

**BETWEEN BAUMGARTEN AND HUME:
ON THE STATUS OF MIRACLES IN KANT'S *METAPHYSICS*
LECTURES¹**

Entre Baumgarten e Hume.

Notas sobre o problema dos milagres nas *Preleções de Metafísica* de Kant

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Resumo: A posição de Kant em relação ao problema dos milagres é quase desconhecida e não é completamente clara. Dentre as várias questões que permanecem obscuras e controversas destaca-se a de saber se Kant considerou (ou não) que milagres fossem impossíveis (ou inviáveis) por serem violações de leis naturais. Para responder à questão começo por pontuar que Kant a enfrentou explicitamente em vários cursos de metafísica ao comentar e criticar a cosmologia de Baumgarten. A seguir, investigo, seleciono e analiso várias Preleções de Metafísica (sobretudo L1 Pölitz e Dohna, mas também Mrongovius e K2/Heinze) e as comparo com a *Metaphysica* de Baumgarten, a *Enquiry* de Hume, e outras fontes da época para reconstruir a posição de Kant. Mantenho que Kant aceitou a possibilidade de milagres que não violariam a *ordem* da natureza, mas apenas o *curso* da natureza (nossa expectativa de regularidade a partir da experiência passada). Mostro também que nas Preleções Kant defende uma concepção que admite *explicitamente* a possibilidade dos milagres e indica sua relevância do ponto de vista prático. Na conclusão defendo que Kant tomou uma posição intermediária entre Hume e Baumgarten que é compatível com o "idealismo transcendental" de sua Filosofia Crítica.

Palavras-Chave: Kant; milagres; *Vorlesungen*; Hume; Baumgarten.

Abstract: Kant's position concerning the status of miracles is not entirely clear and seems rather to present a somewhat controversial idea. One of the many issues that remain unclear is whether Kant took miracles to be "impossible" as violations of natural laws or not. To answer to this question I point out, first, that Kant addressed the issue throughout his *Lectures on Metaphysics* by commenting on Baumgarten's cosmology. Then I track down several lectures, analyze and compare them with the *Metaphysica*, the *Enquiry* and other sources to present a reconstruction of Kant's conception. I maintain that Kant took miracles to be possible to the extent that they are not incompatible with the *order of nature*, but only with the *course of nature* as expected from past experience and observation. Moreover, I show that in the Lectures Kant holds a conception that *explicitly* allows for the possibility of miracles and presents a criterion for assuming miracles under very exceptional circumstances from the practical point of view. In the concluding remarks I defend that Kant's account of miracles is different from Baumgarten's and Hume's, and still compatible with Transcendental Idealism.

Keywords: Kant; miracles; *Lectures*; Hume; Baumgarten;

¹ This paper summarizes and updates in detail my interpretation of Kant's theory of miracles as published previously in *Analytica* and other places.

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I- INTRODUCTION

The status of miracles and their credibility have been subject of debate in the history of modern philosophy³. Modern philosophers were concerned with “miracles”, and no one disputes the fact⁴. Nevertheless, one does not always observe that it was also of concern to Kant; let alone that he thought and developed any kind of theory about it. To say the least, a presentation of Kant's account of miracles seems to be a fair task by itself.

Yet, whenever Kant's conception of miracles is taken into account, it seems either as if he were not interested in miracles (as he would have not considered them *possible* at all), or as if he were concerned with miracles just incidentally. Thus, A. T. Nuyen and S. Palmquist alleged recently that Kant defended or permitted belief in miracles in his *Religionschrift*; and Claude Peddicord asserted that Kant considered miracles as impossible in a naturalistic Humean-like way⁵. However, Kant has neither held belief in miracles, nor their impossibility, but rather advanced an idiosyncratic theory about the possibility of miracles; and even commented on and criticized contemporary metaphysical accounts of their status throughout his courses on Metaphysics. To support my claim I intend to show that Kant holds a non-Humean account of miracles in his *Lectures on Metaphysics* that *explicitly* allows for the possibility of miracles and points towards their *practical relevance*. First, I intend to concentrate in the account of *Metaphysics L1 (Pölitz)* and discuss its relation to Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and other Lectures. Then, I will claim that *Metaphysics L1* gives a good idea of Kant's conception of miracles in the seventies (when Kant supposedly would have read Hume's critique of miracles), viz. his admission of the possibility of miracles, and

³ See on this A. Glémain, *Croyance et probabilités dans la pensée européenne des XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles*. EHESS: Paris, 1992, 48ff, 69ff; J. Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*, N. York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 14ff, 96ff; R. M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume*. London/ Toronto: Associated University Presses; Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981; E. Vailati, "Leibniz and Clarke on Miracles", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 33/4 (1995): 563-591.

⁴ See, for instance: B. Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Ch. 6; J. Locke, *A Discourse of Miracles* (in I. T. Ramsay (ed.), *The Reasonableness of Christianity*...Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958, 78ff.); G. W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain* (Bk. IV, Ch. xix); *Théodicée* (Preliminary Dissertation §§3, 23; I §§54, 61-62; II §§120, 204-209; very especially III §§ 248-249, 353-354, 397); D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (EHU), Sect. X; *Treatise of Human Nature* I, iii 9-10, III i 2; G. Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, §§57, 62, 84.

⁵ See S. Palmquist's *Kant's Critical Religion* (London: Ashgate, 2000, 474ff.), A.T. Nuyen's "Kant on Miracles" (*History of Philosophy Quarterly* 19/3 (2002), 309ff) and C. Peddicord's *Die Wunderkritik Immanuel Kants* (Giessen: Justus Liebig University, 2001, 109ff). However, none of them takes into account the *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Desmond Hogan's "Kant's Theory of Divine and Secondary Causation" (in Brandon Look (ed.), *Leibniz and Kant*. Oxford/UK: Oxford University Press, *Forthcoming*) and Eric Watkins' *Kant's Metaphysics of Causality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) have also made use of materials from the Lectures and Nachlass to examine related issues as "secondary causation" and "physical influx".

confront Kant's account in *Metaphysics L1* with *Metaphysics Dohna's*. I will suggest that both *Metaphysics Dohna* and *L1* display evidence of miracles-issue as a permanent critical concern for Kant⁶. Moreover, I suggest that the evidence of similar assumptions discloses Kant's own critical conception (from the seventies through the nineties). Last but not least, I will suggest that the Lectures shed more light onto the *Religion's* account, insofar as they present a picture of miracles that not only leaves *explicitly* open the logical possibility of miracles, but also presents more accurately a criterion for assuming miracles under very exceptional circumstances from the practical point of view⁷. In the concluding remarks, I will defend that Kant's account of miracles is different from Baumgarten's and non-Humean, yet compatible with Transcendental Idealism.

II - MIRACLES IN KANT'S LECTURES ON METAPHYSICS: THE CASE FOR METAPHYSIK L1 (PÖLITZ)

One can stress at least two points to assess to what extent Kant is concerned with the possibility of miracles in his *Lectures on Metaphysics*⁸. First, Kant lectured and commented on Baumgarten, who held his own independent theory about the possibility of miracles⁹. Thus, whatever theory of miracles Kant may hold, if any, he addressed the issue by commenting on Baumgarten. Second, Kant commented on Baumgarten and lectured about miracles at least in the following Lectures on Metaphysics: *Metaphysik L1* (nach Pölitz) (V-

⁶ The text of *Metaphysik Dohna* appeared in two different editions, not without some minor discrepancy between them: the usual in the *Academie-Ausgabe* by Lehmann (AA 28: 613-704), and the older by Arnold Kowalewski (Kowalewski, A. (ed.) *Die philosophischen Hauptvorlesungen Immanuel Kants* (1924), Hildesheim: Olms, 1965 (H. L. A. zu Dohna Wundlacken, *Die Metaphysik nach den Vorlesungen des Herrn Professor Kant*, 517-631).

⁷ The four parts of the *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason* were all ready before the end of 1792, but they were published only on March 1793 (AA 06: 498ff). In a word: the *RGV* was contemporaneous to the *Dohna* und *K2 Metaphysics Lectures* (1792-1793). It is reasonable to suppose, then, that they may contain an improvement in terms of clarity.

⁸ In this section I have worked, as usual, with the German originals. Yet, I cited Naragon & Ameriks versions of the Lectures every time an English translation of the passage was available. The passages that were not available, like those of V-Met-K2 /Heinze, and others, I translated myself.

⁹ See, for instance, *Metaphysica*, Latin 4th. Ed., § 474, 477, 480, 483, 833f. Whether Baumgarten was inspired or not by Wolff and Leibniz is not clear at first, but his theory is certainly different from theirs. Especially if we bear in mind Frängsmyr on Wolff's conception about miracles. See Frängsmyr, T. "Christian Wolff's Mathematical Method and its Impact on the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36/4 (1975), 663). See also Richards, R. "Christian Wolff's Prolegomena to empirical and rational Psychology: Translation and Commentary", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 124/3 (1980), 235). According to Casula's influential study (Casula, M. *La metafisica di Baumgarten*, Milano: Mursia, 1973, 21ff), the analysis of miracles in Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* is one of the most important innovations in relation to Leibniz's. Recent account on Leibniz, when properly compared with Baumgarten's account, makes evident some striking differences in their account on miracles. See Dowe, P. "Recent Work on Leibniz on Miracles". *Leibniz Society Review*, 6 (1996), 60-163. Cf. Watkins, E. "From Pre-established Harmony to Physical Influx: Leibniz's Reception in Eighteenth Century Germany", in *Perspectives on Science*, 6.1 & 2 (1998), 136-203.

Met-L1/Pölitz, AA 28:216-221), from the late seventies¹⁰; *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (*V-Met/Mron*, AA 29: 869-875), from the early eighties; *Metaphysik Dohna* (*V-Met/Dohna*, AA 28: 667-70) and *Metaphysik K2* (*Auszüge Heinze*), both from the early nineties (*V-Met-K2/Heinze* AA 28: 732-735). Moreover, it is clear from the outset that Kant and Baumgarten follow a similar order in their arguments. Both of them define first the concepts of “natural” and “contrary to nature”, and later those of “supernatural” and “miracles”¹¹. This could raise the question, whether Kant holds a theory proper or just sparse comments on Baumgarten’s account. I will show that Kant holds his own theory, even though it might be inspired by Baumgarten’s account.

The account of miracles in *Metaphysics L1* certainly differs from *Dohna*’s, but it also has points of agreement. In both sets of notes, Kant discusses the concept and status of miracles in his critique of Baumgarten’s cosmology. A miracle, at first, relates to the “supernatural” (*Übernatürliche*), and this is thought of and explained in contrast with the concepts of “natural” (*Natürliche*) and “contrary to nature” (*Widernatürliche*)¹². So the issue appears in Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica*¹³, as well as in Kant’s *Lectures on Metaphysics L1(Pölitz)*, *Mrongovius*, *K2(Heinze)* and *Dohna*. It is also worth noting that only *Metaphysik L1 (nach Pölitz)* and *Metaphysik K2(Auszüge Heinze)* introduce the concept of the

¹⁰ The dating of the *Metaphysik L1* –“nach Pölitz”– is controversial: it would be compared with the *Metaphysik Korff* by Erdmann and dated in 1773/4, but Arnoldt would dispute it and date it “in the period 1778-1779, likewise from 1779/1780 until 1784-1785, maybe 1783-1784”, according to Lehmann report (AA 28:1341-2). Lehmann thinks it cannot be from 1784-1785, nor from 1783-1784, and quotes Menzer, for who it comes from around 1778-1779/1779-1780. Heinze thinks it is from the winter 1791-1792 or 1792-1793 (Heinze M. *Vorlesungen Kants über Metaphysik aus drei Semestern*. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1894, 623; Cf. Lehmann, AA 28:1346note35). Indeed, some passages seem to be entirely critical, i. e. after 1781 (e.g., AA 28:195, 201-202), and even around the 1790s. (e.g., AA 28:205), but others are typically “pre-first-critique” (as, for instance, AA 28: 206-207, wherein Kant criticizes Descartes quite differently from the first Critique, or AA 28: 214-215, wherein Kant criticizes Leibnizian/Baumgartenian and Cartesian accounts of interaction among substances and bases the concept of the unity of the world “on the unity of the primordial being”, thus grounding cosmology on natural theology). To judge the notes for the content they present, I tend to agree more with Menzer than with Lehmann or Arnoldt: *they seem to come from the late -70s*. However, the fact that diverse layers of content can be tracked down within the same copy Lecture is probably due to the juxtaposition by professional copists of different notes relating to different courses and periods in the evolution of Kantian philosophy. See on this, and related issues: Naragon, S. *Kant in the Classroom*, <http://www.manchester.edu/kant/Notes/notesMetaphysics.htm> (Available on July 18th 2013.)

¹¹ See Kant, *Metaphysics K2* (*V-Met-K2/Heinze*, 28.2.1: 732); *Metaphysics L1* (*V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, 28:216-17). Cf. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* (Latin, 4th. Edition, 1757), §§466-500 (§§466, 474, 475: *miracula sunt possibilia*; §§ 834, 860, 913). In *Metaphysics Dohna* Kant expresses himself a little bit different, first discussing what is “against nature”, then the “natural”, the “supernatural”, and eventually “miracles” (*V-Met/Dohna*, AA 28: 667-668).

¹² *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA 28:216. Unless otherwise indicated, I cite the translations of Kant’s *Lectures on Metaphysics* by Ameriks, K. & Naragon, S. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge/UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, and quote the original German texts in the footnotes.

¹³ *Metaphysica*, Latin 4th. Edition, § 466 (“naturale”), § 469 (“praeternaturale”), §§ 474ff. (“supernaturale” and “miraculum”); German edition (second edition, translated by Meier and revised by Eberhard, 1783), §338 (“natürlich”), §§ 340ff. (“übernatürlich”), § 345 (“unnatürlich” —*praeternaturale*— and “Wunder”).

“unnatural” (*Unnatürlich*) as well, yet with different content¹⁴; and also that *Metaphysics Dohna* does not present the concept of the “natural”, but rather defines just “nature”, “contrary to nature” and “supernatural”¹⁵. These conceptual differences might suggest two things: first, that Kant is not only reproducing Baumgarten’s textbook; second, that his own interpretation undergoes changes by criticizing Baumgarten’s. I turn to the definitions in *Metaphysics L1*.

In one of the senses we use the term “nature”, we tend to equate it with “essence”. We say, e. g. that the essence or nature of human beings consists in being rational and finite. Contrary to this regular use of the term, however, Kant defines “nature” in *Metaphysics L1* by contrasting it to “essence”: the “essence is the first principle of the possibility of a thing”¹⁶ according to its very *concept*, but “nature” is rather “the internal first ground of that which belongs to the actuality of a thing”¹⁷. Therefore, *nature* concerns reality and existence, while *essence* “deals with a logical predicate”¹⁸, i.e. it is grounded rather on concepts than on substances or particular natures themselves. Moreover, the text says that “nature” can be conceived of either in general, or in particular beings: “The entirety of nature is the nature of the world (...) *nature in general*. But the sum of the particular natures alone (...) does not yet constitute the entirety of nature; rather to that must also be added the *unification*”¹⁹. Moreover, in the *Metaphysics Mrongovius* “nature” is said to be either *adjectivally*, as the *particular nature of each thing*, or *substantively*, of the world according to general principles and laws²⁰. Thus, we can suppose that the concept of “natural” relates either to particular existent things in the world (“natural things”), or to all of them together (“nature” as such), insofar as they are considered unified or connected by some rule or law.²¹

¹⁴ V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:216; V-Met-K2 /Heinze, AA 28:732. The definition of *unnatural* given in V-Met-K2 /Heinze, (“das, was nicht unter Gesetzen steht, die uns bekannt sind”) is clearly different from V-Met-L1/Pölit, (“*Unnatürlich* ist, was der besondern Natur des Dinges widerspricht”).

¹⁵ See V-Met/Dohna AA 28:667. The definitions of “nature” in *Metaphysics Dohna* and of “nature” and “natural” in V-Met-K2 /Heinze are clearly *critical* definitions. Nothing unexpected: both come from the nineties. See Lehman’s *Anhang* in AA 28: 1346, 1359-1360. See Naragon, S. “The Metaphysics Lectures in the Academy Edition of *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*”, in *Kant-Studien* 91 (2000), Sonderheft, 189-215.

¹⁶ “[Das] Wesen ist aber das erste Princip der Möglichkeit des Dinges” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 216).

¹⁷ “Natur ist der innerliche erste Grund dessen, was zur Wirklichkeit des Dinges gehört” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 215).

¹⁸ “Das Wesen aber handelt vom logischen Prädicat, was zum Begriff des Dinges gehört” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 216). Cf. KrV A598/B626; BDG AA 2: 72f.

¹⁹ “Die gesammte Natur ist die Natur der Welt, die man auch *überhaupt Natur* nennt. Allein die Summe der besonderen Naturen allein (...) macht noch nicht die gesammte Natur aus; sondern dazu muss auch die *Vereinigung* kommen” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 216).

²⁰ “Natur kann im doppelten Verstande genommen werden: 1 adjective als die besondere Natur jedes Dinges, 2 Substantive der Welt nach allgemeinen Principien und Gesetzen” (V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 868).

²¹ In *Metaphysics L1* (nach Pölit) Kant does not mention natural laws as a priori rules yet, as one would expect in a cosmological context. Yet, it appears to be insinuated in the text “Vom Natuerlichen” of Mrongovius *Cosmology* (V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 868f), which resembles a little the concept of *nature* in the first Critique (as, for instance, in KrV A126f,

To the notion of “natural” are opposed those of “unnatural” (*Unnatürliche*), “contrary to nature” (*Widernatürliche*), and eventually the “supernatural” (*Übernatürliche*)²². The definition of a *miracle* follows in accordance with Baumgarten’s conception, insofar as it involves the “supernatural”²³. Thus, Kant defines “miracle” in *Metaphysics L1* as an “event in the world that does not happen according to the order of nature”²⁴. The event happens in the world, but distinguishes itself from all the other events for being in disagreement with the regular order of nature; because its *cause* is said to be “supernatural”²⁵.

Moreover, whereas “natural” can be explained either out of the existence of nature in general, or of a particular thing in nature, “contrary to nature” is defined as that “which does not flow from the determinate nature of a thing”²⁶. However, the term “unnatural” is defined as being more than merely *contrary to nature*: it is rather said to be “what contradicts the particular nature of a thing”²⁷. In addition, the “supernatural” is said to be that which “cannot be explained from the entirety of nature, but rather where the ground must be sought in the *ente extramundano*”²⁸.

Meanwhile, how should we understand the relationship among these concepts? Are miracles “unnatural”, or “contrary to nature”? Are miracles partially “natural” or just “supernatural” events? The “supernatural” acts “unnaturally” or “contrary to nature”?

KrV B165), and especially in the Prol. Cf. Prol. §§14, 16: "Natur ist das Dasein der Dinge, so fern es nach allgemeinen Gesetzen bestimmt ist (...) Noch nimmt das Wort Natur eine andre Bedeutung an, die nämlich das Object bestimmt, indessen daß in der obigen Bedeutung sie nur die Gesetzmäßigkeit der Bestimmungen des Daseins der Dinge überhaupt andeutete. Natur also, *materialiter* betrachtet, ist der Inbegriff aller Gegenstände der Erfahrung" (AA 4: 294f.); Prol. §36, AA 4: 318: "(...)Natur in formeller Bedeutung, als der Inbegriff der Regeln, unter denen alle Erscheinungen stehen müssen (...)".

²² V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 216.

²³ *Metaphysica*, Latin, §474; German, §345. But this conception was not privilege of Baumgarten’s account; it was rather a common currency in XVII and XVIII centuries.

²⁴ “Eine Begebenheit in der Welt, die nicht nach der Ordnung der Natur geschieht, ist ein Wunder” (V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 217).

²⁵ As Kant points out in the contemporary *Reflexion*: “Wunder ist eine Begebenheit, deren Grund nicht in der Natur zu finden ist” (R. 5662, AA 18: 321).

²⁶ “(...) was nicht aus der bestimmten Natur eines Dinges fließt” (V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 216). In *Metaphysics Dohna* the example given is “illness”, as contrary to health, i.e. the normal arrangement of bodily phenomena (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667). The conception of illness as something interrupting or against the regular course of nature seems to come from Leibniz. In a famous letter of April 2 1715 to Wolff, Leibniz would say that: “One shouldn’t doubt that there are more things worthy of observation in a healthy body than in a sick one. If everyone were sick, many remarkable observations would cease, namely those constituting the ordinary course of nature, which is disturbed in disease (...)” (quoted by Brown, G. “Miracles in the Best of All Possible Worlds: Leibniz’s Dilemma and Leibniz’s Razor”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995), 19ff.)

²⁷ “(...) was der besondern Natur des Dinges widerspricht” (V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 216). Note that the terminus appears in Kant and Baumgarten as both substantival and adjective.

²⁸ “(...) was aus der gesammten Natur nicht kann erklärt werden, sondern wo der Grund in dem ente extramundano gesucht werden muss” (V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 216).

To begin with: for Baumgarten, at least, a contingent event the cause of which is neither nature nor anything natural is “contrary to nature” (*praeternaturalis*)²⁹. From this point of view, a “supernatural” cause or event would be “contrary to nature”, to the extent that “supernatural” is by definition not “natural” and opposed to it (*contradistinctus*). This sounds *Humean*-like; but it is still not clear whether this is the case. Briefly, is Baumgarten’s definition in agreement with Hume’s popular conception of miracles, a “miracle” being defined “as a violation of the laws of nature”, which cannot be found or happen “in the common course of nature”³⁰? If we reflect on Kant’s commentary in *Metaphysics L1*, we will realize that the term *praeternaturalis* (i.e. “contrary to nature”) can be defined in two different ways, one that is *Humean* and another that is not.

On the one hand, to define supernatural as “contrary to nature”, and so as something *which does not flow from the determinate nature of a thing* would permit of a conception such as Nuyen’s, according to which “a miracle by definition does not have to involve a

²⁹ See *Metaphysica*, Latin §§469 and 474; German, §345. It is worth to remember that all these concepts go back to the scholastic tradition. For instance, Aquinas distinguished miracles *above nature*, *beside nature*, and *against nature* (*miracula supra naturam*, *praeter naturam*, *contra naturam*: *Sent.* ii. dist. 18. q. 1. art. 3. solutio; *De Potentia*, q. 6. art. 2. ad 3m. Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 114, art. 4c; *Summa contra gentiles* III, 98-110). Thus, in *Summa contra gentiles* III, 101 he says: "Of these miracles there are various degrees and orders. The highest degree in miracles comprises those works wherein something is done by God, that nature can never do: for instance, that two bodies occupy the same place, that the sun recede or stand still, that the sea be divided and make way to passers by. Among these there is a certain order: for the greater the work done by God, and the further it is removed from the capability of nature, the greater the miracle: thus it is a greater miracle that the sun recede, than that the waters be divided.

The second degree in miracles belongs to those whereby God does something that nature can do, but not in the same order: thus it is a work of nature that an animal live, see and walk: but that an animal live after being dead, see after being blind, walk after being lame, this nature cannot do, but God does these things sometimes by a miracle. Among these miracles also, there are degrees, according as the thing done is further removed from the faculty of nature. The third degree of miracles is when God does what is wont to be done by the operation of nature, but without the operation of the natural principles: for instance when by the power of God a man is cured of a fever that nature is able to cure; or when it rains without the operation of the principles of nature" (Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, translated by Vernon J. Bourke et al. in 4 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1955-57/reprinted in Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) Besides, Augustine had differentiated between the course of nature known by us and the divine order. God’s can be contrary to the course of nature, but never contrary to the order of nature: "We admit that what is contrary to the ordinary course of human experience is commonly spoken of as contrary to nature. (...) Contrary to nature is here used in the sense of contrary to human experience of the course of nature (...) But God, the Author and Creator of all natures, does nothing contrary to nature; for whatever is done by Him who appoints all natural order and measure and proportion must be natural in every case. And man himself acts contrary to nature only when he sins; and then by punishment he is brought back to nature again. The natural order of justice requires either that sin should not be committed or that it should not go unpunished. In either case, the natural order is preserved, if not by the soul, at least by God. (...) There is, however, no impropriety in saying that God does a thing contrary to nature, when it is contrary to what we know of nature. For we give the name nature to the usual common course of nature; and whatever God does contrary to this, we call a prodigy, or a miracle. But against the supreme law of nature, which is beyond the knowledge both of the ungodly and of weak believers, God never acts, any more than He acts against Himself" (Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XXVI 3, Translated by Richard Stothert. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Suárez distinguishes at least *miracula contra naturam* and *miracula praeter naturam*, and maintains that God never acts *contra naturam*, but at most only *praeter naturam*. Cf. Brieskorn, N. "Suárez and the Question of Miracles", *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 65 (Supl.) (2009), 1315-1318. Augustine and Suárez seem to agree with the idea that miracles cannot occur or run against the order of nature. Aquinas, however, can be interpreted as allowing for miracles against the order of nature. Thus, it is highly probably that most XVII and XVIII century conceptions of miracles (as violating the order/laws of nature) depart from Aquinas.

³⁰ Hume says that “nothing is esteemed a miracle, if ever happen in the common course of nature” and that regular, “uniform experience amounts to a proof (...) a full *proof* against the *existence* of any miracle” (EHU X 1, §12; the second emphasis in “existence” is mine).

transgression of any law of nature”³¹. Thus, God’s intervention from outside the world of nature would possibly be considered as “contrary to nature” for being something which “does not flow from the determinate nature of a thing”, but not for bringing about any “unnatural”, entirely unlawful effect. On the other hand, according to the second way of conceiving *praeternaturalis*, to define God’s intervention from outside the world as “unnatural” would *contradict* “the particular nature of a thing”: the supernatural action, as well as the perpetrated “miracle”, have to be both thought of as necessarily violating the laws of nature (what I call the *Humean* view).

Note that two different points are here at issue: first, to know whether Baumgarten’s definition of *supernatural* can in principle be interpreted as implying a violation of the lawful order of nature, or not; second, whether Kant follows Baumgarten or not.

Meanwhile, if it is true that for Baumgarten "*supernaturalia sunt praeternaturalia (...) et praeternaturalia (...) sunt supernaturalia*"³², the problem seems to be how to translate the terminus *praeternaturalis*, whether as “unnatural” (*unnatürlich*), which contradicts or violates nature, or as simply “contrary to nature” (*widernatürlich*). The translation of Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics* into German by Meier differentiates only between *Übernatürliche* (*supernaturale*) and *Unnatürliche* (*praeternaturale*)³³. Thus, by rendering the phrase as “supernatural [causes, or events] are unnatural (...) and unnatural [events, or causes] (...) are supernatural”, miracles would violate the laws of nature. Yet, Baumgarten does not seem to have used the distinction between “unnatural” and “contrary to nature” in the Latin version. Unless Kant had called here “unnatural” what Baumgarten called *physice impossibile* (*natürlicheweise unmöglich*)³⁴, Meier having reserved “unnatural” for *praeternaturale*. Again, Baumgarten’s Latin *Metaphysica* does not use another term at all; unless we think of *extraordinario*, which sometimes can be applied to the supernatural. Still, the problem is then that “extraordinary” can at first be considered either as “unnatural”, or as “contrary to nature”: for that which is “ordinary” is precisely the “natural”, and the “extraordinary” can be that which is not “natural”, or that which is “contrary” to it. Therefore, that Meier mistakenly translated *praeternaturale* as *unnatural* instead of *contrary to nature* is a fair possibility.

³¹Nuyen, "Kant on Miracles", 318. This seems to be compatible with Augustine and Suárez conception, insofar as divine miracles cannot go against the divine order of nature.

³² Latin edition, § 474 (we can translate it as “supernatural events are contrary to nature (...) events contrary to nature (...) are supernatural events”).

³³ German edition, §345.

³⁴ I.e. “Naturally impossible” (German, §341; Latin, §469).

This becomes more likely if we pay attention to the "Leibnizian" thesis Baumgarten defends in the end of the chapter, namely, the hypothetic possibility of miracles in the best possible world *to complete or correct nature*³⁵. Because in the "best possible world" nothing happens without pre-established harmony or contradicts the higher order of nature³⁶. Thus, the text suggests that Baumgarten's definition of *supernatural* is far from being Humean and cannot be interpreted as a violation of the laws of nature.

This question is important not only because it allows for deciding whether Baumgarten's conception of miracles is to be understood as involving a Humean violation against the laws of nature or not, but because it also helps to understand Kant's position.

In *Metaphysics Dohna*, from the nineties, Kant translates himself the Latin *praeternaturale* into the German *Widernatürlich* ("contrary to nature")³⁷; and all the same in the *Metaphysics Mrongovius*³⁸, which comes from the eighties. In both *Metaphysics Dohna* and *Mrongovius*, however, Kant simply abandons the concept of the "unnatural". It is true that the concept reappears in *Metaphysics K2* (which is also from the nineties), but the definition changes: here Kant defines the term "unnatural" as that which is *not subordinated to the laws we are acquainted with*³⁹. Moreover, this notion is compatible with the definition of miracle given in the *Religion* (which seems to imply the logical possibility of miracles)⁴⁰, and with what has been called "contrary to nature" in *Metaphysics L1*.

³⁵ I said "Leibnizian" because of the use of the Leibnizian term "best possible world". But the idea of completing or correcting nature is certainly Baumgarten's (cf. *Metaphysica*, Latin, §497), whereas Leibniz criticized Newton by imputing him a similar idea, viz. an *extraordinary concurrence* by which God would be obliged to mend the world through miracles, as a clockmaker mends his work (*Die Philosophischen Schriften von Leibniz*, 7 vols, ed. by C. I. Gerhardt, Berlin: Weidmann, 1875-90, vol. VII 352-353). See on this Brown, D. "Miracles in the Best of All Possible Worlds: Leibniz's Dilemma and Leibniz's Razor", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995), 25f. For Kant's criticism to this amendment, or *complementum ad sufficientiam*: V-Th/Baumbach, AA28:1308.34-36. Cf. BDG AA 2:108ff. However, Kant does not criticize *concursum* by itself; he rather denies the claim at its knowledge in natural philosophy, on the one hand, and on the other in moral philosophy, as it would undermine responsibility. According to a note in A. Wood's and G. Clark's edition (*Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978, 147n31), Kant targets here Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, §958. Sometimes, however, Kant appears to accept *concursum*. See Vallicella, W. "Kant on Divine Concurrence and Miracles as *Complementa ad Sufficientiam*" (2009).

³⁶ I think here above all in the *Discours de métaphysique*, §§ 6-7 (*Die philosophischen Schriften*, vol. IV, 431-2).

³⁷ V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667.

³⁸ V-Met/Mron, AA 29:870.

³⁹ "...was nicht unter Gesetzen steht, die uns bekannt sind" (V-Met-K2 /Heinze, AA 28:732).

⁴⁰ The definition was that miracles "can then be defined (since what really matters to us is only to know what they are *for us*, i.e. for our practical employment of reason) as events in the world the *operating laws* of whose causes are, and must remain, absolutely unknown to us" (RGV AA 6:86: "... so kann man (da uns eigentlich nur daran gelegen ist, zu wissen, was sie für uns, d. i. zu unserm praktischen Vernunftgebrauch, seien) sie dadurch erklären, daß sie Begebenheiten in der Welt sind, von deren Ursache uns die Wirkungsgesetze schlechterdings unbekannt sind und bleiben müssen"). Cf. RGV AA 6:85: "Es mag also *sein*, daß die Person des Lehrers der alleinigen für alle Welten gültigen Religion ein Geheimniß, daß seine Erscheinung auf Erden, so wie seine Entrückung von derselben, daß sein thatenvolles Leben und Leiden lauter Wunder, ja gar, daß die Geschichte, welche die Erzählung aller jener Wunder beglaubigen soll, selbst auch ein Wunder (übernatürliche Offenbarung) sei (...)" (my emphasis).

Indeed, Kant might well be saying that a miracle, while involving a supernatural cause, must be considered “contrary to nature”; just because *it cannot flow just from the nature of bodies themselves*. But the opposite, viz. that miracles be considered as “unnatural”, and so they contradict or violate nature, is something which is not clear in *Metaphysics L1* and it is certainly not stated in *Metaphysics Dohna*. On the contrary, that miracle is something that involves the supernatural as *contrary* to the order of nature is asserted clearly in the *Mrongovius Metaphysics*⁴¹: Should the clause “contrary to the order of nature” be interpreted in a “Humean” sense?

I think that we can interpret the clause according to a very interesting distinction Kant probably borrowed from Baumgarten and introduced in *Metaphysics L1* between the *course* and the *order* of nature⁴². The clause can very well be just an inaccurate way of expressing which is contrary or against the *course* of nature, but not contrary or against its *order*. Accordingly, Kant says:

The course of nature is the series of the alterations of events. The order of nature is just this same series of alterations, but only to the extent that they stand under a general rule. *The course of nature is to be distinguished from the order of nature. The course of nature can be cognized empirically; but the order through the understanding (...)*⁴³

⁴¹ It is said to happen “wieder die Ordnung der Natur in der Welt” (V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 870).

⁴² Baumgarten uses both notions of a *course* and *order* in nature, but the distinction does not seem to be always clear. In the fourth edition Kant most used (Halle: C. Hemmerde, 1757, in: Refl. AA 15 and 17), at the time of introducing his concept of “supernatural” and “miracles” as being *contra cursum naturae* and *contra ordinem naturae* (See *Metaphysica*, §§480-481, in: Refl. AA 17: 126), Baumgarten seemed to talk about both indistinctively. The second edition of the German translation by Meier and annotated by Eberhard (*Metaphysik*, Neue vermehrte Auflage, Halle: Hemmerde, 1783) represents the distinction between *Lauf der Natur* and *Ordnung der Natur* as between *Folge* and *Ordnung* (§§ 342-343), which apparently fits with Kant’s use of it. Nevertheless, the ensuing paragraph of the same edition (§344) presents the term *Folge* changed by the flexion of the verb *folgen* and applied to *both* terms, i.e. *Lauf der Natur* and *Ordnung der Natur*, the last being mysteriously referred to the rules of “natural law in a large sense”. One is tempted to suspect of Eberhard’s own “correction” to try once more to diminish Kant’s originality. Nonetheless, Baumgarten had already distinguished both in his Latin *Metaphysica* in terms of temporal succession and natural laws: “Successio naturalium in mundo est *cursum naturae*”, “Ordo naturalium in mundo est *ordo naturae* (...) Ergo sunt in hoc mundo normae naturalis ordinis leges regulaeque communes, diversae, at similes. Complexum legum similium *Ius est (...)*” (*Metaphysica*, §§471-2). At any rate, Baumgarten used both terms before Kant. Even if it is not entirely clear to what extent Baumgarten was aware of Hume’s account, he was certainly acquainted with the scholastic tradition, to which the distinction can be traced back. See, for instance, Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, 1a, Quaest. 105, Art. 6-8. See also Brieskorn, N. “Suárez and the Question of Miracles”, 1315. It is worth noting, however, that the first German translation of the Enquiry is from 1755 by Johann Georg Sulzer (»*Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Erkenntnis*« in: David Hume, *Vermischte Schriften über die Handlung, die Manufacturen und die andern Quellen des Reichthums und der Macht eines Staats*, 2. Band, Hamburg und Leipzig (Grund & Holle) 1755). Thus, as Hume’s *Enquiry* was translated two years before the fourth edition of the *Metaphysica*, it is at least possible that Baumgarten had read it.

⁴³ The original says: “Der Lauf der Natur ist die Reihe der Veränderungen der Begebenheiten. Ordnung der Natur ist eben dieselbe Reihe der Veränderungen, so fern sie aber unter einer allgemeinen Regel stehen. Der Lauf der Natur ist von der Ordnung der Natur unterschieden. *Der Lauf der Natur kann empirisch erkannt werden; die Ordnung aber durch den Verstand...*” (V-Met-L1/Pölitz, AA 28:216). The same distinction is also introduced in both *Metaphysics Mrongovius* (V-Met/Mron, 29:869) and *Metaphysics Dohna* (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:669).

If the course of nature is made up by the empirical series of alterations we can observe (which seem to face us with the regularity of nature), then it could well be the case that something happen contrary to this *empirically observed* and *expected* “regularity of nature”, but not contrary to its “order”. “If supernatural events were usual, then no one would be amazed by them”⁴⁴, says Kant; no one would call them “miracles”, were they expected and regular. Thus, it is possible for something to *appear* to be contrary to the *order* of nature, even though it is not. It could be the case that we are just not able to place it under a general rule already known, since its cause, or its lawful order appears to be either unexplainable or unknown to us⁴⁵.

Thus, if a miracle is defined as “a violation of the laws of nature”, a “transgression” of the causal laws of nature that cannot be proven to be the very case, as Hume does⁴⁶, then one could still object that a miracle, as a *partially* supernatural event, would just *interrupt* the regular course of nature by introducing something different in the world as an *exception* to the *expected* rule⁴⁷. A miracle would definitely introduce something that does not follow necessarily from the previous observed succession of contingent events (in the sense that, had it not occurred, then the consequent succession of effects in nature would be different from the one that be the case, were the miracle to occur)⁴⁸. But it would also be something that in principle does *not* violate or contradict the *order of nature* at all, because the event, even though unexpected, would take place in space and time and be followed by a series of alterations causally intertwined. So Kant says in *Metaphysics L1* that a miracle “does not happen in conformity with cognized nature”, but “it could be in conformity with a higher order”⁴⁹.

Moreover, it is possible to think of a causal explanation (e.g., in *analogy* with the case of Kant's conception of freedom, as suggested in Refl. 5662⁵⁰); even though not a *completely natural* one, insofar as the main cause is said to be here “supernatural”. A miracle, as an event caused by a supernatural agent, can be taken as unaccountable in terms of previous occurrences in time, just because it should not be by definition the effect of a *unique*

⁴⁴ “Wenn übernatürliche Begebenheiten gewöhnlich wären, so würde sich keiner darüber wundern” (*V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA 28:217).

⁴⁵ Kant sometimes hesitates between “causes” and “operating laws” of causality in his formulations.

⁴⁶ *Enquiry* X 1, §12 and §12 footnote; X § 36: “(...) a miracle can never be proved (...)” (Beauchamp, p. 184).

⁴⁷ Kant uses both terms in L1: that miracles *interrupt* nature and are *exceptions* to it (*V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA 28:219-220).

⁴⁸ I take this formulation from Baumgarten (*Metaphysik*, German ed., § 358).

⁴⁹ “Das Wort *Wunder* soll bedeuten eine Begebenheit, die der erkannten Natur nicht gemäss geschieht, obgleich es einer höhern Ordnung gemäss sein konnte” (*V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA 28:217).

⁵⁰ AA 18:320.

contingent cause. However, it is to *happen* in space and time. Even though supernatural, it has to presuppose *previous* series of events or causes: it would not be properly contrary to the *order* of nature, but only contrary to the *empirical* “course of nature”. Furthermore, if the “order of nature” can be defined in general as a set of causal rules unifying events or phenomena, then a miracle need not preclude entirely “causal explanation”. Even though the cause must be a supernatural being, the event, the *Begebenheit* must still have a cause, and must also give rise to a series of occurrences as events in space and time. Even if I do not know the entire law of its causality, say, the supernatural intervention, I can possibly think of it (either as a *sui generis* concursus, or as consequence of certain pre-established order). Thus, as Baumgarten pointed out against what he called “the naturalist in a broader sense” (Hume?), it can always be held that *miracles are internally possible*⁵¹. Kant repeats it explicitly in the *Metaphysics Dohna*: “A miracle is thus possible in itself internally (*interne*)”⁵². Curiously, the same statement takes place (or is implied) in the correspondent passages of *Metaphysics L1*, *Mrongovius e K2*⁵³.

Again, can we understand Kant as asserting the mere possibility of a miracle as an event the causes of which we cannot explain *exhaustively* by natural means, according to the *course of nature*, because they “do not flow from the nature of the thing”? As it is the case with moral actions, the possible effects of a supposedly supernatural intervention do not need to be necessarily thought of as not happening in space and time⁵⁴. If, to give an example, Jesus’ resurrection were to have happened, then the movements of his body and his ascension to heaven had to be observed in space and time. The only thing that would not be naturally expected and empirically explainable is the very resurrection, pointing towards an unknown cause or law of causality different from the natural⁵⁵. However, it would always be according to a possible *higher order*.

A problem with this interpretation is that in *Metaphysics L1* and other set of notes Kant sometimes seems to be oscillating between a conception like this and a Humean conception, viz. when he defines *miracle* as *an event in the world which does not happen according to the order of nature: which is contrary* “to the cognized *order* of nature”⁵⁶.

⁵¹ German edition, § 365; Latin edition, §493. That is, that they are logically possible.

⁵² “An sich interne ist also ein Wunder möglich...” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667).

⁵³ Cf. V-Met-L1/Pölitz, AA 28: 218; V-Met/Mron, AA 29: 871; V-Met-K2 /Heinze, AA 28:734.

⁵⁴ Cf. RGV AA 6:191.

⁵⁵ This is an example of mine. Kant’s conception of Jesus Resurrection is rather an allegorical interpretation. See the RGV, AA 6:129n.

⁵⁶ My emphasis: “...der erkannten Natur nicht gemäss...” (V-Met-L1/Pölitz, AA 28:217).

Besides, Kant's formulations not always respect the distinction *course/order* of nature. Several times Kant uses *order* instead of *course* of nature, and vice-versa. Yet, first, I think Kant might be thinking here in accordance with Augustine, viz. that a miracle happens against or contrary to the *cognized* order, not properly *against the order*. Secondly, Kant is well known for being sometimes inconsistent in the use of his own terminology. Thirdly, even in the cases in which the text does not seem to be consistent with the distinction between *course of nature* as empirical and *order of nature* as not merely empirical, we can always presume a misinterpretation on the part of the student or copyist who transcribed the lecture⁵⁷. For a miracle can be against the *regular course* of nature, but always according to the higher cosmological *order*; or at least to some kind of causal order of events: "it could be in conformity with a higher order", as the Lecture says⁵⁸. At last, I think this is *what Kant should have said* in order to be consistent with his *explicit defense* of the internal possibility of miracles against a Humean position.

Even though Hume never asserted explicitly that miracles are contradictory, he seems clearly to imply the thesis that the concept of miracles *is incompatible* with our concept of the well-established *laws of nature*:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the *proof* against a miracle, from the very nature of the *fact*, is as *entire* as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood..., unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature [?] (...) ⁵⁹.

Thus, if miracles are possible, they cannot violate or contradict the *order* of nature. Otherwise, we would have to consider the "well-established" laws of nature as a "*proof* against" the possibility of miracles, "as *entire* as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined", and even as an argument that is "more than probable". Even if we accept a probabilistic account of Hume's point, as it seems to be the case, the balance between

⁵⁷ A hint of this might be found in other texts: *Metaphysics Mronovius* says clearly that the "course of nature is succession of the series of events (...). I experience what happens according to the course of nature. The order of nature is the ground of this connecting of appearances.- Course of nature points to the regularity of experience, order of nature its necessity..." (*V-Met/Mron*, AA 29:869).

⁵⁸ "Das Wort *Wunder* soll bedeuten eine Begebenheit, die der erkannten Natur nicht gemäss geschiehet, obgleich es einer höhern Ordnung gemäss sein konnte" (*V-Met-LI/Pölitz*, AA 28:217).

⁵⁹ EHU X 1, §12 (my emphasis). Actually, Hume uses here (EHU X 1, §12, footnote) the expression "contrary to the laws of nature", and not contradictory, but this does not change the implications of what he affirms. He says in the same chapter that "no human testimony can have such a force as to prove a miracle...otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature..." (EHU X 2, §§ 35-36).

incompatible assertions implies that only one can be accepted as probably true, and this is for sure the most observed and regular⁶⁰.

If this is minimally sound, then the way Kant is going to explain the concept of a miracle permits him to posit a different conception from that of Hume. “*Contrary to the cognized order*” means here “contrary” in the weaker sense, rather than contradictory to or incompatible with nature in the sense of a plain transgression of natural law. Thus, miracles are possible, *because* they do not contradict or violate the laws of nature. They are just incompatible with a regularity empirically observed, which is entirely contingent. However, if they do not contradict nor violate the order of nature, then they should not be said to be highly *improbable*. Moreover, from a *Kantian* point of view, in order for his argument to work, Hume would have to be a transcendental realist, viz. a realist in philosophy of science (to account for his conception of well-established *natural laws*) and an essentialist in metaphysics (to account for his concept of *uniform nature*, which *cannot be proven without circle*⁶¹). However, it would certainly be possible to defend Hume’s position as compatible with his probabilistic account of natural laws, but not very easy⁶².

Meanwhile, another important distinction we must take into account is between *form* and *matter* of miracles, which is not introduced in the *Religion* but reappears later in the *Metaphysics Dohna*⁶³. In a miracle considered “in and for itself” as “opposed to natural events”⁶⁴, we can distinguish its *matter* and its *form*. That a miracle might happen *from the powers of nature* is said to be its “matter”, but that it flows *contrary to the regular order of*

⁶⁰ Cf. EHU X 1, §§ 4ff.

⁶¹ EHU IV 2, § 30.

⁶² Lorne Falkenstein (University of Western Ontario) and José Oscar de Almeida Marques (Campinas State University) objected that they think the point I am making for Kant is actually Hume’s. Meanwhile, Hume himself assumed that it is not impossible that nature changes his own course, and so miracles could be possible at first. Indeed, Hume never said that miracles are contradictory, because his concept concerns matters of fact, *not relations of ideas* (as Tamra Frei, José Oscar and Falkenstein have already pointed out to me). Hume is saying that miracles are at first not impossible, but at most *improbable* to occur. Yet, I still think that Hume’s point is that a miracle is highly improbable because it is *almost impossible* to interrupt the lawful course of nature: it will be easier (more probable) to admit that a miracle does not occur, rather than supposing that nature might be changed and his laws be violated. I also think what a Humean could state in this case is that miracles are *naturally or empirically impossible*, because to interrupt the uniformity of nature is *less probable* than the opposite. Nonetheless, insofar as Hume admits of the possibility of nature changing his own course, a good Kantian is able to reply that *then* they are not only possible but also *probable*. In the end, a probabilistic account of natural laws seems to give no permission to assert that, e.g., “this Law L” could not be violated by a miracle “M”. So far as I see, this point has been recently highlighted by John Earman (*Hume’s Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*, 22ff.) and contended by Robert Fogelin’s recent book *A Defense of Hume on Miracles* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, 32ff). I cannot get into more detail here on this point, but I tend to agree with Earman’s analysis. For another recent critique of Hume’s account of miracles see: Johnson, D. *Hume, Holism, and Miracles*, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1999, 5ff.

⁶³ V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 668-669. See also the same distinction in V-Met/Mron AA 29: 870-871.

⁶⁴ “Hier nehmen wir (...) eine Begebenheit, die an and für sich selbst ein Wunder ist. — Die Wunder werden den natürlichen Begebenheiten entgegengesetzt” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:217).

things is said to be its “form”⁶⁵. “The *cause* of the miracle”, says Kant, “lies then *not merely* in the matter, but rather also in the *form*. Miracles are, then, twofold: *material* or *formal*”⁶⁶. This definition, however, can be misleading. Indeed, it seems to imply that material miracles have their cause in nature and formal miracles in the supernatural, but this is not the case. Because Kant, in addition, defines *material* miracles as those “in which the cause of the event is not natural (...), is outside of nature”⁶⁷, and *formal* miracles, as those “in which the determination of the cause does not happen according to the order of nature (...), where the cause is indeed in nature, but the determination of its action does not happen according to the order of nature”⁶⁸. Thus, the definition of matter and form of miracles requires interpretation.

As read it, I think that it applies to what I call Kant's conception of a “miracle as possible in itself”. On the one hand, if miracles are considered as not violating nature, then they have to happen in nature, viz. from the powers of nature (e.g. the wind that separated the waters and permitted Moses and his people to escape from the Egyptians). On the other hand, they must be contrary to the regular expected series of events in nature, because a miracle is something unusual and not expected to happen that way: “for the *determination* (...) it is not in nature (...) Here the cause lies indeed in nature, but it does not take place according to the order of nature (...)”⁶⁹.

The confusion disappears when we realize that Kant is actually applying here the form/matter distinction to the concept of a miracle as such, “in and for itself”. This point is important and allows Kant to think of the possibility of a miracle that does not properly violate the order of nature, insofar as it occurs *from the powers of nature*: it is only contrary to the *expected* order according to the *regular course* of nature. Kant then says:

The essence of a miracle thus rests on the form, on the determination of the order of nature. Through this much theological delusion is destroyed, if one takes the trouble to explain the miracles half-naturally, and to seek out the powers in nature. But the miracle does not become smaller thereby, for it is supposed to be a miracle (...), then one is not to be at loss with respect to the intermediate causes and put into

⁶⁵ “(...) dass sie geschehen können *aus den Kräften der Natur* (...) das ist die *Materie* des Wunders...dass aber *nicht nach der Ordnung der Dinge* fliesse, das ist die *Form* des Wunders” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:217).

⁶⁶ “Die Ursache des Wunders liegt also nicht blos in der materie, sondern auch in der Form. Die Wunder sind demnach zweifach (...) *materialia* und *formalia* (...)” (Ibidem; my emphasis).

⁶⁷ “*Materialia, in quibus causa eventus non est naturalis* (...) ausser der Natur ist” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:217).

⁶⁸ “*Formalia, in quibus determinatio causae non fit secundum ordine naturae* (...) wo zwar die Ursache in der Natur ist, aber die Bestimmung ihrer Wirkung nicht nach der Ordnung der Natur geschieht” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:217).

⁶⁹ “(...) denn die *Bestimmung* (...) is doch nicht in der Natur (...) Hier liegt zwar die Ursache in der Natur; allein das geschieht doch nicht nach der Ordnung der Natur (...)” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:218). Note that here Kant should have said “course” and not “order”, to be consistent.

God's hands natural means; for the *determination* of this natural means is still not in nature, and then it is just as much a miracle (...) ⁷⁰

In fact, what we have now is the concept of something that has a supernatural origin and nonetheless can happen *from the powers of nature* in space and time. So that it can follow the laws of nature, says Kant; yet it must have a *direction* that cannot formally be conceived of in the regular course of causes. The cause lies indeed in nature, but it does not occur according to the regular course of nature: "thus, a special direction is required here" ⁷¹.

However, if *the essence of a miracle thus rests on the form*, what "delusion" Kant condemns in such a "Humean" tone? I think that Kant is opposing to both theological and naturalistic conceptions of miracles. Because from the distinction between form and matter he draws immediately another between *formal* and *material* miracles: a new tool for classifying and criticizing alternative conceptions of miracles.

On one hand, Hume is not mentioned. However, by taking a miracle as "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of a Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent" ⁷², his definition would certainly be a good example of a *material* conception of miracles. Indeed, it *overemphasizes* the role of supernatural causes, conceived of as external to nature and conflicting with the lawful order of natural events. On the other, the "formal miracles" (i.e. formal conceptions of miracles) "are classified further into pre-established and occasional" ⁷³. Both are explicitly referred to the Leibnizian and Cartesian conceptions ⁷⁴. Then Kant turns to criticize the Leibnizian thesis by saying that it is worse than the conception of material miracles ⁷⁵:

When already from the beginning on the arrangement of nature is made so that in particular cases the cause does not produce an effect according to universal laws (...) the use of reason is interrupted [by pre-established] even more than by material miracles. The use of reason demands that we must think there is a nature (...) according to universal rules (...). Order is thus the simple condition of the use of

⁷⁰ "Das Wesentlich des Wunders beruht also auf der Form, auf der bestimmung der Ordnung der Natur. Hierdurch wird viel theologischer Wahn zerstört, wenn man sich bemühet, die Wunder halb natürlich zu erklären, und die Kräfte in der Natur aufzusuchen. Allein dadurch wird das Wunder nicht kleiner; denn wenn es ein Wunder sein soll, so darf man nicht in Ansehung der Mittelursachen verlegen seyn und Gott ein Naturmittel an die Hand geben; denn die *Bestimmung* dieses Naturmittels is doch nicht in der Natur, und dann ist es eben ein solches Wunder" (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28:217-218).

⁷¹ "(...) es gehöret also hierzu eine besondere Direction" (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 218).

⁷² Enquiry X 1, § 12, footnote (ed. Beauchamp, p. 173).

⁷³ "Die miracula formalia theilet man noch ein in praestabilita und occasionalia" (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 218).

⁷⁴ It might sound astonishing for many to see Descartes as an occasionalist, but here Kant follows Baumgarten (*Metaphysica*, Latin, §452.)

⁷⁵ The Leibnizian thesis seems sometimes to be assumed by Baumgarten, at least partially: e.g. in *Metaphysica*, Latin, § 497; German, § 364.

reason (...). Every interruption of nature is thus a disturbance of the understanding.-
*But miracles are not impossible in themselves (...)*⁷⁶

This could be read as a criticism to both Leibniz and Baumgarten, and a relative concession to Hume. However, Baumgarten does not affirm explicitly *miracula praestabilita* (even if he accepts the pre-established harmony among substances)⁷⁷; and the sense of interruption and exception can always be read in the weak sense we have argued for so far. Kant seems to retain the Leibnizian idea according to which miracles might respond to a higher order, but as a rational condition for the use of the understanding. The assertion that miracles are *not* impossible reinforces it. In any case, to state the explicit possibility of miracles is in agreement with Baumgarten, but not with Hume. *Miracles are not impossible in themselves*, then.

Yet, to say the least: is it not a problem? Apparently, it is. Because in the previous quoted passage Kant defines miracles as being essentially *formal* and conceives of them as something the cause of which does not happen against the order but rather *against* its *regular course* of nature, whereas in the last quotation he seems to endorse the conception of miracles as coming from a supernatural cause: is Kant being inconsistent? I do not think so. Neither do I think that Kant would be merely criticizing an occasionalist or Leibnizo-wolffian conception. I think that here Kant is just reasserting his own conception, which allows for thinking the logical possibility of miracles.

He might very well be explaining *in what sense* they *can* be possible without contradicting the very order of nature required by reason: Even if an event has a supernatural cause, it must happen in the natural world and have material occasion to happen: a human body, a wind, etc. Properly understood, miracles have to be conceived of as materially happening in nature, but formally being against its regular course, possibly responding to a supernatural order and cause⁷⁸.

Moreover, this outcome seems to imply that Kant only rejects introducing *concursum* from the theoretical point of view, viz., in natural philosophy and epistemology, but accepts it in particular and extreme cases *from the practical point of view*. For a miracle to be possible,

⁷⁶ “Miraculum praestabilitum ist: wenn schon von Anfang an die Einrichtung der Natur so gemacht ist, dass die Ursache in einzelnen Fällen nicht nach allgemeinen Gesetzen eine Wirkung hervorbringt (...). Der Gebrauch der Vernunft wird dadurch noch eher Unterbrochen, als durch die *miracula materialia*. Der Gebrauch der Vernunft erfordert, dass wir uns denken müssen, es sey eine Natur (...) nach allgemeinen Regeln (...). Die Ordnung ist also die einzige Bedingung des Gebrauchs der Vernunft (...). Jedes Unterbrechen der Natur ist also eine Störung des Verstandes.— *Wunder sind aber nicht an sich selbst unmöglich (...)*” (My emphasis; V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 218).

⁷⁷ See *Metaphysica*, Latin, §§ 448ff; German, §§ 328ff.

⁷⁸ That's why I said before that the former definition of miracles in terms of the form/matter distinction could be misleading.

it is to be possible that it occurs in the natural world out of natural (the material aspect) and supernatural (the formal aspect) concurrent causes. Having rejected pre-established harmony⁷⁹ and occasionalism⁸⁰, Kant is obliged to admit of special concurrence at least in very rare cases⁸¹.

Now, what Kant presents latter on in L1 can be characterized as twofold⁸²: on the one hand, he makes a few comments that resemble the *Religionschrift*⁸³; on the other, he introduces another important distinction that is still present in the *Dohna* (but not in the *Religion*) and comes probably from Baumgarten⁸⁴. The distinction between *miracula rigorosa* and *comparativa*:

Miracles can be either strict or comparative. A strict miracle is a supernatural event, insofar as it interrupts the order of nature. A comparative is when an event is indeed natural in view of the entirety of nature, but cannot be cognized according to known nature (...) Miracles are events which interrupt the order of nature (...) ⁸⁵

A fair question to raise at this point is: which is finally Kant's position? Miracles are for Kant comparative, strict, or both? Let's turn to the *Metaphysics Dohna*, before we sketch an answer to it.

III - THE CASE FOR MIRACLES IN *METAPHYSICS DOHNA*

The first thing that calls for attention in Dohna Lectures is the abandonment of the distinction between "unnatural" and "contrary to nature". In any case, as already mentioned, the difference made in *Metaphysics L1* between *Unnatürliche* and *Widernatürliche* is not present in Baumgarten's account⁸⁶. Besides, more than ten years later in *Metaphysics Dohna* Kant himself translated the Latin *praeternaturale* into the German *Widernatürlich* ("contrary

⁷⁹ Kant was physical influx and rejected pre-established harmony and occasionalism since his pre-critical period. See Watkins, E. *Kant's Metaphysics of Causality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005, 155ff, especially 160.

⁸⁰ Hogan shows clearly how Kant attempted to reject occasionalism and developed different arguments in both critical and pre-critical periods. Hogan, D. "Kant's Theory of Divine and Secondary Causation", in Brandon Look (ed.), *Leibniz and Kant*, Oxford University Press, *Forthcoming*.

⁸¹ Cf. for instance V-Phil-Th/Pöhlitz, AA 28:1106.12-22. In ZeF, Kant denies both claim to theoretical knowledge of miracles and *concursum* concerning secondary causes. But he accepts *concursum* from the practical point of view. After equating the concept of "divine collaboration" with "concurrence" (*concursum*), Kant says that *concursum* is "quite appropriated and even necessary" from the "morally practical point of view" (ZeF 8:361n).

⁸² V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 219-221.

⁸³ For instance, RGV AA 6: 84ff.

⁸⁴ *Metaphysica* (latin), §477; German, §347.

⁸⁵ "Miracula können seyn, entweder rigorosa oder comparativa. — Miraculum rigorosum est eventus supernaturalis, quatenus interrumpit ordine naturae. — Miraculum comparativum ist, wenn eine Begebenheit zwar in Ansehung der gesammten Natur natürlich ist, aber nach der bekannten Natur nicht kann erkannt werden...(219). Die Wunder sind aber Begebenheiten, die die Ordnung der Natur unterbrechen (220)" (V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 219-220).

⁸⁶ As we pointed out before, the German edition of Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* (2nd. edition, 1783) differentiates only between *Übernatürliche* (*supernaturale*) and *Unnatürliche* (*praeternaturale*) (§345).

to nature”) and completely abandoned the term “unnatural”⁸⁷. What a consequence do we have for the miracles issue? First, the shift can be taken as Kant’s mature position around the nineties, viz. the *unnatural* is nothing more than that which is *contrary* or *against* nature in the weaker sense. Secondly, even though in comparison with Hume’s we have a relative weak or non-Humean conception of miracles, we have still a strong one. For, now we know that it implies the logical possibility of miracles, and this possibility might have interesting metaphysical consequences from the practical point of view.

Accordingly, in *Metaphysics Dohna* Kant says that a miracle is “a supernatural event in the world”⁸⁸. “Supernatural”, however, is defined from now on as “impossible according to natural laws”, while mere “contrary to nature” is defined as “something that does not stand under the laws known to us (...), of which we can make no determinate concept”⁸⁹ (which coincides partially with the definition of the “unnatural” in *Metaphysics K2*)⁹⁰.

Still, these two concepts do not seem to fit each other: the concept of the “supernatural” seems to be stronger in *Dohna* (“impossible according to natural laws”) than in *Metaphysics L1* (“cannot be explained from the entirety of nature (...) the ground must be sought in the *ente extramundano*”⁹¹), whereas the concept of the “contrary to nature” involves an indeterminate concept that can include unknown *causes* or *laws* in nature (as in *Metaphysics K2*: “what is not subordinate to laws that are known to us”⁹²).

The “supernatural” in *Dohna* seems to be impossible, but only to the extent that it cannot be known to happen *naturally* by definition, i.e. is not logically impossible, it is just not natural. The “contrary to nature” is not to be known according to the laws we cognize and thus its concept is indeterminate⁹³. Kant exemplifies, we can make us a determinate concept of health, but not of sickness: the diversity of unknown sicknesses und symptoms “makes impossible a standing rule”⁹⁴. Therefore, the text of *Metaphysics Dohna* does not identify the notions of *supernatural* and *contrary to nature*, but even though both are such that we cannot

⁸⁷ V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667.

⁸⁸ My emphasis: “Miraculum est eventus supernaturalis in mundo” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667).

⁸⁹ “Etwas heisst *widernatürlich*, was nicht unter den uns bekannten Gesetzen steht...— (praeternaturale) wodurch wir uns keinen bestimmten Begriff machen können. *übernatürlich*, was nach Naturgesetzen unmöglich ist...” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667).

⁹⁰ See V-Met-K2/Heinze, AA 28: 732: “das, was nicht unter Gesetzen steht, die uns bekannt sind”.

⁹¹ “(...) was aus der gesammten Natur nicht kann erklärt werden, sondern wo der Grund in dem ente extramundano gesucht werden muss” (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 216).

⁹² Note that the definition of *unnatural* given in V-Met-K2/Heinze (AA 28:732) (“das, was nicht unter Gesetzen steht, die uns bekannt sind”) is clearly different from V-Met-L1/Pölit (AA 28: 216) (“was der besondern Natur des Dinges widerspricht”).

⁹³ Worth to remember *Metaphysics L1* definition: “contrary to nature” is that “which does not flow from the determinate nature of a thing” (“was nicht aus der bestimmten Natur eines Dinges fließt”) (V-Met-L1/Pölit, AA 28: 216).

⁹⁴ “(...) macht eine beständige Regel (...) unmöglich (...)” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667).

make a determinate concept of them. Moreover, Kant also says that something is “*supernatural* as long as the cause of the *eventus* is not met with in the world (...)”⁹⁵. The important point to retain here is that Kant does not say that the *event* is not to be met in the world with: he says rather that a “*miraculum est eventus supernaturalis in mundo*”⁹⁶, i.e. that only the *cause* of the event is not to be met with, not that *the event* is not to be met with. That’s exactly the reason why “Creation” cannot be considered as a miracle: It is a *supernatural* event, but *extra mundo*. Therefore, it is not an *eventus*: It could never happen *in* the world, but it rather might have given origin *to* the world *from outside* the world. The cause has to be thought of as supernatural, viz. not to be met in the world with; yet the event can and must be necessarily in the world of nature⁹⁷. Thus, as suggested before, a special kind of “concurrency” must be involved in this case to guarantee the possibility of miracles. Furthermore, this might also suggest that *in Metaphysics Dohna* the first definition of supernatural as “impossible according to natural laws” is substantive and refers actually to the idea of God, whereas the second shows clearly an adjective use and refers to God’s predicates, as the in notion of “supernatural intervention”. In substantival sense “supernatural” is purely noumenal and impossible to happen according with natural laws, whereas in adjectival sense we can think of supernatural causation and events in terms of *special concurrence*. Yet, this is slightly different from Baumgarten’s account. For in his *Metaphysica* a supernatural event cannot involve *any* contingent event (neither as *causa*, nor as *concausa*)⁹⁸.

Meanwhile, Kant reintroduces *in Metaphysics Dohna* the distinction between *miracula rigorosa* and *comparativa* (already present in *Metaphysics L1* and his *Religion*), viz. strict miracles in themselves and miracles from the point of view of our incomplete knowledge. Then he asks: “is such a thing [a miracle] possible? His response is affirmative: “Because

⁹⁵ “(...)Übernatürlich, sofern die Ursache des eventus nicht im Weltganzen (...) angetroffen wird” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667).

⁹⁶ V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667 (My emphasis).

⁹⁷ This represents a kind of variation from the Leibnizian position sometimes Kant seems to accept in this issue: “Gott ist entweder der Urheber der Weltvolkommenheit durch die Ordnung der Natur oder wieder dieselbe. Die erste ist die ordentliche, die zweyte als *miraculum praestabilitum* die ausserordentliche Vorsehung” (R. 6173, Refl. AA 18:477). But in another cases he seems to accept something different: “Eine jede ausserordentliche Direction ist ein wahres Wunder. (Man nennt nicht bloß ein Wunder, was nach natürlichen Ursachen geschieht)” (R. 6317, Refl. AA 18:626); “(Die ausserordentliche direction ist jederzeit ein Wunder.)” (R. 8081, Refl. AA 19:618). See also R. 8081, 8082, Refl. AA 19: 621; V-Th/Baumbach, AA 28:1308ff; and SF 7: 56-57.

⁹⁸ Latin, §§ 474-477; German, §§ 345, 347. See especially §474: “EVENTUS mundi a nullius entis contingentis natura actuatus SUPERNATURALIS est. Eventus a determinata certi entis contingentis, in quo evenit, natura non actuatus, respectu illius entis PRAETERNATURALIS est. Hinc supernaturalia sunt praeternaturalia respectu naturae universae; et praeternaturalia respectu naturae universae sunt supernaturalia (...)”. Cf. “Eine Begebenheit der Welt, welche nicht durch die Natur irgend eines zufälligen Dinges gewürkt wird (...)” (§345).

there is an *extramundane cause* that has produced this order of things, thus [it] can also produce another. *A miracle is thus possible in itself internally (...)*⁹⁹ In addition, he adds a new explanation:

In general, an event in the world whose laws human reason cannot at all cognize is a miracle. Now for us it is the same whether it happens according to – for us unknown – natural laws or by the influence of the highest being. It is enough that the cause is impossible for us to cognize (...). But if a body rises against the laws of gravity, then that is contrary to nature. A miracle is called not something of which we do not cognize the cause, but rather that for which we do not cognize the laws. Thus magnetic power is no miracle, for we cognize its law (but not the cause).¹⁰⁰

In spite of Kant's shifting between characterizing miracles in relation to unknown causes or to unknown laws of causality, we can see that the conception here is still the same as in *Metaphysics L1* (and as in the definition of miracles in *RGV*): miracles are still said to be possible and involve something we *cannot cognize*. Whatever the laws or causes of the event, it would point towards something unknown; either natural, or supernatural. Again, both Lectures seem to suggest together that *miracula comparativa* are defined as those whose *natural* causes are ignored, and thus they are only miracles from our point of view. Both also suggest that *miracula rigorosa* would involve by definition a supernatural intervention interrupting the regular course of nature, but not necessarily the *order of the world*.

Kant seems to be not too far from Baumgarten, but is actually not too close. Accordingly, even though we do not cognize the laws according to which the event happens in the world, we can assume that “a miracle is thus possible in itself internally”. Because it makes no difference whether the unknown cause or law of the event is due to our ignorance or to a supernatural intervention. At first, it can be any one of them. However, the lack of causal knowledge is an insufficient criterion for recognizing an event X as a “miracle”: the event can still be no miracle. If we do not cognize the laws that govern the exceptional happening, how do we know that we have a miracle? It seems so far we have no criteria to recognize miracles. Because a “[C]comparative miracle [is] what is supernatural in relation to our

⁹⁹ “...weil eine causa *extramundana* da ist, welche diese Ordnung der Dinge hervorgebracht hat, also auch eine andere hervorbringen kann. *An sich interne ist also ein Wunder möglich...* (My emphasis; V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 667).

¹⁰⁰ “Wunder überhaupt heisst eine Begebenheit in der Welt, deren Gesetze die menschliche Vernunft gar nicht erkennen kann. Nun ist es für uns einerlei, ob es nach — uns unbekanntem — Naturgesetzen oder durch Einwirkung des höchsten Wesens geschieht. Genug die Ursach ist uns unmöglich zu erkennen...Wenn aber ein Körper gegen die Gesetze de Schwere emporsteigt so ist dies widernatürlich. Ein Wunder wird nichts genannt, wovon wir die Ursache nicht erkennen, sondern das, wovon wir die Gesetze nicht erkennen. So ist die magnetische Kraft kein Wunder, denn wir erkenne die Gesetze davon (die Ursache aber nicht)” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 667).

reason, but otherwise in according with certain laws unknown to us”¹⁰¹. An event the laws of which we do not cognize can be a strict miracle, but can also be just *a miracle for us*, not in itself.

Kant's explanation of comparative miracles separates from Baumgarten's account in terms of the consequences it derives, and relates the concept to a well-known subject in the *Religion*, viz. to the supposed actions *against nature* of demons and angels (the “invisible” agents in Hume's definition). Kant had held emphatically that accepting them is repugnant to reason, because it would *undermine our responsibility*: we were always able to justify our moral errors and wrong choices either by imputing them to the interference of angels or demons, or by presuming fanatically that we are choosing and acting according to God himself. Instead of just repeating the *Religion*, Kant reasserts now the possibility of *theistic* miracles as *miracula rigorosa* and says that *they are possible in themselves*. Kant adds here a special clause: that we cannot take them as explanatory principle in *science*, because we do not have criteria for identifying individual miracles in particular cases:

So we had theistic (strict) and demonic (comparative) miracles. Without being allowed to deny this, we will concede this as possible with respect to the object, but still not affirm it with individual events, i.e. assume it as basis, a principle. If one concedes the latter [demonic], then it undermines reason (...) For the most comparative miracles are repugnant to our use of reason, of the theistic ones we can all the more easily make a general concept.¹⁰²

Two important points can be made from the above quotation. First: if “strict” miracles are by definition *theistic*, then in the case of an event X whose cause C or law L we do not know, we can never be sure whether it is a miracle *in itself* or *for us*. Therefore, an apparently theistic miracle can be just a comparative miracle. Second: even if miracles are possible, we cannot know them. According to the previous definition of *miracula comparativa*, an apparently theistic miracle can be just a demonic deed; but reason cannot admit it without undermining itself. We have to use reason and reason cannot *make use* of things in the world unless it

¹⁰¹ “Miraculum comparativum, was verhältnissweise auf unsre Vernunft supernaturalis, übrigens aber nach gewissen uns unbekanntem Gesetzen ist” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 667). Comparative miracles are characterized thereafter as those supposedly perpetrated by “Demonen”, a good or bad angel, a *kakodaimon* or *agathodaimon*. Kant rejects them at once. The only extant sense for comparative miracles is then that implicated by the very possibility of miracles: a apparent “miracle” can be a miracle just for us (due to unknown causes or laws), but not in itself, or a miracle *rigorosum*. Thus, demoniac or angelical miracles are a subset of the set “comparativa”, because we can think of examples of *miracula comparativa* that would not be angelical or demoniac.

¹⁰² “So hätten wir theistische (rigorose) und daemonische Wunder (comparative). Ohne diese läugnen zu dürfen, werden wir in Ansehung des Gegenstandes sie als möglich einräumen, doch sie nicht bei einzelnen Begebenheiten statuieren, d.h. zum Grunde legen, zum Princip annehmen. Wenn man das letztere einräumt, so untergräbt es die Vernunft (...) Am meisten sind die comparativen Wunder unserem Vernunftgebrauch zuwider, von den theistischen können wir uns schon eher einen allgemeinen Begriff machen” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:667f). Cf. RGV AA 6:86f.

considers them as *events in nature happening according to the order of nature*, and nothing more. That's why we suspend all principles of reason "when in a given case we get in the business of affirming miracles, assuming them as foundation, but that does not mean to deny miracles – in general one assumes them as possible"¹⁰³ Moreover, by taking into account the impossibility of identifying miracles, it seems at first value that Kant is in no better position than Hume and Baumgarten. However, a closer scrutiny suggests that this is not the case.

In any case, the distinctions introduced by *Metaphysics Dohna* appear to be an improvement from the previous treatment in *Metaphysics LI*, and be *closer* to the *Religion*, where Kant just states that demonic miracles are incompatible with reason and we can have just a general concept of theistic miracles¹⁰⁴. On the one hand, in *Metaphysics Dohna* Kant shows why this is the case, i.e. that demonic miracles are incompatible with reason. He shows also that to have a general concept of their possibility does not necessarily mean to "know miracles" at all. Besides that, the distinction between formal and material miracles, which is totally Kantian, and the other between *miracula comparativa* and *rigorosa*, which Kant takes from Baumgarten, are also improvements which were not present in the *Religion*, as well as the *explicit* assertion of the possibility of miracles in general was not there either.

On the other hand, in *Metaphysics LI*, in spite of criticizing Leibniz's conception of miracles as formal, Kant had pointed out that the essence of miracles rests *on the form*; and in *Metaphysics Dohna* he expresses almost the same, viz. that "with miracles reason looks only

¹⁰³ "Wir heben also alle Principien auf wenn wir in gegebenen Fall, wenn es auf ein Geschäft einkommt, Wunder statuiren, zum Fundament annehmen, das heisst aber nicht Wunder läugnen – im allgemeinen nimmt man sie als möglich an" (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:668).

¹⁰⁴ RGV AA 6:86-87: "Da kann man sich nun entweder theistische oder dämonische Wunder denken, die letzteren aber in englische (agathodämonische) oder teuflische (kakodämonische) Wunder eintheilen, von welchen aber die letzteren eigentlich nur in Nachfrage kommen, weil die guten Engel (ich weiß nicht, warum) wenig oder gar nichts von sich zu reden geben. Was die theistischen Wunder betrifft: so können wir uns von den Wirkungsgesetzen ihrer Ursache (als eines allmächtigen etc. und dabei moralischen Wesens) allerdings einen Begriff machen, aber nur einen allgemeinen, sofern wir ihn als Weltschöpfer und Regierer nach der Ordnung der Natur sowohl, als der moralischen denken, weil wir von dieser ihren Gesetzen unmittelbar und für sich Kenntniß bekommen können, deren sich dann die Vernunft zu ihrem Gebrauche bedienen kann. Nehmen wir aber an, daß Gott die Natur auch bisweilen und in besondern Fällen von dieser ihren Gesetzen abweichen lasse: so haben wir nicht den mindesten Begriff und können auch nie hoffen, einen von dem Gesetze zu bekommen, nach welchem Gott alsdann bei Veranstaltung einer solchen Begebenheit verfährt (außer dem allgemeinen moralischen, daß, was er thut, Alles gut sein werde; wodurch aber in Ansehung dieses besondern Vorfalls nichts bestimmt wird) (...). Unter diesen sind aber die dämonischen Wunder die allerunverträglichsten mit dem Gebrauche unsrer Vernunft. Denn in Ansehung der theistischen würde sie doch wenigstens noch ein negatives Merkmal für ihren Gebrauch haben können, nämlich daß, wenn etwas als von Gott in einer unmittelbaren Erscheinung desselben geboten vorgestellt wird, das doch geradezu der Moralität widerstreitet, bei allem Anschein eines göttlichen Wunders es doch nicht ein solches sein könne (z.B. wenn einem Vater befohlen würde, er solle seinen, so viel er weiß, ganz unschuldigen Sohn tödten); bei einem angenommenen dämonischen Wunder aber fällt auch dieses Merkmal weg; und wollte man dagegen für solche das entgegengesetzte positive zum Gebrauche der Vernunft ergreifen: nämlich daß, wenn dadurch eine Einladung zu einer guten Handlung geschieht, die wir an sich schon als Pflicht erkennen, sie nicht von einem bösen Geiste geschehen sei, so würde man doch auch alsdann falsch greifen können; denn dieser verstellt sich, wie man sagt, oft in einen Engel des Lichts".

to the form, the matter is not the issue”¹⁰⁵. I presume that is so because every event that can be a miracle must *happen in the world*, i.e. in space and time, but *against the regular course* of nature. That’s perhaps the reason why in *Metaphysics Dohna* Kant speculates about the criteria for recognizing which events should be counted on as miracles and which not: “Now”, says Kant,

Every miracle is still something extraordinary, therefore, everyone who assumes miracles, also assumes an order of nature from which they are exceptions (...). Is it possible to cognize a miracle? (...) the possibility of the experience that something is a miracle has many difficulties (...)¹⁰⁶.

Of course: to accept a miracle could imply to accept an evil agent to blame and to undermine our moral responsibility, insofar as we don’t know how to identify whether the *eventus* is a strict miracle or it seems miraculous just for us. His point is then that we cannot count on a general epistemic criterion to recognize miracles: we can never *know* whether X is a case for a miracle or not. But precisely here Kant keeps distance from both Hume and Baumgarten; for he says that *we have at least a certain criterion from the practical point of view*: “The moral law gives a negative criterion for the possibility of miracles...”¹⁰⁷. True, in RGV Kant had already stated something similar¹⁰⁸:

Among miracles, however, the demonic are the ones most irreconcilable with the employment of our reason. For, as regards the *theistic* miracles, reason can at least have a negative criterion at its disposal, namely, if something is represented as commanded by God in a direct manifestation of him yet is directly in *conflict with morality*, it cannot be a divine miracle despite every appearance of being one (...) whereas in the case of a supposed demonic miracle even this criterion fails to apply (...)¹⁰⁹

Indeed, the term "moral law" also occurs in this context, but this time suggesting something slightly different from *Metaphysics Dohna*, and more general:

Should we, however, accept that from time to time, and in special cases, God allows nature to deviate from such laws, then we do not have the least conception, nor can

¹⁰⁵ “Die Vernunft sieht bei den Wundern nur auf die Form, auf die Materie kommt es nicht an” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:669).

¹⁰⁶ “Nun ist doch jedes Wunder etwas ausserordentliches mithin nimmt jeder welcher Wunder annimmt, auch eine Ordnung der Natur an, von der sie Ausnahmen sind (...) Ist es möglich ein Wunder zu erkennen? (...) die Möglichkeit der Erfahrung dass etwas ein Wunder sey, viel Schwierigkeit hat” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28:669-670).

¹⁰⁷ “Ein negatives Criterium für die Möglichkeit der Wunder giebt das Moralgesetz” (V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 670).

¹⁰⁸ RGV AA 6:87.

¹⁰⁹ RGV AA 6:87f: “Denn in Ansehung der theistischen würde sie doch wenigstens noch ein negatives Merkmal für ihren Gebrauch haben können, nämlich daß, wenn etwas als von Gott in einer unmittelbaren Erscheinung desselben geboten vorgestellt wird, das doch geradezu der Moralität widerstreitet, bei allem Anschein eines göttlichen Wunders es doch nicht ein solches sein könne (...); bei einem angenommenen dämonischen Wunder aber fällt auch dieses Merkmal weg; und wollte man dagegen für solche das entgegengesetzte positive zum Gebrauch der Vernunft ergreifen: nämlich daß, wenn dadurch eine Einladung zu einer guten Handlung geschieht, die wir an sich schon als Pflicht erkennen, sie nicht von einem bösen Geiste geschehen sei, so würde man doch auch alsdann falsch greifen können”.

we ever hope to attain one, of the law according to which God promotes any such occurrence (apart from the *general moral law* that whatever God does will all be good, in virtue of which, however, nothing precise is established with respect to the particular event). Here reason is as paralyzed (...) ¹¹⁰

Thus, it is clear from the RGV quotations that the assertion in *Metaphysik Dohna* seems to clarify explicitly what this criterion consists in. The Religion suggests the idea that an evil wonder conflicts with *morality*, nearer from Locke's formula ¹¹¹, even though not mentioning a *particular* moral law (viz. the "general moral law" according to which *whatever God does will all be good*), whereas the Lecture actually explains it in a more Kantian way. Indeed, it says that it is the universal *moral law* of reason that works as a *negative* criterion.

Therefore, if some event is epistemically inexplicable in nature but *contributes* to morality, or at least *does not contradict* moral law, it can be assumed (the text uses *annehmen*) from the practical point of view as a "miracle". Kant does not say here why, but I think it is because miracles are possible in themselves, even though we cannot cognize them. Because there seem to be a practical content implied metaphysically in their very logical possibility. This, in my view, puts Kant in a better position than his opponents.

Accordingly, Heinze interpreted that in *Metaphysics L1* Kant admitted the possibility of miracles to *supplement* the imperfection of nature in disharmony with morality ¹¹². But Kant had immediately added that we should expect the possible harmony of nature with freedom rather than assume miracles; and that we could only assume them "when the case is such that cannot be cognized according to the natural order and refers to the aim of morality" ¹¹³. Heinze also shows that in *Metaphysics K2* Kant reaffirms this critical point clearly:

In order to help human freedom to reach more perfection in the world, e.g. for the honest man to be also happy, what does just not [necessarily] happen according to nature; for this sake, one is allowed to assume miracles (...) Nothing conflicting with moral laws can be a miracle; this is a negative principle of miracles. One can also

¹¹⁰ RGV AA 6: 86f: "Nehmen wir aber an, daß Gott die Natur auch bisweilen und in besondern Fällen von dieser ihren Gesetzen abweichen lasse: so haben wir nicht den mindesten Begriff und können auch nie hoffen, einen von dem Gesetze zu bekommen, nach welchem Gott alsdann bei Veranstaltung einer solchen Begebenheit verfährt (außer dem allgemeinen moralischen, daß, was er thut, Alles gut sein werde; wodurch aber in Ansehung dieses besondern Vorfalls nichts bestimmt wird). Hier wird nun die Vernunft wie gelähmt (...) Denn in Ansehung der theistischen würde sie doch wenigstens noch ein negatives Merkmal für ihren Gebrauch haben können, nämlich daß, wenn etwas als von Gott in einer unmittelbaren Erscheinung desselben geboten vorgestellt wird, das doch geradezu der Moralität widerstreitet (...)"

¹¹¹ "That no mission can be looked on to be divine, that delivers any thing derogating from the honour of the one, only, true, invisible God, or inconsistent with natural religion and the *rules of morality*: because God having discovered to men the unity and majesty of his eternal godhead, and the truths of *natural religion and morality*, by the light of reason, he can not be supposed to back the contrary by revelation; for that would be to destroy the evidence and the *use of reason*, without which men cannot be able to distinguish divine revelation from diabolical imposture" (my emphasis) (Locke, J. *A Discourse on Miracles, The Workes of John Locke*, vol 9, 262f).

¹¹² V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 219; Heinze 1894, 627. Cf. V-Met-K2/Heinze, AA 28: 734.

¹¹³ "(...) wenn nun ein Fall Von der Art ist, das er durch natürliche Ordnung nicht erkannt werden könne, sich aber auf den Zweck der Moralität beziehe (...)" (V-Met-K2/Heinze, AA 28: 734; Heinze 1894, 628.)

assume miracles for the harmony of moral perfection with natural perfection (of the merit of being happy with the joy of happiness), therefore for the promotion of morality (...)¹¹⁴

This citation seems to give an answer, one criterion for individuating miracles; and it comes also from the nineties. The moral law gives us a negative criterion. Thus, we can assume the possible harmony between nature and freedom as a miracle: first, it cannot be explained in pure naturalistic terms and is not contradictory to the order of nature (all the same as teleology does not contradict mechanism, but is rather another possible explanation.) Secondly, it does not contradict, but rather contributes to the end of morality.

Note that the moral law cannot give in itself a criterion for the logical possibility of miracles: this criterion is the mere absence of contradiction in their concept, and is merely negative. Thus, the negative criterion the moral law really seems to give for individuating miracles is the criterion for *figuring out* how a miracle could be, viz. as a certain way of thinking the *real possibility* of miracles from the *practical* point of view. There is a clear analogy with the case of freedom: the logical possibility of miracles suffices to *think of* their real possibility from the *practical* point of view: we can think *problematically* the real possibility of miracles, but only insofar as they do not conflict with the moral law of reason.

Thus, miracles can problematically be individuated from the practical point of view. Nonetheless, the criterion does not offer to us *knowledge* of the real possibility of miracles in natural experience¹¹⁵. Insofar as the criteria we have to recognize them are not epistemologically precise in experience, we cannot use miracles as a base for the explanation of anything: "To assume miracles does not mean to affirm that there are miracles; still, it does not mean to assume them as maxims in the use of our reason"¹¹⁶. Otherwise, we would undermine reason in science.

IV - CONCLUDING REMARKS

¹¹⁴ "Um der Freiheit der Menschen zu grösserer Weltvokommenheit zu hülfe zu kommen, dass z. B. der rechtshaffene Mann auch glücklich werde, welches eben nicht nach der Natur geschiet, um dieser willen kann man Wunder annehmen (...) Es kann nichts ein Wunder sein, was den moralischen Gesetzen widerstreitet: dies ist ein negatives Princip der Wunder. Zur Uebereinstimmung der moralischen Volkommenheit mit der Naturvollkommenheit (der Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein mit den Genusse der Glückseligkeit) kann man also Wunder annehmen, mithin zur beförderung der Moralität (...)" (*V-Met-K2/Heinze*, AA 28: 734-735).

¹¹⁵ Remember I stated before that we have to distinguish at least between *two* different kinds or concepts of "possibility" present in Kant's writings (e.g. KrV A244/B302-3n): the mere *logical* possibility, defined as the absence of contradiction in a concept and the *real* possibility, defined as the *conformity of a cognition with the general conditions of possible experience*. The possibility of miracles that Kant admits concerns mere *logical* possibility. But, as it is with the case of freedom, the logical possibility is enough to assume miracles from the practical point of view, if and only if the admission does not contradict morality.

¹¹⁶ *V-Met-K2/Heinze*, AA 28:734.

I would like to state, first, that Kant's account differs from Hume's, which boasts of having found a *full proof* against miracles¹¹⁷. Even if we can say that there are some points Kant and Hume share in common, for sure with different concepts and arguments, Kant's theory of miracles is not naturalistic. At least, not in the sense of Hume's conception, since Kant's is not directed primarily to assess their probability or the degree of assurance that their testimony would entail. It is true that Hume never held *explicitly* that miracles are impossible, in the sense of being contradictory like the concept of a "square circle"; but he never held their logical possibility as being relevant to moral purposes either.

In my view, Hume's conception is that the individuation of a miracle would involve incompatibility between its concept and the concept of natural laws. It is because the particular assertion of any miracle would undermine the assertion of the universality of natural laws that both propositions are incompatible each other. Moreover, I think on this basis for Hume one proposition must be considered as more or less probable than the other: one has to be accepted as a higher evidence and the other be rejected as improbable in terms of its low degree of evidence and assurance¹¹⁸. In contrast, I see in Kant a mere opposition between miracles and the course of nature; not *against* the order of nature. Asserting miracles is not incompatible with the assertion of the lawful order of nature, insofar as miracles would at first be only contrary to our *expectations* of regularity. Therefore, miracles are possible because they can be compatible with the order of nature. That's why we are able to assume them in certain and very special cases from the moral point of view, even though this might mean to admit of a particular kind of special concurrence.

Now, someone could contend that Hume's account establishes a pattern for what would be a *possible* miracle¹¹⁹. I agree with that. However, we should remember that he does it just rhetorically, in order to reject more emphatically the very possibility of a reported miracle. Accordingly, Hume concedes the theoretically possible case in which a reported miracle could at first be accepted: the eyewitnesses of an anomalous event should be many, and reliable, and their reports accurate and trustworthy, in such a case as the "falsehood of

¹¹⁷ In EHU 1, §2 Hume says "Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument (...) I flatter myself that I have discovered an argument of a like nature (...)", and then in EHU 1, §12 he presents the *nervum probandi*: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined(...) and as uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof (...)".

" See Earman, J. *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*, 23, 29ff.

¹¹⁸ See EHU X, 1 §§ 4ff., §§12-13; X, 2 §§14-15, 36-37, etc.

¹¹⁹ Again, Tamra Frei and José Oscar de Almeida Marques suggested this point to me.

testimony" would be *more miraculous* than the reported fact "which endeavors to establish"¹²⁰. Nevertheless, his point is actually to reject the possibility of *establishing* a miracle. This is quite clear as he adds immediately that we would have in the case incompatibility or conflict between the miraculous report and the course of uniform experience: "even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments"¹²¹. Moreover, in the following paragraph Hume states *ironically* that

[I]n the foregoing reasoning *we have supposed*, that the testimony, upon which a miracle is founded, may *possibly* amount to an entire proof (...) But it is easy to show that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession, and there never was a miraculous event on so full an evidence (...)¹²²

Thus, Hume seems rather to deny the theoretical possibility Kant is prone to accept. Nevertheless, to deny the possibility of miracles by arguing that the only thinkable possibility of miracles would be miraculous itself seems to beg the question. In this point, I agree partially with Nuyen¹²³. Because Kant accepts the possibility of miracles, even though he denies they can be known individually or identified in possible experience: *it is always possible for them to happen*. Again, Nuyen is right by saying that "Kant takes the dismissal of miracles as the claim to knowing that there are no miracles, which is just as unjustified as the claim of knowing an event to be miraculous"¹²⁴. Moreover, Kant presents at least a negative criterion for identifying miracles from the moral point of view.

In addition, I would like to say that Kant's position seems to me very different from Baumgarten's. I argued that Baumgarten has a conception that is clearly different from Hume's. Yet, despite Kant's debts to his rationalistic conception, Kant disagrees and extrapolates the mere commentary on several times. Besides, I think Baumgarten never seems to wonder what it means for miracles to be possible, as Kant did. The only point Kant and Baumgarten share arguably in common is the explicit thesis that miracles are internally possible, viz. that the concept of miracles is consistent. Kant's main point, viz. that we should not assume miracles but from the practical point of view, and only in extreme cases, when an alternative explanation is missing and their acceptance does not conflict with the moral law, is

¹²⁰ I take the phrase from Nuyen, "Kant on Miracles", 312. The last part between quotation is Hume's (EHU X 1, §13). See also Hume, EHU 2, §§ 14ff..

¹²¹ EHU X 1, §13.

¹²² EHU X 2, § 14. My emphasis. Note that the supposed "possibility" is just rhetorically and ironically (i.e. literarily) admitted in imagination in order to be refuted at once.

¹²³ Nuyen does not go so far as to say Hume begs the question, but rather that the allegation "will not do as an argument against the possibility of miracles (as he defines them)" ("Kant on Miracles", 312).

¹²⁴ Nuyen, "Kant on Miracles", 314.

entirely different. In my view, without accepting the apparently Leibnizo-Wolffian “non-sequitur” (one might figure out: if miracles are possible, then we can admit them as theoretically or empirically possible), Kant holds a different position which accounts for the undeniable fact that something unexpected and miraculous can always happen, viz. as it is the case with miraculous cures medical science cannot account for. Furthermore, this is not incompatible with the empirical realism that transcendental idealism defends, because it does not affirm *claim to knowledge* of any entity that cannot be given in possible experience. From the epistemological point of view, according to the logical definition of its concept, which is non-contradictory in itself, Kant just assumes that miracles are logically *possible*¹²⁵. So far, we cannot dismiss them. Being compatible with transcendental idealism, the conception does not preclude agnosticism. To assume miracles as possible is not to say that we must *believe* in them, nor that we know that miracles will happen, but rather that we know that they are at first not impossible, *and thus they can in principle happen*. Nor does it imply that we would presuppose unjustifiably the existence and supernatural action God's. Kant's theory can be reconstructed *without* this assumption.

I think, however, a *theist* could accept Kant's point as the philosophical explanation of something he can morally believe (because it is not in itself impossible), but not prove¹²⁶. Last but not least, I think the general tendency of a believer is to affirm miracles from the mere fact of their conceptual possibility; all the same as agnostics and atheists tend to lay stress on the fact that the conceptual possibility is the same as lack of evidence.

¹²⁵ In a different way, this point has been made by Stephen Mumford in his “Miracles: Metaphysics and modality”, *Religious Studies* 37 (2001), 191ff.

¹²⁶ “Es geschieht kein Wunder in der körperlichen Welt”, says *Opus Postumum* (OP, AA 21:439).

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