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Volume 1

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CHAPTER I I

*Kant and Crusius on the Role of
Immortality in Morality*

Paola Rumore

I. Kant and Crusius

The central role played by Christian August Crusius in the development of Kant's early thought has often been stressed in Kant scholarship, even before the recent 'rediscovery' of Crusius's philosophical works, thanks to Giorgio Tonelli's modern edition. Indeed, the massive circulation of Crusius's main philosophical works began in the very first years of Kant's activity and exercised a remarkable influence on the formation of his early intellectual identity. According to Arthur Warda, Kant had a copy of the *Anweisung, vernünftig zu leben* (*Guidance for Living Rationally*) and the *Entwurf der nothwendigen Vernunft-Wahrheiten* (*Sketch of the Necessary Truths of Reason*) in his personal library, both in the second edition (published in 1751 and 1753, respectively), and a copy of Crusius's work on natural philosophy, the *Anleitung über natürliche Begebenheiten ordentlich und vorsichtig nachzudencken* (*Instruction for the Orderly and Careful Consideration of Natural Occurrences*), published in Leipzig in 1749.¹ As Tonelli states in the preface to his Crusius edition, as well as in his earlier, pioneering work on the metaphysical and methodological elements of Kant's pre-Critical philosophy, the crucial points of Crusius's influence on Kant can already be identified in the ontological theses of the *New Elucidation* of 1757, and in the methodological and moral claims of the *Inquiry* of 1762.²

Indeed, from the very beginning Kant seems to recognize Crusius as the source of his primary objections against Wolffian rationalism: the difference between mathematical and philosophical method,³ the criticism of

¹ Warda also mentions a '*Crusii logica*' from 1753, but since there is no edition of Crusius's *Weg zur Gewissheit* in that year, the entry might concern a work on his logic (*Immanuel Kants Bücher*, p. 74).

² See Tonelli, 'Vorwort', in Crusius, *Die philosophischen Hauptwerke*, vol. 1, pp. li–lii; and Tonelli, *Elementi metodologici e metafisici in Kant*, ch. III.

³ See Tonelli, 'Der Streit über die mathematische Methode'; Campo, *La genesi del criticismo kantiano*; Marquardt, *Kant und Crusius*; and Kanzian, 'Kant und Crusius 1763'.

the principle of sufficient reason together with the consequent defense of free will and denial of ethical intellectualism,⁴ the denial of any pre-established harmony and the defence of a real influx among substances.⁵ It was, in particular, Crusius's idea of an original *sensus communis* (*recta ratio*) at the basis of every human activity, his defence of the primacy of the will and emphasis on the moral basis for any philosophical investigation and his inclination towards eclecticism that grounded his opposition to Wolff and served to connect him to the so-called Thomasian-Pietistic milieu.⁶ Crusius himself never disguised the polemical target of his philosophical works, namely the supporter of the 'Leibnizian-Wolffian system', for whom 'it seems that what one believes by means of the *sensum communem* is still too stodgy and exoteric, as in the case of the freedom of the will and of its power on the intellect, of space, of a time before the world, of the effects of spirits and bodies upon each other, of the capacity spirits have to be touched and moved, of elements which have shape and size, of the variability of contingent beings, etc.'⁷ Stepping away from what common sense suggests and disregarding every reference to experience, Leibniz and Wolff's rationalistic system becomes, according to Crusius, entangled in its own web of principles and definitions, which lead only rarely to the statements its supporters hope to draw from it and, as in the notorious case of fatalism, often imply consequences that its supporters are not willing to admit.⁸

Crusius's moral philosophy, with its distinctive understanding of virtue and moral motivation, draws on topics that languished at the hands of the Leibnizian-Wolffian system and that Crusius accordingly seeks to reinvestigate in 'a proper manner'.⁹ Foremost among these topics are the

⁴ See Heimsoeth, *Metaphysik und Kritik bei Chr. Aug. Crusius*; Schmucker, *Die Ursprünge der Ethik Kants*; Henrich, 'Über Kants früheste Ethik'; and Perin, 'The Proof of the Principle of Sufficient Reason'.

⁵ See Carboncini, 'Christian August Crusius und die Leibniz-Wolffische Philosophie'; Finster, 'Zur Kritik von Christian August Crusius an der Theorie der einfachen Substanzen bei Leibniz und Wolff'; Krieger, *Geist, Welt und Gott bei Christian August Crusius*; Watkins, 'The Development of Physical Influx in Early Eighteenth-Century Germany'; and Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysik of Causality*, pp. 81–100.

⁶ On the 'Thomasian-Pietistic' tradition, see Carboncini, 'Die thomasianisch-pietistische Tradition', particularly regarding the connection of the elements of *Selbstdenken* and *Eklektik*, the growing interest in a non-doxastic model of the history of philosophy, the reliability of inner moral inclination stressed by Christian Thomasius, Johann Franz Buddeus and Joachim Lange and Crusius's own place in this tradition. Cf. also Ciafardone, 'Über das Primat der praktischen Vernunft'.

⁷ *Entwurf* [1753], p. 9* (when referring to the second edition, I will note the date in square brackets; otherwise, references to the *Entwurf* will be to the first edition of 1745).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9*–10*. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11*.

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immortality of the soul, which is the core of morality, and the existence of God. Both of these topics are at the very center of Crusius's rethinking of Wolff's rationalistic metaphysics, and both served as fundamental sources of inspiration for Kant's own reflections. This chapter will not claim that Crusius was the immediate source of Kant's analysis of the problem of the immortality of the human soul; rather, it defends the idea that Crusius's attitude towards that central topic of rationalistic psychology and the critique he put forth opened a viable path to Kant, an alternative to the dominant options in the philosophy of the time. Indeed, within the manifold treatments of this topic offered by eighteenth-century German philosophy, Crusius's position in particular presents a variety of elements that were not compatible with Wolff's philosophical conception and that will be reprised in Kant's doctrine of the postulates of pure practical reason developed in the second *Critique*. Notoriously, a postulate of pure practical reason is, according to Kant, 'a theoretical proposition, although not one demonstrable as such [but only] insofar as it is attached inseparably to an *a priori* unconditionally valid practical law' (CPrR 5:122); which is to say, it is a proposition that reveals a specific inadequacy of speculative reason and the moral ground for unavoidable assumptions.¹⁰ As I will show, Crusius similarly emphasizes the 'inadequacy' of theoretical proofs provided by the demonstrative method and adopts the attitude of intellectual modesty and diffidence towards the claims of reason that likewise animates Kant's philosophical activity. Crusius was, in other terms, the representative of a way of understanding the task of philosophy whom Kant might have regarded as a model for his own reflections.

The present chapter focuses on the idea that Kant's investigation of immortality, and the role he assigns to it within the realm of practical philosophy, reveals the influence of Crusius – among other critics of Wolff's rationalism – upon his mature thought, and this regarding two points in particular. The first concerns the attitude towards the claims of reason and its arrogance in metaphysical questions. Since this attitude arises in a particularly clear way in their respective analyses of the condition of the soul after the death of the body, I shall begin by offering a schematic presentation of the standard idea of immortality in the Wolffian tradition and a survey of its different proofs with reference to its main formulations around the mid-1700s. I shall then turn to Crusius's arguments against the idea of a rational proof of immortality in order to show that his criticism of

¹⁰ Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, ch. IV; Guyer, 'From a Practical Point of View'; Ricken, 'Die Postulate der reinen praktischen Vernunft'.

the traditional metaphysical proof of immortality not only is a topic Kant continuously takes into account in his investigation of rational psychology, but also can be considered a key anticipation of Kant's characterization of the eternal persistence of the soul as a postulate of pure practical reason. The second point, by contrast, relates to the place Kant and Crusius assign to the immortality of the soul in their respective moral philosophies. As I will stress, the role played by the afterlife in the system of *eternal* rewards or punishments that follows from God's justice in Crusius's idea of morality reveals a deep analogy with Kant's conception of morality as an expression of the 'autonomy' of reason in acting according to the moral law.

2. Against Rationalism: The Criticism of the Metaphysical Proof

The immortality of the soul – declared a *dogma* of Christianity by the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513 – is one of the main topics of eighteenth-century psychology, alongside the nature and origin of the soul and its *commercium* with the body. Already by the first half of the eighteenth century, we find an extremely varied typology of rational proofs of immortality in German philosophy, and a detailed description of them would be well beyond the purpose of this paper.¹¹ For our aims it is sufficient to bear in mind that in Germany, the passage from the old *pneumatologia*, or *science of spirits*, to the modern *psychologia*, understood as both the *empirical* and *rational science of the soul* with its own method and its own terminology, is one of Wolff's most notable innovations in German philosophy and one of his most relevant accomplishments in the history of Western thought.¹² The interdependence between experience and reason, the *connubium rationis et experientiae* that serves as the motto of Wolff's philosophy, finds one of its best realizations in the realm of psychology.¹³ Indeed, Wolff's *rational* psychology derives *a priori* from the concept of the soul, the effects that can be observed *a posteriori* in the realm of *empirical* psychology.¹⁴ The origin of the soul and its fate after the death of the body are topics that

¹¹ The complexity of the debate in Germany in the first half of the eighteenth century is described in the preface to Löscher, *Auserlesene Sammlung*.

¹² Vidal, *The Science of the Soul*, pp. 89–97; Rudolph and Goubet (eds.), *Die Psychologie Christian Wolffs*; F. Marcolungo (ed.), *Christian Wolff tra psicologia empirica e psicologia razionale*.

¹³ École, 'Des rapports de l'expérience et de la raison'; Vittadello, 'Expérience et raison'; Cataldi Madonna, *Christian Wolff und das System des klassischen Rationalismus*.

¹⁴ Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris*, §§111–12; Wolff, *Psychologia empirica*, §112n.

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for obvious reasons can only be treated in the rational doctrine of the soul; this means that the knowledge we gain of these topics can be derived exclusively *a priori* and by means of the deductive reasoning that forms the basis of Wolff's scientific method.¹⁵

Both in Wolff's earlier formulation in the *Deutsche Metaphysik* (*German Metaphysics*) (1719–20) and in the later, more complex *Psychologia rationalis* (1734), the demonstration of the immortality of the soul rests on three grounds: the proof of the incorruptibility of spiritual (i.e., simple) substance, the proof of the capacity to persist in a state of consciousness (distinct thoughts) even after the connection with the body is lost and the proof of the preservation of the 'personality' of the soul, or the identity of the same subject through past states of life. Immortality is the combination of these three features, since none of them on its own amounts to the proof of the continuation of the soul's life after the death of the body. Wolff's proof soon became a standard solution to the problem of immortality, and a number of his supporters tried to safeguard it from various attacks and to improve it in some particular respects. Even philosophers who followed Wolff's footsteps in a very autonomous way and offered important revisions of his proof of immortality nonetheless agreed with him on the mathematical certainty of the *a priori* (i.e., metaphysical) demonstration. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, for instance, integrated Wolff's proof with a notable consideration: simplicity and incorruptibility are not by themselves sufficient reasons for the soul's immortality, since its *finite* nature determines the contingency of its existence: 'hence the death of human soul is possible in itself'.¹⁶ The idea that the soul, on account of its contingent nature, can stop living is supported by the distinction between two different kinds of immortality, *absolute* and *hypothetical*. The body is

¹⁵ Wolff, *Discursus praeliminaris*, cap. IV; Campo, *Cristiano Wolff e il razionalismo precritico*, pp. 100–23.

¹⁶ Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §780. For Wolff, incorruptibility represents one of the grounds of immortality but is not self-sufficient and stands in need of the other two. However, Wolff does not call into question the certainty of the rational proof of immortality. According to him, souls cannot die, neither *naturaliter* nor *supernaturaliter*. They do not die *naturaliter* because they are *per essentiam* incorruptible, capable of distinct thoughts and aware of their previous condition; they cannot die *supernaturaliter* because the *nexus rerum* in the universe is necessary and unalterable. If God wants to let human souls die by means of his omnipotence, he should either modify their own essence or endow them with a capacity which is not grounded in their essence. Both ways are impossible, since God's omnipotence is the power to turn what is possible into something real, and not what is impossible. On Wolff's doctrine of the immutability of essences, cf. *Deutsche Metaphysik*, §§32–43, and *Anmerckungen zur Deutschen Metaphysik* (*Remarks on the German Metaphysics*), §43. For the dangerous implications of the denial of this doctrine, one might consult his controversy with Budde as presented in Wolff, *Nöthige Zugabe*, §§13–15; and Rumore, *Materia cogitans*, ch. II.

absolutely mortal, since it can die by means of natural laws, whereas the soul is *hypothetically* (and not absolutely) *immortal*; but since it cannot die in the way a body can die, it has a ‘very great hypothetical immortality’,¹⁷ which, combined with its maintenance of the capacity of distinct understanding and of its personality, provides a reliable demonstration of its immortality.¹⁸ Other supporters of the rational proof of immortality managed to integrate Wolff’s demonstration with further metaphysical items, such as the relation between composite substances and the capacity of thinking – like Knutzen (*Commentatio philosophica de humane mentis individua natura, sive Immaterialitate*, 1741) and Mendelssohn (*Phaedon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* [*Phaedo, or on the Immortality of the Soul*], 1767); or the capacity for distinct thoughts even independent of any contribution of the body – like Johann Gustav Reinbeck (*Philosophische Gedancken über die vernünfftige Seele und derselben Unsterblichkeit* [*Philosophical Thoughts on the Rational Soul and its Immortality*], 1739); or the universal harmony of beings that would change (or lose perfection) if one of them should die – like Israel Gottlieb Canz (*Überzeugender Beweis aus der Vernunft von der Unsterblichkeit* [*A Convincing Proof of Immortality through Reason*, 1744])¹⁹ and Samuel Gotthold Lange’s essay on G. F. Meier’s initial essay on immortality.²⁰

The conviction that we cannot prove the immortality of the soul from its nature alone (*metaphysically*, as rational psychology claims to do) does not always imply the radical denial of immortality. As pointed out in the chapter by Corey Dyck in this volume, Meier, a permanent reference point in Kant’s teaching activity, rejects every metaphysical proof of immortality, together with any attempt to prove it *a priori* by means of the deductive method of Wolff’s rational psychology, as the real ground of immortality lies in God’s unfathomable will.²¹ Meier’s investigation of the basis of our belief in immortality and appreciation of a different degree of certainty in metaphysical investigations are shared with another unavoidable referent of

¹⁷ Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §781: ‘Absolute immortality indeed cannot be attributed to the soul; however, since what is indestructible cannot die in the innumerable ways in which the body can die, the soul possesses a very great hypothetical immortality. No substance of this world is annihilated. Therefore, when the body (such as humans have on this earth) dies, the surviving human soul lives immortally.’

¹⁸ For Baumgarten’s proof of immortality, cf. Dyck, ‘Beyond the Paralogisms’.

¹⁹ Cf. Rumore, *Materia cogitans*, pp. 130–6.

²⁰ Lange, *Versuch, des von dem Herrn Georg Friedrich Meyer, . . . in seinen Gedancken von dem Zustande der Seele nach dem Tode gelegneten mathematischen Erweises der Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1749). For further integrations and emendations of Wolff’s idea, see Dyck, *Kant and Rational Psychology*, ch. 2.

²¹ Cf. Meier, *Verteidigung*, §2, and *Gedancken von dem Zustande*, §§22 and 28: ‘The death of the soul is possible in itself, and the soul is mortal in itself and for itself; cf. also pp. 215–16.’

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Kant's philosophy, Crusius. In addition to the topics mentioned at the outset of this chapter, namely the fundamental idea of the scope of philosophy, the attitude towards metaphysics and, most of all, the reconsideration of the possibility of providing new solutions to old, inescapable problems, Crusius's treatment of the immortality of the soul allows us to shed light in a very specific way on the influence this distinct philosophical tradition had on the development of Kant's thought.

3. Crusius's Moral Proofs and the Role of Immortality

As Wolff already pointed out, and Reinbeck had stressed, immortality proper pertains only to rational souls and spirits, that is, only to those who are capable of distinct representations and who possess an awareness of self-identity (i.e., personality). In the *Entwurf*, his work on metaphysics, Crusius recalls this idea, claiming that immortality concerns only *rational* spirits, not merely insofar as they are capable of distinct thoughts once their bodies have died, but also because only rational spirits are endowed with freedom and therefore capable of moral action.²² Such creatures are in fact free to direct their actions according to the laws of God's perfection, which laws guarantee that the world is good.²³ God's will is indeed *moral*, in the sense that it conforms to his perfect nature, but it is not *determinant* with regard to the human will; thus, virtue consists in the conformity of human actions with the laws that constitute God's plan and that express his perfection. Accordingly, Crusius conceives of happiness, considered as the reunification with God which rational and freely acting creatures achieve by means of virtue, as God's 'objective final end' (*objektiver Endzweck*).²⁴

Crusius's insistence on the *moral nature* of rational spirits is a function of his claim that finite spirits possess a variety of properties which cannot be understood as effects of the action of physical laws, but which express moral relations grounded on the nature of God. Even though in Crusius's eyes those properties are not necessarily determined by fundamental

²² In the *Entwurf* (§§482–7) Crusius presents immortality as a property of rational spirits; §486: 'The proofs of immortality we provided can be applied immediately only to spirits who had a real usage of reason, and who carried out moral actions.'

²³ Ibid., §477.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, §§478–9. Human beings are God's final objective ends, because they are able to know the world and to derive a 'rational pleasure' (*ein vernünftiger Genuss*) from that knowledge. According to Crusius, the world was created for human beings (*Anweisung*, §210). God's final formal end is to create the condition in which human beings are able to realize their virtue (freedom) (§211). Indeed, obedience to God can be considered the *form* of virtue (§480).

powers rooted in the physical essence of beings,²⁵ they nevertheless present the same degree of necessity, since they are rooted in God's plan. Immortality is one of these properties: 'God's perfection contains a reason why he preserves his creatures once their life has started and does not ever allow them to cease completely and forever, so that they do not simply keep on living, but live in a way that enables them to act morally.'²⁶ Given these premises, Crusius claims that rational spirits share with God the property of living eternally, albeit on the basis of different ontological grounds: in the case of God, the reason of immortality lies *within* his own essence, whereas in the case of finite beings, it is *external* to their essence, as it can only be traced back to God.²⁷

Indeed, it is in the context of natural theology that Crusius presents two *a priori* proofs of immortality, based respectively on the presence of an internal striving (*Trieb*) to an eternal final end in finite creatures and on the fact that finite creatures are God's objective final end. The first rests on the idea that rational spirits are the only ones capable of both conceiving of and striving towards an eternal final end, whereas irrational beings, like animals, continuously change their aims. Since God does not do anything by chance, the presence of an insatiable striving in rational beings fits a specific divine purpose which implies that God will maintain them in their living state eternally.²⁸ The second proof proceeds, briefly, as follows: rational creatures, as God's objective final aim, cannot cease to exist, since otherwise God would fail in his final aim and creation would lose its purpose, which is of course nonsense.²⁹ A third demonstration, presented in the *Anweisung*, constitutes a distinct predecessor of Kant's famous use of the idea of immortality as a postulate of pure practical reason:

God must reward every good action proportionally to its goodness, and must also punish every bad action proportionally to its degree. Since as experience shows this never occurs in this life, or does so only rarely, there must be another life which God designates for the revelation of His rewarding and punishing justice. Since rewards and punishments must be unceasing, the other life must be a state of actual immortality.³⁰

In any case, rational spirits are immortal only thanks to God's decision (*Ratschluss*), and not due to some ground internal to their nature, and moral reasons provide the only possible foundation for a valid demonstration of the immortality of the soul: moral reasons (*moralische Gründe*) 'are

²⁵ Ibid., §476.

²⁶ Ibid., §482.

²⁷ Ibid., §483.

²⁸ Ibid.; *Anweisung*, §219.

²⁹ *Entwurf*, §484; *Anweisung*, §218.

³⁰ Ibid., §220.

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the only ones that fit the proof [of immortality]. It is impossible to derive immortality from the essence of the soul'.³¹

With this criticism Crusius aims, of course, to deny the validity of every traditional metaphysical proof of immortality, but moreover and explicitly to undermine Leibniz and Wolff's system of pre-established harmony with its foundational assertion of the complete independence of the soul from the body. Having released the soul from every connection with matter and bodies, that is, from the very condition of distinct thoughts (according to the Leibnizian adage that defines the soul as a *vis repraesentativa pro situ corporis sui*), the proponents of the harmony are compelled to admit that once the body ceases its existence, the soul loses its capacity of rational thinking and, therefore, its existence as a *human* soul.³² Hence the system of harmony fails to demonstrate immortality and must therefore have recourse to moral arguments. In this context, Crusius uses the failure of metaphysically grounded proofs of immortality for a much broader criticism of that system, which turns out to rest on an erroneous idea of God and spirits and to lead to false conclusions in the form of a fatalism that involves God's decisions as well. By contrast, Crusius argues for a system of real, physical connections among finite beings, whose theoretical justification has to be found once again in one of the bedrocks of his natural theology, namely the distinction between God's means and aims in the creation. As matter and rational spirits are God's means and final ends, respectively, they must be reciprocally connected in a *real*, and not merely an *ideal* way, as the harmonist would claim.³³ As both spirits and matter are necessary elements of the divine plan, they must be in a real connection, which means that they both can *really* act on each other. Crusius explains this in terms of a shared property, contending that both spirits and matter are endowed with the capacity of movement (*Bewegungsfähigkeit*), which is a consequence of their finite nature.³⁴ Indeed, as *finite*

³¹ Ibid., §221. ³² *Entwurf*, §485.

³³ Ibid., §363. Indeed, the harmonist claims that matter is necessary in order to *determine* the representative power of the soul, but at the same time maintains the complete autonomy of each substance whose essence is by definition necessary, immutable and already determined to develop according to a preconceived plan. Wolff's notorious claim that the mouth could speak even without there being a soul guiding its speech constituted a clear admission of the complete independence of the two ontological realms, so that their relation could only be understood as an *ideal* connection (cf. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §448). But in such a case, matter would turn out to be a completely useless element of creation – a statement that, of course, contradicts the basic assumption that God never acts in vain. For a detailed analysis of Crusius's version of physical influx, cf. Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, pp. 328–38.

³⁴ Crusius (*Entwurf*, §362) identifies two kinds of matter: passive, *leidende Materie*, which he calls also *Materia prima sive metaphysica*, and active, *Materia activa sive physica*.

substances, they both occupy a finite space (i.e., are impenetrable) and are therefore able to move from their position when other substances try to occupy their previous place.³⁵ According to Crusius, this statement is far from being a concession to materialists, or to those who aspire to explain thoughts in terms of movements.³⁶ Such a hasty conclusion, drawn by, for instance, Wolff, is nothing but the result of a fallacious inference (i.e., matter can move; spirits are different from matter; therefore, spirits cannot move³⁷) and of his failure to recognize the fact that the capacity of movement possessed by spirits can be legitimately derived from their very essence as finite substances.³⁸

Rather than consisting in the capacity of movement they have in common, then, the ontological difference between spirits and matter concerns the possession (or lack) of a further power of representation (*Ideenfähigkeit*) expressed through thought and will. Crusius identifies thought, will and movement as 'the three original experiences of the spirit', and their intrinsic difference is grasped by what he, in a Lockean vein, calls the 'postulate of sensation'.³⁹ Yet, as we saw, the ontological gap between the two 'highest classes of substances'⁴⁰ cannot by itself provide a satisfactory demonstration of the immortality of the soul, and reason fails when it tries to grasp that proof by means of metaphysical arguments. Similarly to Meier, however, Crusius moves to a kind of mistrust of the potentialities of mere demonstrative reason, which has to find the source of its certainty outside of its pure concepts and scientific method; indeed, neither what Crusius calls 'subjective reason' nor 'reason *in abstracto*' manages to yield an indisputable knowledge of immortality.⁴¹ Even so, the same degree of certainty can be achieved otherwise, since, when reason fails, the *Gewissenstrieb* (*conscience-drive*, or simply *conscience*) forces us to believe in the eternal nature of human souls. In this way, Crusius stresses the legitimacy of the 'moral proof' as a new, alternative manner of demonstrating on a practical basis that which reason fails to deduce on the basis of its *a priori* analysis of the concept of the soul.

Significantly, the 'moral' nature of this proof of the immortality of the soul can be understood in a twofold sense. First, as Crusius often stresses, it is 'moral' insofar as it is developed on the basis of *moral* and not

³⁵ Ibid., §§364 and 431.

³⁶ Ibid., §236. Where materialists are those who think that thought and will are movements, Crusius insists explicitly on the idea that thought, will and movements are irreducible to each other and are the three fundamental experiences of the spirit (§§425–30).

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, §364. ³⁸ Ibid., §434. ³⁹ Ibid., §429. ⁴⁰ Ibid., §362.

⁴¹ *Anweisung*, §223.

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demonstrative grounds; and second, because this kind of proof achieves by itself a degree of *certainty*, which Crusius calls *moral*. According to the definition provided in his *Weg zur Gewissheit (The Path to Certainty)* (1747), ‘moral certainty’ is ‘the certainty achieved through the knowledge of probability, in order to differentiate it from the kind of certainty we achieve in the demonstrative manner’.⁴² This seems to be precisely what happens with our knowledge of immortality, which Crusius explicitly numbers among the truths we are allowed to accept as certain even though they do not rely on any rational *a priori* demonstration. Indeed, our ‘probable proofs (*wahrscheinliche Beweise*) of the immortality of the soul’ can be considered (morally) certain since they present ‘a very high probability, which concerns the most important duties’, and because ‘on the one hand [this probability] does not arise from the accidental circumstances of an individual person, and on the other hand God’s providence ensures that we are not deceiving ourselves about it’.⁴³ With this statement, Crusius provides a step forward in the gradual advance from a conception of ‘moral certainty’ as the ‘highest probable knowledge’ – useful both as a support for our practical life and as a weapon against the spectre of scepticism – to the distinctively Kantian conception of a ‘moral commitment’ towards the final ends of human beings.

Crusius’s idea of immortality is firmly grounded in what he understands to be God’s ‘moral arrangement of the world’ (*moralische Einrichtung der Welt*), i.e., the idea that ‘God’s main final end in this life is virtue’.⁴⁴ Virtue itself requires the presence of free will, and, as Crusius claims, ‘since in any world there must be free actions, God wants them to be necessarily in accordance with virtue, and they will then be followed by a reward or a punishment’.⁴⁵ The necessity of rational beings acting according to virtue follows, as we have seen before, as an undeniable consequence from the rational investigation of God’s moral properties.⁴⁶ Indeed, what Crusius calls ‘God’s moral will of virtue’ (*moralisches Wollen der Tugend*) is the fact that God wants rational and free-acting beings to act in conformity with the essential perfection of his creation.⁴⁷

Precisely because rational beings act freely, God’s will towards their actions is *moral* and not *determinative*.⁴⁸ In just this sense, God is the ‘legislator’ of the world, as concerns both the natural and the moral realms; in fact, in both cases he acts according to his will (determinative or moral), and the laws he introduces in the creation are the effect of his infinite

⁴² *Weg*, §361. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, §417. ⁴⁴ *Anweisung*, §214. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, §213.

⁴⁶ *Entwurf*, §§476–7. ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, §477. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

perfection.⁴⁹ In the field of morality, God's perfection can be understood in an absolute sense, in which God is *per essentiam* 'holy' (*heilig*), and therefore he wants the moral good *necessarily*; or God's perfection can be understood in a relative sense, i.e., in relation to the moral actions of rational spirits. In the latter sense, it expresses itself in terms of 'rewarding or punishing justice'.⁵⁰ But as Crusius immediately notes, if this justice is not conceived as something that stretches into the afterlife but realizes itself solely within the boundaries of this earthly existence, then once this life is over, every difference between those who were virtuous and those who were vicious will be cancelled out, and God's justice would be in vain.⁵¹ God's justice, then, considered in terms of providing *eternal* reward or punishment, necessarily requires the *eternal* persistence of the soul, and accordingly, the idea of God as an indispensable guarantee of justice in the appraisal of the morality of human action during humans' earthly lives becomes one of Crusius's moral proofs of immortality.

The role Crusius assigns to God's eternal justice and, as a consequence, to the immortality of the soul in his moral philosophy reveals an understanding of morality which is much more subtle than might initially appear. Immediately after stressing the never-ending effects of God's justice, Crusius provides his readers with the following striking caveat:

Beware of the mistake of considering divine punishments and rewards to be necessary because it is through them that the law attains to an obligation in the sense that people would be driven to obedience by the fear of the former and the hope for the latter, such that fear and hope should be the final ends of obedience. This would cancel every genuine lawful obligation, and all actual obedience.⁵²

Being a driving motivation of moral actions, the moral certainty of the immortality of the soul conceived as the hope for eternal reward and fear of eternal punishments must, of course, be connected to the obedience of the divine moral law. Yet its role in morality is not essential, but complementary: hope and fear 'must prepare the puzzled for obedience; they must make the idea of the certainty and inviolability of the law lively and maintain it as such; they must prevent the obedient one from being seduced by any provocation of evil'.⁵³ In other words, the idea of immortality as well as the doctrine of eternal punishments and rewards do not form the core of morality, but only serve to make our understanding of moral action more coherent with God's final ends, which are the very foundation of morality.

⁴⁹ *Anweisung*, §193.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §192.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, §191.

⁵² *Ibid.*, §194.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

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In fact, Crusius emphasizes that ‘the *essence* of the obligation to the law’ cannot be seen in the fear of or the hope for the eternal effects of God’s justice, but only in the conformity of human action to the divine law that moves us to virtue.⁵⁴ That is precisely what is suggested by the *Gewissenstrieb*, the true criterion of any morality, the detector of the authentic moral motivation or, as Crusius calls it, the ‘*formale* of virtue’, which is to say ‘the intention to obey to God’s will’.⁵⁵ The *Gewissenstrieb* is in fact understood as a natural striving that allows us to recognize the divine moral law, one of the ‘natural basic laws of our soul’, from which is derived ‘an inclination to morality, i.e. to judge the justness or unjustness of our actions’.⁵⁶ It reveals the dependence of rational spirits on God, and leads us to a form of obedience that cannot be subordinated to anything else except for God.⁵⁷ In this way, Crusius’s insistence on the moral inadequacy of an action driven by those complementary motivations, and the need to refer to the *formal* aspect of our actions, that is, to their conformity to the divine moral law in order to judge their morality, could not be clearer. Indeed, Crusius seems to stress the need for the purity of morality insofar as this admits of no other authority than the divine law as expressed in our internal conscience, where the dependence upon God is an *essential* property of finite spirits (and so consistent with the ‘purity’ of morality). In comparison, Kant’s idea of the ‘autonomy’ of the will in moral actions would seem to require just a small step forward.

4. Kant on the Moral Relevance of Immortality

According to Crusius, moral proofs of immortality are the only reliable ones and enjoy a similar degree, if not the same kind, of certainty and cogency that the old metaphysical proofs claimed to achieve, even if they do not gain the same broad approval. As opposed to the traditional proofs, moral proofs are accepted only with some difficulty, since their validity cannot be traced back to the principle of non-contradiction (as with mathematical claims) or confirmed experimentally (as in physics), but presuppose a deep knowledge of ‘telematology’ (Crusius’s term for the doctrine of the will), the doctrine of virtue and the fundamentals of *theologia naturalis*.⁵⁸

The central role played by this theological element in Crusius’s proof of immortality is what leads Kant to label it as the ‘*theological-moral* proof’. This expression appears already in the early so-called Metaphysics L₁ from

⁵⁴ Ibid. ⁵⁵ Ibid., §177. ⁵⁶ Ibid., §132. ⁵⁷ Ibid., §238. ⁵⁸ Ibid., §223.

the mid-1770s, which documents Kant's attempt to systematically organize the various paths followed by his predecessors in demonstrating the soul's immortality, a demonstration which was presented to his students at that point as one of the main aims of rational psychology, and which even in the first *Critique* still constituted the 'final aim' of the transcendental use of reason.⁵⁹ The 'theological-moral proof', in which one infers 'from the cognition of the divine will . . . to the necessary survival of the soul',⁶⁰ is there presented as one of the two *a priori* proofs of immortality, the other being the so-called transcendental proof, which moves from the nature and the concept of the soul itself, understood, as in the first *Critique* (A345/B403), as the 'principle of life' that animates the body (ML1 28:285–7). The transcendental proof – with its baggage of Platonic images, such as the metaphor of a man pulling a cart to express the relation between soul and body, or the death of the body described as the liberation of the soul from the hindrance to a complete life (ML1 28:286–7) – rests on a twofold principle: first, that life is the faculty of spontaneity, i.e., of acting from an inner principle, and second, that matter in itself is inert and lifeless. The conclusion is that everything that belongs to life must have a source other than the body: 'the ground of life must rather lie in another substance, namely, in the soul' (ML1 28:285).⁶¹ Notoriously, Kant will abandon this proof on the basis of his transcendental idealism, which calls into question the idea that material and spiritual phenomena cannot have the same non-phenomenal substrate (cf. A358–60 and A277/B333).⁶²

The theological-moral proof, too, is a *demonstratio a priori*, since it moves from the *a priori* cognition we have of the absolutely necessary being, namely God. The proof works as follows. We find in ourselves a moral law which we comprehend *a priori* and with which we have to act in accordance if we want to be moral. Morality thus sets the conditions under which we become worthy of happiness, but since happiness is not attained in this world, 'there must be *another world*, or a *state where the well-being of*

⁵⁹ 'The greatest yearning of a human being is not to know the actions of the soul, which one cognizes through experience, but rather its future state. The individual propositions of rational psychology are not as important here as *the general consideration of its origin, of its future state, and of its survival* (ML1 28:263) and A798/B826. Far from being a marginal topic of Kant's philosophy (see Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, p. 177), the proofs of immortality are constantly encountered in his lectures on metaphysics. For a precise reconstruction, see Dyck, 'Beyond the Paralogisms'.

⁶⁰ 'This is the moral or (because the cognition of God is involved) the theological-moral proof' (ML1 28:288).

⁶¹ Cf. also R 4240, 17:474.

⁶² Cf. Rumore, 'Meier, Kant e il materialismo psicologico' and 'Kant's Understanding of the Enlightenment'.

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a creature is adequate to its proper conduct' (ML_I 28:289). This is where theology comes to our aid, since the absolutely necessary being is the one who is able to provide the happiness we have made ourselves worthy of through our moral action, which is not achievable within the boundaries of this earthly life. As with Crusius, God is here introduced as the supreme judge, whose capacity to punish and reward humans 'proportionally' to the morality of their actions is our guarantee of the achievement of happiness;⁶³ likewise, the later Metaphysics Mrongovius affirms that this proof rests on 'the *moral properties* of the highest being ... on God's goodness and justice' (MM_I 28:917, my emphasis).⁶⁴

Nevertheless, and differently from Crusius, Kant denies that this proof and the *a posteriori* proofs which follow actually demonstrate the *immortality* of the soul, 'but rather prove only the *hope* for a future life' (ML_I 28:285). Indeed, immortality, considered as the 'natural necessity of living' (according to a definition that Kant most likely takes from Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*; cf. §781), involves a speculative claim concerning the nature of the soul and should therefore rest on the contention that the notion of a 'mortal soul' rests on a *contradictio in adjecto*, and so violates one of the fundamental principles of logic. Since the theological-moral proof does not derive its cogency from the rational analysis of the concept of the soul, but rather from our knowledge of the absolutely necessary being, it is rational and *a priori* but does not manage to prove the *absolute necessary* immortality of the soul. The Metaphysics L_I presents a series of objections to the proof that move precisely in this direction: first of all, one cannot actually know whether vices and virtues are not already rewarded and punished in this life, and so whether the whole idea of a future state would not be superfluous; and second, even assuming the necessity of a future life for that aim, we have no reason to affirm that, having received our punishment or reward, we would then need to continue living eternally (ML_I 28:289–90).

In Kant's critical remarks, we can nonetheless discern the conception of the soul as a finite and therefore contingent being, which was at the very basis of Crusius's refutation of the traditional metaphysical proof, as well as Baumgarten's distinction between the hypothetical and the absolute necessity of immortality and the criticisms of the deductive demonstrations of the rationalists. Kant was surely familiar with this notion (through Baumgarten's textbook), but he makes use of Baumgarten's conceptual pair of absolute and hypothetical necessity, along the lines of Crusius, to

⁶³ *Anweisung*, §§208 and 220.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Entwurf*, §476.

stress the primacy of *practice* in this realm; thus, 'this moral proof is practically adequate enough for believing in a future state' and is an 'adequate ground of belief' (MLI 28:289–90). In grounding our hope and our belief in the afterlife, the proof of immortality serves as an *incentive* to morality and virtue, which is actually the main aim of any metaphysical investigation. A lecture from the early 1770s concludes with a very clear statement on this score, which recalls the 'practical conclusion' of the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (2:373, cf. A828–9/B856–7) and the idea of a *moral faith*:

The main point is always morality: this is the holy and unassailable thing which we must protect, and this is also the ground and the purpose of all our speculations and investigations All metaphysical speculations aim at it. God and the other world is the only goal of our philosophical investigations, and if the concepts of God and of the other world did not hang together with morality, then they would be useless. (MLI 28:301)

Indeed, this understanding of immortality as an *incentive* to morality⁶⁵ comes back as a recurrent topic in Kant's lectures, gradually taking the form of the postulate of pure practical reason which will be officially presented in the second *Critique*. Yet some hints in this direction can already be found in the *Metaphysics Mrongovius* from the early 1780s, where one reads: 'Morality would be without *incentives* if there were no immortality of the soul. Without *belief* in immortality, morality would have power only in the idea, but not in reality. Since morality thus lacks reality, the *hope* of immortality cannot be separated from it . . . [T]he *hope and belief* in immortality is a practical postulate of reason' (MMr 29:918, emphasis mine). By recognizing the basis of the moral proof in the laws of morality, 'which are as it were geometrically necessary',⁶⁶ and the role played by immortality as a practical postulate, Kant emphasizes and strengthens the validity of this demonstration: 'Although it cannot be counted among the scientific proofs', it has its strength, as revealed by the fact that its opponents can be brought '*ad*

⁶⁵ As offering only an *incentive* to virtue and morality, Kant identifies the real limit of the theological-moral proof, which is no longer identified in the possibility that the soul dies once it has been punished or rewarded for its actions in this life, or in our ignorance about the real nature of punishment and rewards, but rather in the fact that the moral proof can be effective only for the 'honorable man', i.e., for somebody who has 'already embraced moral convictions beforehand'. For him, any proof of immortality is in fact superfluous, whereas despicable human beings would not only 'deny the law, but also its author' (MLI 28:289, 291).

⁶⁶ 'The moral-theological proof is grounded in the moral laws, which are as it were geometrically necessary' (MMr 29:918).

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absurdum practicum' (MMr 29:919). At this point, Kant's previous doubts concerning the weaknesses of the moral proof seem to have been set aside.

Indeed, being an *incentive* to virtue and morality is what connects the theological-moral proof to the *a posteriori* proofs that Kant investigates in his lectures, and which he repeatedly presents as proofs of our *hope* in a future life. There are two such proofs, both unable to prove the immortality of the soul *qua talis*. The first one, the so-called *empirical-psychological* proof, is based on the distinction between animal and spiritual life: from the fact that animal life ceases with the death of the body, one cannot infer the end of the spiritual life. This proof acts merely *negatively*, as a support of our hope of an afterlife insofar as it shows that it is impossible to refute the belief in an afterlife from an empirical point of view. The second is the so-called *cosmological, teleological* or *analogical* proof, which constitutes another remarkable point of convergence with Crusius's discussion. The proof is initially presented as follows:

in the entirety of nature we find that no powers, no faculty, no instruments belonging to either inanimate or animate beings which are not aimed toward a certain *use* or *end*. But we find in the soul such powers and faculties which have no determinate end in this life; thus these faculties (since nothing in nature is without use or end) ... still must have a use *somewhere*; there must thus be a state where the powers can be used. (MLI 28:292)

Kant's argument rests on the idea that nothing in nature is without use or end, and on the consideration that our soul is endowed with faculties and powers whose use extends beyond this world.⁶⁷ These premises echo one of Crusius's moral proofs which we have discussed, specifically that which derived immortality from the capacity God endowed his human creatures with to conceive and desire eternal final ends.⁶⁸ Crusius's proof had two fundamental premises: the first concerned our knowledge of God's ends so that we could affirm that God does nothing in vain and that human beings were his objective final end; the second concerned our knowledge of the soul such that we could affirm that it is endowed (by God) with the capacity we have just described. The Metaphysics Volckmann from the mid-1780s offers very explicit statements on this score; for instance, 'God would have had no end with the creation of his creatures, if the rational beings should not have survived, for these just are the end of creation' (MVo 28:443).

⁶⁷ 'The soul of a human being is armed with powers of cognition and desire, with drives and moral feeling which have no adequate determination at all in this life' (MLI 28:294).

⁶⁸ *Entwurf*, §483.

Nevertheless, in the main part of the available lectures, Kant's version seems to translate Crusius's premises into a more 'secularized' idiom: so the idea that God does nothing in vain is replaced by the affirmation of an immanent teleology in nature, moving from talk of the 'ends of God' to talk of 'natural ends', as in the late *Metaphysics Dohna* (28:687),⁶⁹ and in the *Metaphysics Mrongovius*, the analogical (now explicitly called *teleological*) proof rests on what is called 'a necessary postulate of reason . . . also confirmed by experience', or the idea that everything has an end, that nothing is in vain and even that everything is determined to achieve its end.⁷⁰ It is then nothing more than the 'general law of nature' from which we infer an analogy of every natural being with our soul: as every other part of nature is determined to a life where it can use the members it is provided with, so our soul is determined to a life where it can fulfil its abilities (MMr 29:916; MDo 28:687).⁷¹ It is hardly coincidental that in this context the *Metaphysics Mrongovius* mentions the fact that even 'the atheist must assume ends, otherwise he cannot explain the structure and organization of bodies at all',⁷² a point that underlines Kant's attempt to extend the validity of Crusius's argument beyond the boundaries of the doctrine of divine ends. While we cannot know God's ends, as this exceeds the intellectual capacities of human beings, we do not in fact need to know them in order to provide a solid basis for our hope in immortality: 'Immortality is the necessity of a future life from the natural constitution of the human being (not from an extraordinary decree), thus all human beings will live in the future because it lies in their nature – they will endure eternally, for, if it must go beyond this life, then I do not have the least ground – why this life should end' (MDo 28:688).⁷³ The same idea of 'moral autonomy' as a

⁶⁹ Statements about this principle are found throughout the lectures, e.g., 'Since nothing in nature is in vain, but rather everything has its end, these abilities of the soul must also have their determinate end' (MLI 28:294 and *passim*).

⁷⁰ 'The principle in the realm of ends is: that everything has an end and nothing is in vain' (MMr 29:915), and 'we find in nature that everything not only has its end, but rather is also determined to develop completely and to attain its complete end, because it actually attains it' (MMr 29:915).

⁷¹ MMr 29:916: 'The striving after cognition, carried to a certain degree, appears to be even against our vocation on earth'; 'All talents are disproportionate in this life'; 'Who reflects assiduously on the seat of the soul, or on its immortality does not think in a proportionate enough way [*der denkt nicht proportioniert genug*]. *Ars longa, vita brevis*' (R 2085, 16:227).

⁷² MMr 29:915.

⁷³ The ends of God 'we cannot wholly cognize, because he always wants *the best* – but we do not cognize that – and no human being can grasp the wisdom of God – the proof from the analogy of human beings with organized beings of nature is thus for us the most sure. Nothing is in vain – this is the principle – the ends of organization should be fulfilled in this life or in a future one. Since for many talents no proportionate use is possible here at all, then it would be against the general law of nature if they were placed in vain in a human being, if he could not make use of them in a future life' (MDo 28:687).

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formal obedience to a law that in Kant is no longer 'divine', but prescribed by reason, itself arguably falls into this same attempted 'secularization' of Crusius's perspective.

The belief in immortality, far from being an intrinsic property drawn from the pure concept of the soul, is thus rooted in the natural constitution of human beings as an expression of the need of reason to move beyond the boundaries of the realm of phenomena. Kant's final statement on this topic, the acknowledgement of immortality as a *postulate* of pure practical reason, has to be seen as the result of his continuing reflection on the inadequacy of any metaphysical proof suggested by those, like Crusius, who rejected the Wolffian rational demonstrations as unsatisfactory and constraining. While Baumgarten exerted an undeniably direct influence on Kant's definition of immortality, his distinction between incorruptibility and immortality, and the importance assigned to the concept of personality, all of which are commonly highlighted in the identification of Kant's sources in this regard, it was Crusius's broader suggestion that morality offers the most fertile terrain for seeking a proof of immortality and his claim of the complementary role of such a 'belief' in the realm of morality that seem to play a much more notable role for Kant. For the mature Kant, as for the young author of the *Dreams*, the 'scale-pan of hope' maintains its advantage over the 'scale-pan of speculation' (DS 2:350), even if this is now an advantage that is grounded in the transcendental nature of the illusions of old metaphysics.