1996

**What Morality Requires: Re-Reading Kant's Highest Good**

Cynthia A. Brincat  
*Loyola University Chicago*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss)  
Part of the Philosophy Commons

**Recommended Citation**  
[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/3588](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/3588)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).  
Copyright © 1996 Cynthia A. Brincat
Copyright by Cynthia A. Brincat, 1995
All rights reserved.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

A dissertation is not merely a two hundred or so page document, rather, it is a symbol of the culmination and end of an educational process. Like any other process, a variety of sources contribute to its successful completion.

Hence I would like to thank all of those people who have contributed to this final step in their many and unique ways. Thank you especially to my graduate colleagues, Thomas Bowen, Catriona Hanley, Maria Mondragón and Aron Reppman, for their assistance in the last stages of this project. Also, thank you to Dr. Mary Connors whose wisdom has always been sustaining these last few years. In addition, I am very happy to acknowledge my dissertation committee; they have been without exception very supportive throughout my graduate career, especially recently in their efforts to help me make this project as clear as possible within my own limits, both intellectual and temporal. It is thus I am grateful to Dr. Adriaan Peperzak, Dr. Richard Westley, and my director, Dr. Victoria Wike. Finally, I would especially like to acknowledge my parents, who have played a very large part in making my graduate school years good ones.
REFERENCES

All references to Kant's work are given in the form of footnotes. First, I have put the title, as listed in the abbreviations below, followed by the page number of the German text, followed by the page number and reference to translator of the English translation. Rather than put the volume of the German text in every cite, the volume is listed below, with all of the other pertinent information. All references to the German translations are to the Royal Prussian Academy edition of Kants Gesammelte Schriften, Königliche preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1904- ). For present purposes, I will refer to this work as KgS. The abbreviations for the English translations are the following:


Note: All quotes from Kant will be given directly, including any gender exclusive pronouns. An attempt will be made, whenever possible, to remedy this exclusion in the text. This assumes an acceptance of the translation of Mensch as man, while human being is a more appropriate translation for the present day.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................... iii

REFERENCE PAGE .............................................................. iv

INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

Chapter

1. THE ORIGINS OF THE HIGHEST GOOD: THE SUMMUM BONUM AS DIALECTICAL IDEAL OF REASON ......................... 8

2. THE AIM OF THE HIGHEST GOOD: THE SUMMUM BONUM AS MORAL IDEAL ......................................................... 48

3. THE SOCIAL HIGHEST GOOD: KANT'S ETHICAL COMMONWEALTH ................................................................. 84

4. KANT'S DEVELOPMENTAL PLAN: THE CONSUMMATION OF THE HIGHEST GOOD ........................................... 128

5. KANT'S KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH: THE ETHICAL COMMONWEALTH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES .................. 169

CONCLUSION ................................................................. 202

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 206

VITA ................................................................. 211
INTRODUCTION

WHY RE-READ KANT’S HIGHEST GOOD?: AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Very few notions in Kant scholarship have caused as much controversy as the highest good. Is it heteronomous? Is it superfluous? Is it the answer and to what question? What is it about Kant's doctrine of the highest good that has caused so much confusion? Much of the confusion surrounding the highest good can be seen to be a consequence of its presentation throughout the Kantian corpus. That is, Kant devotes no one treatise to a unified treatment of the object of pure practical reason. In being presented throughout various works whose tasks themselves vary as well, the highest good often becomes a handmaid to the general task with which Kant is concerned. We are thus left with myriad conceptions of the highest good, which in most cases can each be supported through their presence in specific texts. This situation has led to conflicting, albeit prolific, scholarship relative to the highest good.

Since there is so much controversy and conflict with regard to the highest good, it is necessary to take an integrated look at this object in order to take Kant seriously. In doing so, we must appreciate that the various
manifestations of the highest good are obviously not random, but can appear
to be unrelated, especially when each manifestation of the highest good is
treated in isolation. As a consequence of this isolationist approach, there
appears a false notion of competing or exclusive concepts of the highest good.

Instead of interpreting the highest good through its apparently isolated
instances, I will argue for a new way of approaching and interpreting the
highest good. Through this interpretation, I have sought to overcome the
cacophony of conflicting interpretations and thereby offer a method towards
quieting the din. In so doing, I have realized that much of contemporary
Kantian scholarship has a decidedly Kantian flavor. Often it reads similarly to
the antinomies in that it addresses two competing solutions to the same
problem, denies each of them, then asserts a middle solution that contains the
best aspects of the two that were previously denied.

The approach of this analysis is no exception, although its results in my
assertion of a middle solution is unique. What I have done, is to examine the
two predominant schools of thought with regard to the highest good: that of
the highest good as unifier and that of the highest good as a moral ideal.
Under these two broad rubrics, all of the interpretations of the highest good,
both pro and con, can be subsumed. After analyzing these conceptions of the
highest good, I have asserted that neither of them is completely correct in
isolation, yet both of them are correct to a certain extent. That is, both of these viewpoints are a necessary part of the complete understanding of the highest good: that of the ethical commonwealth. Furthermore, in appreciating the ethical commonwealth as the consummate articulation of the highest good my interpretation presents Kant's developmental plan for achieving this complex end.

Thus, to grasp the highest good in its complete relation to the moral law and moral agents is to appreciate the moral object as it is manifested in its entirety: Kant himself gives some practical advice in this regard as he advocates that an analysis must grasp correctly the idea of the whole, and then to see all those parts in their reciprocal interrelations, in the light of their derivation from the concept of the whole.\(^1\)

In general, this is the plan which I have attempted to follow. In the organization of my project I have attempted to correctly grasp the idea of the highest good as a generic whole determined by the moral law, and then to see it specifically manifested in its parts. After appreciating the highest good in its parts (a stage where many studies are arrested thereby causing controversy among Kantian commentators since their individual interpretations compete

\(^1\)CPR, 10-11 (Beck, 10). John Silber, in his article, "The Importance of the Highest Good in Kant's Ethics," also cites this passage as a way to authentically approach the highest good, (Ethics, April, 1963) 183.
and are never reintegrated), I have proceeded to see the parts of the highest
good relative to their reciprocal interrelations deriving from their unifying
concept. As a result of this theoretical backdrop to the aforementioned
organization, the outline of my project is as follows.

In Chapter One, I argue for an understanding of the highest good
centered around its presentation in the Dialectic of the second *Critique*. This
is the highest good as a dialectical ideal of reason. In appearing as a dialectical
ideal, the highest good manifests itself as a unifier through which the duality
of the human will as supersensuously and sensuously determined is unified.
This is a conception of the highest good as the all inclusive object of pure
practical reason. This understanding of the highest good has met with the
criticism that it is superfluous to the practical aspects of the moral project.

In Chapter Two, I argue for an understanding of the highest good
centered around its presentation in the Analytic of the second *Critique*. This is
the highest good as a moral ideal insofar as it serves as a guide for action. The
conception of the highest good in this manner comes about as a consequence
of Kant’s command that we act in such a way to work towards making the
highest good an actuality in the world. This understanding of the highest
good has met with the criticism that in its implementation, it will have
heteronomous consequences for the moral agent.
In Chapter Three, I will demonstrate that the ethical commonwealth, Kant's social understanding of the highest good as it is contained primarily in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, contains both aspects of the highest good discussed in Chapters One and Two. That is, a conception of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth serves as a unifying ideal as well as a moral ideal. In addition to including both of these strains of thought, the ethical commonwealth contributes an entirely new perspective to the highest good. For it is through the ethical commonwealth that the highest good takes on a decidedly social component, becoming a duty for all humanity. In addition, it is through this understanding of the highest good that the criticisms of superfluity and heteronomy are to be met as they are addressed in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Four, I will demonstrate the developmental plan contained in the Kantian corpus for the realization of the highest good as an ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. In so doing, I will demonstrate how it is that the ethical commonwealth includes the integration of the understandings of the highest good previously presented. This integration consists of the development of the highest good through the moments of the individual, the state and the human race, in which the aforementioned articulations of the highest good are subsumed and brought to their
culmination in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will further illustrate how it is we achieve the consummate articulation of the highest good. That is, the ethical commonwealth is brought about through the careful plan Kant articulates for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth. In concluding Chapter Five, I will summarize the results of this analysis as they pertain to contemporary scholarship on Kant's highest good and the shadow that these sorts of reflections can cast relative to the Kantian project as I perceive it.

The above explains my overall goal, to articulate the various faces of Kant's moral object fairly and completely since it is through the notion of the highest good that we are led most concretely to the requirements of the moral law. A useful metaphor is the cube. Each of the typical articulations of the highest good is a side of the cube which, seen in isolation, gives only a picture of a square. This is a picture that is unsatisfying to anyone who is more than two dimensional. I have attempted to not only delineate each of the squares, but then to put them together in their natural form as a cube. The squares taken as a whole and assembled properly make up this cube just as each facet of the highest good makes up the program of the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. This is an understanding of the highest good as the moral object of the pure practical reason that is far from being empty, free from
heteronomy, and not superfluous. Instead, it is an object through which we are given a vision of the Kantian moral system, including the concerns of moral individuals, nations and the human race, thereby rounding out Kant's vision of the object of the moral law as it articulates what morality truly requires.
CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE HIGHEST GOOD:
THE SUMMUM BONUM AS DIALECTICAL
IDEAL OF REASON

Throughout his work, Kant was concerned with establishing how it is that human moral agents were freely subject to the moral law. In the second Critique, Kant begins to directly address this consuming passion. How is it that pure reason (objective and necessary) is able to be the determining ground for our action? In other words, how is the moral law, that which resides in the noumenal realm able to serve as a determinant for actions which take place in the empirical world and hence reside in the practical or phenomenal realm? Kant articulates the solution to how moral actions are to take place through the second Critique, where Kant seeks to unify and integrate the human will as he establishes how it is that pure reason can be practical. This establishment anchors the moral law as it demonstrates how we are subject to such a law, and in so doing, anchors and requires its object, the highest good. In so anchoring the object of the law as necessitated by pure practical reason, the highest good manifests itself as a unifying concept insofar as it theoretically unifies the dual aspects of the human will as supersensuously
and sensuously determined. This is its function as a dialectical ideal of reason.

The object of pure practical reason, the highest good as happiness in proportion to worthiness to be happy, had up until the second Critique almost never been treated in a concentrated manner. However in this work, through the Dialectic of pure practical reason, Kant remedies this neglect. In the Dialectic, he gives a concentrated, albeit comparatively brief as compared to Kant's other interests (e.g., freedom, God, etc.), treatment of the highest good. As a result of this treatment, we are left with one of the few sustained statements about the function of the highest good in the Kantian project.

Unlike its appearance in other places in the Kantian corpus, where the role of the highest good must be gleaned from a careful gathering of supporting evidence, in the Dialectic Kant generously delineates aspects of its role and function.

Consequently, in this chapter I will concentrate on this manifestation of the highest good in its appearance as a unifier of the legislation of our reason through its function as a dialectical ideal of reason. It is my thesis that in this section of the second Critique where the highest good manifests itself as unifier we are presented with one of the two major roles of Kant's highest good. In addition, through this presentation we are given hints of the other major role of the highest good, that of a final end for moral action, and moral ideal which
serves as a guide for conduct.¹ These two understandings of the highest good exhaust the presentation of the highest good in the second *Critique*. That is, in presenting both of them, we are left with a complete picture of Kant’s highest good as it appears in this text. Returning to the task of this chapter, I will argue for my thesis through analysis of primarily the second *Critique*, with its theme of grounding the moral law for beings who are members of both a supersensuous and a sensuous realm; that the highest good in its role as a dialectical ideal serves as a unifier of the apparently disparate aspects of the moral self.

Without the unification accomplished by the highest good the call to be moral would fall on the deaf ears of impotent moral beings. That is, insofar as moral agents heed the call of the law, and are not morally impotent, human moral agents require the highest good as that object of the law which unifies the duality of their wills as rational beings. This duality arises as a consequence of Kant’s conception of:

...the will of a rational being, as belonging to the sensuous world, recognizes itself to be, like all other efficient causes, necessarily subject to the laws of causality, while in practical matters, in its other aspect as a being in itself, it is conscious of its existence as

¹The highest good as a moral ideal and guide for conduct will be treated in Chapter Two.
determinable in an intelligible order of things.\textsuperscript{2}

Hence in being human, moral agents reside in this sensuous world as well as in that of the supersensuous. The command to be moral is heard by and heeded by their supersensuous self, while the law, insofar as it is to be effective must dictate actions able to be enacted in the sensuous realm, by the sensuous self. Thus for the law to be enacted there must be some way for the theoretical realm of the supersensuous to become real for the practical realm of the sensuous. If the moral law is not to be regarded as sensuously ineffective, and not merely as that which is binding for our supersensuous self, there must be some means to bridge our separate selves allowing for the supersensuous law to be sensuously effective. In what follows, I will show that this seeming chasm separating these two realms is bridged by the concept of the highest good as it serves as a unifying concept able to bring together both aspects of the self of the moral agent, thereby providing a means for the law to be effective in the empirical realm.

In presenting the highest good as a unifier through its presentation as a dialectical ideal of reason, I will address: 1) the way in which the highest good

\textsuperscript{2}...\textit{...wodurch der Wille eines vernünftigen Wesens, das, als zur Sinnenwelt gehörig, sich gleich anderen wirksamen Ursachen notwendig den Gesetzen der Kausalität unterworfen erkennt, im Praktischen doch zugleich sich auf einer anderen Seite, nämlich als Wesen an sich selbst, seines in einer intelligibelen Ordnung der Dinge Bestimmgaren Daseins bewußt ist,... [CPR, 42 (Beck, 43)].
is established as a relationship of happiness in accordance with worth (virtue). This will require a) an elucidation of “the good” [das Gute], that which Kant refers to as the bonum supremum; and b) an elucidation of happiness as the other concept under which all other objects of the moral will are organized. Next, I will treat 2) the positive statement of the highest good as it is presented as a dialectical ideal of reason that is made up of these two aforementioned components. This discussion will consist of an analysis of the antinomy of pure practical reason and its results. Finally, I will address 3) the consequences of this understanding of the highest good for Kant’s project.

The organization of this chapter follows Kant’s criterion for analysis as it was discussed in the introduction. That is, with a broad general understanding of the highest good as a whole, I will then analyze it relative to its parts, after which, I will address the consequences of this interpretation.

\[\text{3 There is a certain ambiguity in the use of the term object throughout the Critique. Happiness is an object of the will insofar as it is an object of inclination. The good, or evil is an object of the will insofar as it is an object of practical reason. This ambiguity will be treated later in this chapter. See Lewis White Beck, A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) 91 fn and 92.}

\[\text{4 In short, these consequences consist of interpreting the highest good under the rubric of unifier, not only as it appears in the second Critique, but also as it appears elsewhere in the corpus of Kantian commentary.}\]
relative to the function of these parts as they are reintegrated into the whole\

The Summum Bonum and its Parts

Kant's treatment of the highest good in the second *Critique* could be said to begin with his discussion of its primary component, "the good" [das Gute]. Kant's discussion of the good rests on his claim that even though a moral will is to be determined purely by the law, that does not mean that this will is to be without an object. The will must have an object as a consequence of its form. The will, Kant says:

\[
\text{could be defined as the faculty of ends, since they are always determining grounds of the faculty of desire according to principles.}^{6}
\]

If the will were to be without objects, it would be a will without volitions, and to be a human will is to be a will with volitions and ends. However, to be a will with volitions and thus with objects, does not necessarily mean that the will is determined by those volitions and objects. To quote Kant:

\[
\text{Now it is certainly undeniable that every volition must have an}
\]

---

5 As a reminder, Kant suggests that it is the task of analysis to:
..grasp correctly the idea of the whole, and then to see all those parts in their reciprocal interrelations, in the light of their derivation from the concept of the whole.
CPR, 10-11 (Beck, 11).

6 "den Willen durch das Vermögen der Zwecke definieren könnte, indem sie jederzeit Bestimmungsgründe des Begehrensvermögens nach Prinzipien sind... [Ibid., 59 (61)].
Thus in his discussion of the good, Kant demonstrates that the good provides the moral will with an object. This object of pure practical reason allows the will to remain autonomous insofar as it is an object that preserves the moral will’s decision to choose to be determined exclusively by the form of the law and not by its material. Hence in his discussion of the good, Kant proceeds to establish that which will serve as the object of the moral will which has as its determining ground the law. In so doing, Kant is departing from the classical ethical tradition which based its moral principles on the good and did not derive the good from the law, as Kant does. The consequence of the way in which Kant establishes the moral object not only validates the way in which his system values ends for action, but it also stresses that although the will

---

7) Nun ist freilich unleugbar, daß alles Wollen auch einen Gegenstand, mithin eine Materie haben müsse; aber diese ist darum nicht eben der Bestimmungsgrund und Bedingung der Maxime; denn ist sie es so läßt diese sich nicht in allgemein gesetzgebender Form darstellen, [Ibid., 34 (34)].

8) It would be useful here to mention that Kant refers variously to the good as the concept of an object of pure practical reason (CPR, 58 [Beck, 59]); as the sole object of a practical reason (CPR, 58 [Beck, 60]); and as an end that is also a duty (MM, 386 [Gregor, 190]). This is no surprise considering the multifarious ways in which the good serves the task which Kant has delineated for it. This will be treated as the chapter develops, but should be pointed out here in order to highlight the difficulties of Kant’s language.
requires an object, it is not necessarily determined by such an object.⁹

In what follows, I will present Kant's discussion of the good, that which is the object of the good will. This moral concept gains its viability as it serves to establish the means by which there is a connection between the call to morality and its claims on the moral will. Typically concepts gain acceptance to the will through the will's being determined by the concepts of the objects it desires. However, in the case of a moral will, in order to remain autonomous, the will must be determined by nothing but the law itself. For in a moral will,

The mere form of a law, which limits its material, must be a condition for adding this material to the will but not presuppose it as the condition of the will.¹⁰

That is, in the connection between the consequences of the moral law and the law itself, a means must be established through which we carry out that which the law requires while remaining true both to the law and to our autonomy. This task calls into question the relationship between the principles of morality and their ability to determine our moral will. That is, if the moral

---

⁹For a more detailed discussion of the way in which Kant is not indifferent to ends, see Mary Gregor, *Laws of Freedom* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 89ff.

¹⁰Also die bloße Form eines Gesetzes, welche die Materie einschränkt, muß zugleich ein Grund sein, diese Materie zum Willen hinzuzufügen, aber sie nicht vorauszusetzen. [CPR, 35 (Beck, 35)].
law is to determine the will, the will must be free; yet in being free, the ground of the will should not be determined by anything empirical. Hence in being moral, "a free will must find its ground of determination in the law, but independently of the material of the law."11 Although the will of a moral agent is determined independently of the sensuous world, the same will resides in and works to bring things about in the sensuous world. This occurs as the will brings about objects or states of affairs in the world. Yet in being free, the ground of the determination of the will should not lie in the objects it seeks to bring about, because the determination of the autonomous will must only be subject to the law in its ground of determination. When the law of the will is the will's ground of determination, the will determines itself and is thus autonomous. In short, if the object of the law is to be added to the will as part and parcel of the will, and the will is to remain autonomous, its object must be determined by the law and not otherwise.12

By comparison, in a sensuously determined or heteronomous will, the will is directly determined by an object, or the concepts of objects.13 These

---

11...so muß ein freier Wille, unabhängig von der Materie des Gesetzes, dennoch einen Bestimmungsgrund in dem Gesetze antreffen. Es ist aber außer der Materie des Gesetzes nichts...[Ibid., 29 (28)].

12Ibid., 58 (60).

13Kant is particularly careless about his determination here with regard to whether the will is determined by concepts of objects or objects themselves,
objects are sought as a consequence of the will desiring these objects. That is, the sensuously determined will is determined by the concept of the objects it desires. In any will, when an object serves as the determining ground of the will, the object is brought about through principles or maxims which serve as the conditions of the action insofar as they are the conditions that the agent fulfills as she works towards bringing about these objects. Consequently, all principles have material insofar as they seek to bring about the material of an object, insofar as the material is determined by its object. Yet it must be differentiated that in bringing about objects, although all principles have material (since all volitions have objects), all principles are not material principles. A principle is called a material principle only if its material directly causes the action brought about by the principle. That is, when an action is brought about as a direct consequence of the material of the object, the will can be said to have been determined by the material of the object; thus the will was determined by a material principle. Hence, a will that is determined by an object has a material principle or maxim.

It should, however, be noted that a will can still be subject to bringing about objects and not have a material maxim. This is the case when the material of the will has not determined the object, but something other than

---

see footnote number seven, as well as Beck's discussion of the very same, and an example of the problems with this translation, [Ibid., 58 (59)].
the object provides the condition for the principle or maxim which aims at bringing about the object or state of affairs.\textsuperscript{14}

Consequently, if the Kantian moral law is to have any efficacy in the world, in that it is able to allow the will to pursue objects, it must be able to allow the will to bring about objects or states of affairs independently of the will being determined externally. That is, the law must be able to capitalize on the will's ability to not always be determined by material principles in its realization of objects. Without this freedom from material determination all determinations of the law are contingent, empirical, and unable to lead to the law as a determination of the will, because:

\begin{quote}
All practical principles which presuppose an object (material) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are without exception empirical and can furnish no practical laws.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Therefore, freedom from heteronomy is only possible when the decision as to whether or not to bring about an action (realize an object) is made independently of a material principle. That is, there is no object presupposed as the determining ground of the will. Thus the will is able to be free from


\textsuperscript{15}Alle praktischen Prinzipien, die ein Objekt (Materie) des Begehungsvermögens als Bestimmungsgrund des Willens voraussetzen, sind insgesamt empirisch und können keine praktischen Gesetze abgeben. [CPR, 21 (Beck 19)].
empirical determination. In these freely determined instances, the maxim or principle of the will is not determined by the object or end towards which it aims. So, if the will is not to be sensuously determined, which would be impossible if the will were to remain autonomous, the source of the determination of the will must lie elsewhere than in its empirically determined objects. In stressing that the will can possibly be free from direct determination by objects, Kant asserts that the will can be free, and such a free will has chosen to be determined "by the law of reason" alone. 16

Yet if the will is to have any effect, the will must bring about objects. Kant has always recognized that to be human is to be purposive, seeking to satisfy the conatus of human existence by bringing about objects and satisfying desires. Hence, if the law is to be practically effective it must not thwart what it is to be human, nor must it serve the sensuous aspects of the very same. 17 Consequently, a moral will does bring about objects; yet as was stated above, in so doing, these objects must not be the ground of the will but rather objects that come about as a consequence of the will being determined by the law. Hence, if the will is to be subject to the law, in seeking its objects, these

16 *sofern dieser durchs Vernunftgesetz bestimmt wird...[Ibid., 60 (62)]. In addition, see Beck, Commentary, 130ff.*

objects must be pursued and organized under an object or consist of an object that will be compatible with practical reason. As such, the object will hold sway with the will, and will be determined by the principles of the moral law. That is, this object will fulfill the demands of our supersensuous self as the object is a consequence of and not a ground of the law.

The object that Kant proposes as the object of the moral will is the concept of the moral good; for the good can be the only concept of an object of the pure practical reason as such. In being so determined, Kant informs us that:

By a concept of an object of practical reason I understand the idea of an object as an effect possible through freedom.\(^{18}\)

The good satisfies the above criterion insofar as it conforms with the requirements of freedom as reflected in the free will. This is the case since the good is derived from the practical law and in no way serves as its ground. In so doing, it allows the will to remain autonomous, freely determined, and effective insofar as it has an object.

As the object of a practical reason, the good serves as “a necessary

\(^{18}\)Unter einem Begriffe eines Gegenstandes der praktischen Vernunft verstehe ich die Vorstellung eines Objekts als einer möglichen Wirkung durch Freiheit. [CPR, 58 (Beck, 59)].
object of the faculty of desire...according to a principle of reason."\(^{19}\) It is a necessary object insofar as its pursuit is not optional. That is, the good is an object of desire as compared to evil, which is an object of aversion. It is to be desired as a consequence of the setting of a good will. That is, the effects possible by means of an autonomous will are necessarily good insofar as the autonomy of the will is preserved. Furthermore, its origin and worth lie in practical reason and the principles of practical reason and only as such is the good allowable as a concept of pure practical reason—an effect possible through freedom.\(^{20}\)

Throughout this analysis it should be emphasized that Kant has two different meanings at work for "object". An object can be something out there in the world for which we have a desire and thus we seek to bring about the particular state of affairs through our action, by which the desire for this something is satisfied. Hence the object is an object of desire. In addition,

\(^{19}\) *einen notwendigen Gegenstand des Begehrenden...nach einem Prinzip der Vernunft*. [Ibid., (60)].

\(^{20}\) It should be noted here that Kant refers to the good [*das Gute*] (as well as evil [*das Böse*]) variously as an object of practical reason and as an object of pure practical reason. This variation can be seen in both forms in one page of Kant’s text (e.g. 58). However, in the title to this section he refers to The Concept of an Object of Pure Practical Reason [*Von dem Begriffe eines Gegenstandes der reinen praktischen Vernunft*], hence I have followed Kant’s lead in referring to the good as that object of pure practical reason (as has Beck in his commentary).
Kant uses the term object to describe an internal setting of the will insofar as this setting forms a particular disposition of the will. That is, the particular setting of the will is the will's object, (or another translation could be the will's objective). The setting of the will, as good or evil, is the object of the will as a consequence of the will having made the adoption of this particular moral disposition its object or goal. With relation to the moral will and its setting, the form of the principles of the law have determined what as an object, for the disposition or setting of the will, is and is not good.

The object of the will, as the object of pure practical reason, is determined by the law and in no way externally determined. This determination of goodness occurs irrespective of whether or not the object is possible or actual insofar as it takes place in the world. This determination of the will (in adopting the good as its object), presents the moral object—the good—to the will as its determination, and as the object of its principles for action. This notion of action, since it coincides with the inner disposition of a moral will coincides with the latter sense of object as discussed above.\(^{21}\)

Hence the good, as the object of pure practical reason is not an effect of action insofar as it consists of bringing about a state of affairs in the world. This object has not material. Instead, the good consists in the act of the will

\(^{21}\)CPR, 58 (Beck, 59); see also Beck, Commentar y, 133-36.
in committing or determining itself. Thus, a good will in having the good as its object has itself as its object, since in so doing the will provides itself with its own underlying moral disposition. This can be likened to the way in which humanity serves as an end in itself, as the categorical imperative takes humanity as its object. In the case of both the good and humanity, the end as object does not consist of a state of affairs in the world as much as it refers to what comes before states of affairs, as a requirement to be included within the command of the law. Both ends—humanity and the moral good—are compatible with the command of the law and thereby follow from it as they bring vision to the law in supplying an object for the will.

This good is compatible as an object, with the moral law, insofar as it consists of that status of the will as it is a will determined by the moral law. It is an internally required state of affairs, as a setting of the will morally determined such that “a principle of reason is thought of as already the determining ground of the will... (and thus as a determining ground only through the lawful form of the maxim.)”22 Through the good, it is as if Kant sets as the object of the moral will “a moral will.” Thus the object of a moral will as the good, is a will of a certain disposition. In this manner, the will has

22*ein Vernunftprinzip wird schon an sich als der Bestimmungsgrund des Willens gedacht...(also bloß surch die gesetzliche Form der Maxime.)* [CPR, 62 (Beck, 64)].
itself, and its own perfection as its object.\textsuperscript{23}

In the moral will having the good as its object and hence its own perfection as its object, Kant is demanding that the will be virtuous. In the Analytic, Kant does not make this point completely evident, but when the analytic is read in conjunction with what Kant later says about the good in the dialectic this point becomes obvious.\textsuperscript{24} In further describing the good will as a virtuous will, the demands of the law are made more clear. That is, through understanding what Kant means by virtue and the command to be virtuous, we learn what is demanded by the law as a consequence of the recognition that the good is the only possible object of the will. For example, with regard to virtue, Kant says:

\begin{quote}
The utmost that finite practical reason can accomplish is to make sure of the unending progress of its maxims toward this model (the holy will) and of the constancy of the finite rational being in making continuous progress. This is virtue, and as a naturally
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23}CPR, 58ff (Beck, 60ff); see also Beck, \textit{Commentary}, 135ff.

\textsuperscript{24}In the beginning of Chapter Two of the Dialectic, Kant says: 
\textit{Daß Tugend (als die Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein) die oberste Bedingung alles dessen, was uns nur wünschenswert scheinen mag, mithin auch aller unserer Bewerbung um Glückseligkeit, mithin das oberste Gut sei, ist in der Analytik bewiesen worden.} [CPR, 110 (Beck 114)].
acquired faculty, it can never be perfect...25

Virtue, for Kant, means nothing more than a serious concerted effort towards successful moral progress. In being human, Kant recognizes that we are not holy wills, but rather a combination of what is supersensuous and sensuous. Thus, in calling us to be virtuous, being virtuous is no more than being a "moral disposition in conflict."26 However, a virtuous will is also no less than constant striving towards making the human will in conflict approximate a holy will insofar as it is possible, as determined by the law, and the object of the moral will, the good.

This good is obviously not a subjective sense of good. Instead, this good is that moral good to which any rational will would assent, merely because it is a rational will. Kant stresses that the good is not optional. It is not to be confused with any sort of hedonistic or pleasure based good. It is the good that springs from the law and not vice versa. This is the case because:

...the moral law is that which first defines the concept of the good—so far as it absolutely deserves this name—and makes it

---

25Von welchem ins Unendliche gehenden Progressus seiner Maximen und Unwandelbarkeit derselben zum beständigen Fortschreiten sicher zu sein: d.i. Tugend, das Höchste ist, was endliche praktische Vernunft bewirken kann, die selbst wiederum wenigstens als natürlich erworbenes Vermögen nie vollendet sein kann, [Ibid., 32/33 (33)].

26moralische Gesinnung im Kampfe, [Ibid., 84 (87)].
possible.\textsuperscript{27} 

As such, its pursuit is necessary to the will that is subject to the law of reason. We relate to the good as an inner call to perfection through which our own will is made to be as moral as possible. The good relates to the moral will and the bringing about of states of affairs which are determined by this setting of the will; that is, the good determines those actions brought about through the maxims dictated by the good will. This is the case because:

...good (or evil) always indicates a relation to the will so far as it is determined by the law of reason to make something its object, for the will is never determined directly by the object and our conception of it; rather, the will is a faculty which can make an object real. Thus good or evil are properly referred to actions and not the the sensory state of the person.\textsuperscript{28}

In a good will, or in a will that has adopted the good as its object, actions that follow from this will are perfectly good, because their possibility as moral is already secured since the form of the law and "the object, so far as the object

\textsuperscript{27}sondern umgekehrt das moralische Gesetz allererest den Begriff des Guten, sofern es diesen Name schlechthin verdient, bestimme und möglich mache, [Ibid., 64 (66)].

\textsuperscript{28}Das Gute oder Böse bedeutet aber jederzeit eine Beziehung auf den Willen, sofern dieser durchs Vernunftgesetz bestimmt wird, sich etwas zu seinem Objekte zu machen; wie er denn durch das Objekt und dessen Vorstellung niemals unmittelbar bestimmt wird, sondern ein Vermögen ist, sich eine Regel der vernunft zur Bewegursache einer Handlung dadurch ein Object wirklich werden kann) zu machen. Das Gute oder Böse wird also eigentlich auf Handlungen, nicht auf den Empfindungszustand der Person bezogen; [Ibid., 60 (62)].
is the moral good, of the maxim coincide.”29 It is in this manner that the moral good serves as the criterion by which actions are to be measured. As the moral will that has the good as its object has a good disposition, all of its objects are thus conditioned and can thereby be considered good as well. Thus, actions that follow from the moral good are perfectly good actions that further the moral status of the good will.

To summarize, the moral good is the object that the moral law holds before us as a command to make our will more moral and to perfect our rational nature insofar as it consists of what it is to be a rational will and thus rationally will that which brings about moral objects. As the object of a pure practical reason and determined as such it has the ability to serve as the measuring stick by which we can assess our actions and hence it also serves as that which classifies actions and objects in the world as desirable, relative to the law. For a truly moral action would have its source in such a will and thereby be good.

With this presentation and analysis of the good in place, we can move on to its relation to that other part of the highest good, happiness. That is, the moral good alone is not enough to account for all of our actions; it accounts only for those actions that are perfectly good insofar as they follow

29Beck, Commentary, 134.
from the good will. This could be a possible state of affairs for angels, or for other non-sensuous beings, but it falls terribly short of the human condition. Hence, as we are both noumenal and phenomenal moral agents, we have myriad desires, and obviously not every volition will have as its object, or be able to be conditioned by, some thing that is completely good. Even so, this does not mean that the resulting object is thus perfectly evil. Kant recognizes that as humans, we would have desires for other things than those which would fit under the criterion of the concept of the object of the pure moral good. These resulting desires for which the purely moral will and its object cannot alone account, Kant terms happiness.

In what follows, I will present a brief discussion of the other component in Kant's highest good, happiness. I will do so only briefly since a lengthy treatment of happiness is not germane to this task. Instead, what is presently at stake is: 1) why does Kant seek to establish happiness as the second component of the highest good and 2) what broadly does Kant mean by happiness in this context? Obviously, both of these are very complex questions which, in their abundance of controversy, have been treated elsewhere.\(^{30}\) I will seek to avoid these controversies through beginning my

\(^{30}\)For an in-depth discussion of the controversy surrounding the role of happiness in Kant's ethic, and a defense of its importance, see Victoria S. Wike, *Kant on Happiness in Ethics*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
discussion of happiness in Kant with the presupposition of the veracity of Kant’s own claim that happiness plays an important role in his ethical project.

Through the moral good, Kant has established what he calls the supreme good. As such, it is the unconditional condition, that which is not subordinate to any other condition. The moral good, as a setting of the will, is that condition under which all other pursuits of the will must be conditioned. However, other things are desirable to the moral will. As has been previously established, in order for the moral will to be truly practical, it must bring things about in the world. Yet, the good only accounts for the objects which can be subsumed under that which is wholly moral. If Kant’s account of the moral will were to stop here, many desires for other objects would be left out of the picture. To completely account for the objects of the moral will, Kant articulates that the moral good is not the only good, that is; for the most complete good, “happiness is also required.”

Happiness is required as the second component of the highest good because the moral law would be absurd if those that were worthy of happiness were to go without it. As strange as this may seem, since everyone is aware of many cases where seemingly worthy people are terribly unhappy through no

\[^{31}\text{CPR, 110 (Beck 114).}\]

\[^{32}\text{wird auch Glückseligkeit dazu erforderl, [Ibid., 110 (114)].}\]
fault of their own, Kant holds that to merit happiness through moral worth, and go without, would demonstrate that the moral law was contradictory. The law would lead to a contradiction insofar as the law would be creating a command that would lead to the perversion of the natural end of the moral species as it seeks to fulfill its own happiness. Kant explains why this is the case, as he explains that happiness is required to be achieved by those deserving of it,

not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself his end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which impartially regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves. For to be in need of happiness and also worthy of it and yet not to partake of it could not be in accordance with the complete volition of an omnipotent rational being, if we assume such only for the sake of the argument. 33

The point of this passage consists in Kant’s appeal to the order in the world that is perpetuated by the moral law and furthered by the idea of an omnipotent rational being. In such an ordered world, if one were worthy of happiness, such happiness would be forthcoming. The world must be so ordered, according to Kant, or else the moral law would be contradictory.

33 Zwar nicht bloß in den parteiischen Augen der Person, die sich selbst zum Zwecke macht, sondern selbst im Urteil einer unparteiischen Vernunft, die jene überhaupt in der Welt als Zweck an sich betrachtet. Denn der Glückseligkeit bedürftig, ihrer auch würdig, dennoch aber derselben nicht teilhaftig zu sein, kann mit dem vollkommenen Wollen eines vernünftigen Wesens, welches zugleich all Gewalt hätte, wenn wir uns auch nur ein solches zum Versuche denken, gar nicht zusammen bestehen. [Ibid., 110 (114/5)].
Kant has thereby established happiness as that other aspect of the highest
good such that the moral law is not to be in conflict with the natural ends of
human moral agents.

In order for the highest good to live up to its claim of being the *bonum
consummatum*, or most complete good, it must thereby account for happiness as
a desire of rational beings. That is, in providing a complete object for pure
practical reason, the highest good must actually be the will’s most complete
object. As it is, moral interests alone do not completely account for the
interests of the human moral will. It is the nature of all human will, moral or
otherwise, to desire happiness. Kant says, “To be happy is necessarily the
desire of every rational but finite being.” If the highest good were not to
account for happiness, Kant’s highest good would further supplement the
various arguments propounded against Kant which accuse his moral system of
not being a realistic one for rational but finite beings. In addition, in failing to
account for happiness, the highest good would not live up to its claim of being
the most complete object of the moral will.

From the above discussion it is clear that the highest good, in seeking to
be the most complete object of the moral will, does include happiness. Hence,
it is left to consider what Kant means by happiness in this context. In the case

---

34*Glücklich zu sein, ist notwendig das Verlangen jedes vernünftigen, aber endlichen Wesens* [Ibid., 25 (24)].
of happiness as the second component of the highest good, Kant means by happiness the non-moral goods that the agent pursues. This sense of happiness can best be understood as a sensible one. In this sense, happiness is a "determinant of the faculty of desire" through which we fulfill our non-moral needs.\textsuperscript{35} Kant further classifies happiness as:

the condition of a rational being in the world, in whose whole existence everything goes according to wish and will.\textsuperscript{36}

This is a sensible definition of happiness insofar as Kant is careful to express that it is a condition of happiness for a being "in the world". This condition is comprised of those objects that are pursued merely for the sensuously positive effects they may have on us.

Furthermore, once we have adopted the moral good as a determining principle for the moral will; we are still left with the task of pursuing objects in the world. In so doing, not all objects will necessarily be determined by the moral will, some objects that are brought about by the law will not even have moral import, (e.g. what flavor ice cream to eat on a hot summer day).

Through being human, we are required to pursue some ends that are not perfectly moral; however, this does not mean that they are immoral either.

\textsuperscript{35}Bestimmungsgrund seines Begehungsvermögens [Ibid., 25 (24)].

\textsuperscript{36}Glückseligkeit ist der Zustand eines vernünftigen Wesens in der Welt, dem es im Ganzen seiner Existenz alles nach Wunsch und Willen geht. [Ibid., 124 (129)].
About this very condition, Lewis White Beck writes that a consequence of our "devotion to the moral good does not require renunciation of other goods;...Some desires are compatible with devotion to the good or can be made compatible with it." That is, although we are faced with desires that may compete with the moral good, by their mere presence we are not doomed to failure before we make a moral action. Other desires that are present in the will are entirely permissible without running into contradiction with the moral law. Yet these ends must be subsumed, conditioned and tempered by the influence of our perfected or sought to be perfected rational nature, which seeks as its highest end its own perfection.

In short, although we are to supremely desire the good, it is clear that other desires can be compatible with this over-arching desire, namely those desires Kant organizes under the desire for happiness. This is permissible within the Kantian scheme as long as the desire for happiness is subsumed under the determination of that will which has the moral good as its object. As Kant explains:

...virtue (as the worthiness to be happy) is the supreme condition of whatever appears to us to be desireable and thus of all our

37 Beck, Commentary, 136.

38 As Beck explains, "The only purpose of moral action as such is to secure the reign of law, and every moral action in part accomplishes this aim." [Ibid., 136].
pursuit of happiness...\textsuperscript{39}

Hence, the desire for happiness need not be thrown away, although it must be tempered by the good, and pursued only on condition that the form of its pursuit is dictated by the good.

Thus, in the same way the moral good, as an object of the moral will, serves as the rubric under which all perfectly good moral action can be subsumed, happiness serves as an overarching rubric under which all of our desires for objects of self interest (as non-moral) can be subsumed. With these treatments of each of the constitutive parts of Kant's highest good in place, the analysis now moves on to that way in which the highest good is established as a unifier of the duality of our human wills. As a part of the recognition that the highest good is made up of two heteronomous parts, Kant recognizes that all of the not purely moral objects of desire must still be compatible with and not contradict the desire for the absolutely moral, moral good. Thus, the will's desire for the moral good, in desiring that it be a morally good will is that which is required as the will's over-arching desire.

\textsuperscript{39} Daß Tugend (als die Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein) die oberste Bedingung alles dessen, was uns nur wünschenswert scheinen mag, mithin auch aller unserer Bewerbung um Glückseligkeit, [CPR, 110 (Beck 114)].
The Highest Good as a Dialectical Ideal of Reason

In the Dialectic section of the second Critique, the highest good appears against the backdrop of unpacking reason's confusion over what the practically unconditioned is, a consequence which demonstrates that the highest good provides for the completeness of human experience and the unification of all of the human desires under one concept. Through the concept of the highest good, as it unifies the heterogeneous aspects of ourselves, Kant gains for the moral project a theoretical completeness and unity. In what follows I will concentrate on Kant's demonstration of the highest good as a unifying concept of reason as it appears in the Dialectic section of the second Critique.

Since it has been previously established that desires for happiness are compatible with the supreme moral good, Kant points us towards the pursuit of something still beyond the supreme moral good through which our pursuit of the supreme moral good and our pursuit of happiness are able to be united. That is, this supreme moral good is not the highest good, it is not the summum bonum. For it is only through the summum bonum as the unifier of the two heterogeneous aspects of existence (virtue and happiness) that we are provided with "the concept of a supreme end which unites all other ends."40 It is in this sense that I refer to the highest good as a unifier, as that which

---

40 Beck, Commentary, 242.
unites all other ends. That is, the summum bonum is that end, as the object of a moral agent, through which the two heterogeneous ends of ourselves are united into one. This unification of ends is not satisfied by the supreme object of the moral law, the "good", since that is merely the object that is desired by and rules over the moral will. The moral good alone is unable to provide that object which unifies the other ends that arise as a consequence of moral agents being both phenomenal and noumenal. That is, there is a difference in the notions of the good as they are presented in the Analytic and the Dialectic. 41

To summarize, in the Analytic, we have the moral good as it has been propounded in the above sections, while in the Dialectic we arrive at the highest good, that to which we will proceed. The highest good involves a moral system that entails an amalgamation of our phenomenal and noumenal selves. As such, it must incorporate both moral and non-moral, or even morally neutral desires. This requires a connection between the moral good and these other goods under a moral system. 42

41 Kant refers to the highest good variously as both an end and an object. This point is rarely addressed directly in the secondary literature, however mention of it is made explicitly by John Atwell in his work *Ends and Principles in Kant's Moral Thought*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers) 1986, 102ff.

42 As Beck explains in his commentary:
While the Analytic, in the doctrine of the moral good, taught that the moral good is the sole object of pure practical reason, the Dialectic does not abstract from all the diverse purposes of will
This connection of human ends and objects, which Kant accomplishes through the highest good, is the a priori synthetic combination of the moral good as bonum supremum and the totality of all other goods, which Kant sums up as happiness. Kant names this concept the bonum consummatum or the complete good. This combination accounts for the unity and ability of the pure practical reason to account for the pursuit of all ends. It is a unifying concept of the dual aspect of our will as phenomenal and noumenal. In addition, this unity is able to account for our human moral purposiveness as it projects an end for moral action that accounts for all ends of the moral individual by accounting for happiness conditioned by virtue.\(^4\)

This unity is expressed by Kant as an a priori unity.\(^4\) As such, it is not an empirical unity; but rather, the highest good as a unifier is a theoretical concept in that it accounts for the unity of happiness and virtue in the theoretical realm. That is, virtue and happiness are enacted in the practical realm, but the issue of their unification is an issue for theoretical reason, “a

\[\text{but defines the condition under which they can and must be synthesized in a single system.}\]

[Beck, Commentary, 242].

\(^4\)CPR, 110 (Beck, 114).

\(^4\)For as Kant says, “The highest good is a synthesis of concepts...” and as such a synthesis, “this combination is know as a priori.” “sondern eine Synthesis der Begriffe sei. Weil aber diese Verbindung als a priori, [Ibid.,113 (117)].
practical problem which is assigned solely by pure reason and without any concurrence of sensuous incentives."

As an aside, it is of interest here to note that although in this section of the second Critique Kant refers to the sumrnum bonum, the highest good as the bonum consummatum, he refers to this very same concept in varied ways, if only in this work alone. That is, in the second Critique alone, Kant refers to the highest good as the sumrnum bonum, bonum consummatum, the Kingdom of God and the intelligible world. For present purposes, my investigation is only concerned with the sumrnum bonum as it is expressed as the highest good which is made up of the bonum supremum and happiness, resulting in the most perfect good or bonum consummatum. Insofar as this is the notion of the highest good as bonum consummatum, with which this aspect of the analysis is concerned, this concept has been treated.

---

45praktischen Aufgabe, welche ohne allen Beitritt sinnlicher Triebsfedern bloß durch reine Vernunft vorgeschrieben wird, [Ibid., 124 (128)].

46As bonum consummatum see: CPR, 110 (Beck, 114); as Kingdom of God see: CPR, 129 and 131 (Beck, 133 and 135); as intelligible word see: CPR, 133 (Beck, 137). See also Beck's mention of the very same, in which he notes the disparity of terms but deems it unnecessary to give them individual treatment [Beck, Commentary, 242, (fn 11)].

47Insofar as Kant describes the highest good as consisting of the kingdom of God, that conception of the sumrnum bonum will receive treatment in Chapter Three, while the conception of the sumrnum bonum as an intelligible world will receive treatment in Chapter Two.
Once Kant articulates the summum bonum as *bonum consummatum* he moves on to address how it is that this concept is possible. This is the matter with which the antinomy of practical reason is concerned. This concern must take place in the antinomy:

...since the possibility of the highest good therefore rests on no empirical principles, the deduction of this concept must be transcendental. It is a priori (morally) necessary to bring forth the highest good through the freedom of the will; the condition of its possibility, therefore, must rest solely on a priori grounds of knowledge.\(^{48}\)

In the antinomy, Kant seeks to establish how it is that the highest good as the unity of two heterogeneous concepts of our will is possible. This possibility, since it surpasses expression through the categories of space and time, is established transcendentially. The establishment of the highest good since it is such a complex object and morally necessary has its origin and establishment in a priori reason. Thus, the possibility of the highest good is grounded through pure practical reason's a priori expression in theoretical reason.

Furthermore, the possibility of the highest good is of central focus throughout the rest of the Dialectic. With regard to this Dialectic, it is somewhat unusual that Kant would have a dialectic of pure practical reason.

\(^{48}\)Und die Möglichkeit des höchsten Guts also auf keinen empirischen Prinzipien beruht so wird die Deduktion dieses Begriffs transzendental sein müssen. Es ist a priori (moralisch) notwendig, das höchste Gut durch Freiheit des Willens hervorzubringen; es muß also auch die Bedingung der Möglichkeit desselben lediglich auf Erkenntnisgründen a priori beruhen. [CPR, 113 (Beck, 117)].
since it is not expected that in practice practical reason would over-extend itself. However, Kant promises us a dialectic that will address an illusion of practical reason as exposed through its very own judgments. It is important to appreciate that the Dialectic does not arise as a consequence of pure practical reason in its practical use. Instead, it arises as pure practical reason seeks to go beyond its practical use.

In his analysis of this Dialectic, Beck very succinctly presents its implicit assumptions. The following summarizes his presentation.

1) So far as pure practical reason is practical, it has no dialectic and creates no illusions because it issues no declarative statements.
2) So far as pure practical reason is reason, it seeks the unconditioned condition for its actions and judgments and decisions.
3) In seeking the unconditioned, pure practical reason is theoretical reason employing practical data.
4) The unconditioned condition for pure practical reason is the summum bonum, that which is at stake in the present antinomy. 49

Through the highest good, Kant establishes the concept through which practical reason searches for its unconditioned condition. In this notion of the highest good, not only are our heteronomous ends united, but as Beck argues, we theoretically seek to unite the pursuit of our theoretical and practical

49 Beck, Commentary, 242-246.
reason as well. This can also be seen as unification of the supersensuous and sensuous realms. That is, we have our pursuit of the ends of the supersensuous realm—the moral good and the sensuous realm—happiness. They are united in the highest good. Furthermore, we have the pursuit of an unconditioned condition insofar as we are supersensuously driven by our reason; this is the unconditioned condition for those conditions subject to our practical sensuous concerns. As such, the highest good as the unconditioned condition serves as the sum of all conditions (virtue and happiness) thereby uniting the duality of our human nature.

To summarize, it is very important to appreciate what is being accomplished as a result of this Dialectic. That is, the highest good is being considered from a theoretical perspective; or at the very least, its practical aspects are being considered theoretically. As a result of this consideration, we are left with a concept of the highest good which unifies the two legislations of

50 Beck argues that this is the case since in addressing the highest good we are led to a consideration of the question, “What may I hope?” [Ibid.]

51 As Beck explains:
Explicitly, there is one illusion arising from the fact that practical reason is reason and therefore seeks the unconditioned....it may seek the unconditioned as the totality of the object of pure practical reason in the concept of the highest good and seek to know it theoretically. [Ibid., 241].
our will. This is a unification of ourselves as noumenal and phenomenal and as supersensuous and sensuous selves. This unification also manifests itself as we consider not only the way in which our supersensuous and sensuous concerns of reason are united, but also the way in which our supersensuous and sensuous ends as moral agents are united. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, it is through the highest good that our supersensuous end—the moral good, is united with our sensuous end—happiness. The consequences of this will be discussed further, once the nature of the antinomy has been articulated.

With this background established, we now turn to the issue of the antinomy itself. In what follows, I will summarize Kant’s antinomy, the structure of which has been called into question. That is, it has been questioned whether or not what Kant has expressed as an antinomy of pure practical reason is actually a legitimate antinomy.52 For present purposes I will ignore this controversy since it is not germane to the issue at hand, which is what is at stake in the antinomy for Kant, as Kant presents it.

To begin, Kant denies the following thesis: striving for happiness produces a ground for a virtuous disposition. This denial is obvious as a

52 Lewis White Beck argues that the antinomy of the Dialectic is not a real antinomy insofar as it does not contain a real thesis and antithesis, and hence there is not so much at stake in this antinomy. [Ibid., 247ff].
consequence of Kant’s discussion of the law as that alone which can serve for the ground of a virtuous disposition. If the striving for happiness were to serve as a ground for a disposition, the disposition would not only be heteronomous, but far from virtuous. With regard to the antithesis of the antinomy, Kant asserts that it is not absolutely impossible that a virtuous disposition could necessarily produce happiness. This is false insofar as a virtuous disposition is regarded as the form of causality in the world of sense. That is, it is false if existence is merely understood as that existence which occurs in the sensuously conditioned world, as the only mode of existence that is possible for a rational being.  

Kant allows that it is possible for a virtuous disposition to necessarily produce happiness if:

1) the moral agent is justified in thinking of her existence as that of a noumenon in an intelligible world.
2) the moral agent has in the moral law a pure intellectual determining ground of her causality insofar as it takes place in the sensuous world.

It is not impossible that the morality of intention should have a necessary relation as cause to happiness as an effect in the sensuous world.  

---

53 Es muß also entweder die Begierde nach Glückseligkeit die Bewegursache zu Maximen der Tugend, oder die maxime der Tugend muß die wirkende Ursache der Glückseligkeit sein. [CPR, 113, (Beck 117/118)].

54 Ibid., 113/114 (117/118).
Hence in typical Kantian style, the apparent antinomy is put to rest. This quieting is accomplished as we come to the appreciation that we reside in the noumenal as well as the phenomenal realms. This antinomy arises as the establishment of the highest good as the combination of morality with happiness was called into question. The questioning arises Kant says through the misconception of difficulty in conceiving of bringing about the highest good. Obviously, if we were limited to the world of sense and its faculties the highest good would be alarmingly difficult. Yet when the relationship between appearances is no longer perceived as a relationship of these appearances to things in themselves, the moral law is given vision as it appears through the actual noumenal realm.

The notion of the highest good so expressed is accomplished by means of the cause and effect relation of virtue to happiness. This relation is indirect, since any sort of direct causality would be impossible since it would somehow require an immediate reward of happiness for virtuous action, requiring direct control over the causality of nature (imaginable perhaps, but nonetheless impossible in the Kantian scheme). This indirect relation is mediated by God which Kant thereby describes as "an intelligible Author of nature." Hence this combination of virtue and happiness can occur only

---

55 Eines intelligibelen Urhebers der Natur [Ibid., 115 (119)].
contingently in a system of nature which is merely the object of the senses and, as such, is not sufficient for the highest good. 56

It is through this apparent antinomy that the highest good accomplishes a primary aspect of its ultimate role in the Kantian project. 57 This role consists in the ability of the summum bonum to deal with the way in which pure reason in its practical application is able to account for and unify the two pursuits of a finite rational being. These pursuits consist of the pursuit of the ends and objects of the supersensuously and sensuously determined moral agent. The question of how the summum bonum is possible is answered through the antinomy. That is, the possibility of the highest good is guaranteed as we recognize (as in the other antinomies) that we are not always limited to seek moral possibilities in the realm of nature. For present purposes the solution to the antinomy is of little import. What is of consequence is the role that it provides for the summum bonum. 58 Thus relative to its

56 The constitutive role which God plays, as the guarantor of the highest good will receive in depth treatment in Chapters Three and Five.

57 Lewis White Beck has contended that this role as a dialectical ideal of reason is the only role that the highest good legitimately serves in Kant’s project. The incorrectness and limitedness of this position will be treated in Chapter Five.

58 The only other possible consequence of the summum bonum is its serving as the anchor for the postulates that guarantee its possibility. See Beck, Commentary, 248ff. In addition, this perspective is given considerable treatment in the work of Sharon Anderson-Gold. See especially Sharon
presentation in the Dialectic of this Critique, the role of the highest good is limited to that of a unifier insofar as it is a dialectical ideal of reason, the consequences of which entail its accomplishing the unification of the dual aspects of ourselves as moral agents in the world.

The Consequences of the Highest Good as Unifier

In the previous sections of this chapter, the highest good was established as that concept which serves as a unifier of our supersensuous and sensuously determined moral selves. This assertion has led us to examine the highest good as a unifier of these two disparate parts of our moral selves. To summarize, in this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that one of the major roles that the highest good plays is that of unifier. By unifier, I mean that the highest good unifies the dual aspects of the human will insofar as it is supersensuously driven to be grounded in the moral law (and thus to pursue the moral good as its object) and insofar as it is sensuously driven to fulfill its empirical desires (and thus pursue its own happiness). This was demonstrated to be the case as a result of the way in which the highest good is established as a relationship between the good, as the object of the moral will and happiness.

This is a union whose possibility, as a dialectical ideal of reason, was treated in the antinomy of pure practical reason. Thus, as a result of this analysis we are left with a comprehensive understanding of the highest good as unifier through which we are informed as to how it is to serve in the Kantian moral project, not only as it appears in the second Critique, but also as it appears elsewhere in the corpus of Kantian commentary. With the highest good established as unifier, we can next understand the way in which it is presented in the second major role, that of a final end for action, or moral ideal which serves as a guide for conduct.
CHAPTER 2

THE AIM OF THE HIGHEST GOOD:
THE SUMMEM BONUM AS MORAL IDEAL

In Chapter One, I sought to establish that within the Kantian corpus, especially as evidenced in the second Critique, there is a conception of the highest good as unifier. This is the case insofar as the highest good unifies the dual aspects of the supersensuously and sensuously determined human will through the highest good’s function as a dialectical ideal of reason. In so doing, the highest good provides the human moral will with an object. In and of itself, this conception of the highest good leaves Kant’s complex object open to the accusation that it does nothing for us in our moral lives. Granted, it is through this conception of the highest good that the ends of ourselves as both supersensuous and sensuous beings are united in an object of the moral will; however, as it thus stands, this object alone contributes nothing towards the management of our day to day moral concerns. In short, Chapter One demonstrated that the moral law provides a unified object or end to the moral will through the highest good, but in the way in which this object is established and, so far, in the object itself, this concept gives no guidelines to
our moral life beyond the guide of the command to pursue the moral good.¹

Although it has been established that the highest good serves as an object for the human moral will through which its pursuits of various human goods (the moral good and the natural good) are unified, I will argue that this is not an exhaustive understanding of the highest good. In this chapter, I will defend the view that accepting the fact that the highest good serves as a unifier of the human will (as established in Chapter One), does not preclude another role for the highest good. In short, unification is not the complete role of the highest good. In addition to its role as unifier, the highest good also provides the human moral agent with a moral ideal. It is my thesis that the highest good manifests itself as a moral ideal insofar as it provides a guiding concept for action. It does this in its function as a final end of moral action.

In arguing for my thesis I will again, as in Chapter One, concentrate primarily on the texts of the second Critique. I have chosen to approach my argument in this manner because, as was stated in Chapter One, the second Critique, chiefly in the Dialectic, offers one of the few sustained treatments of

¹This is the crux of Beck’s criticism of the highest good as a dialectical ideal of reason. Beck argues that this understanding of the highest good contributes nothing to the moral project beyond what the categorical imperative implores us to do as it commands us to be moral. Yet the highest good as a dialectical ideal of reason is not an exhaustive understanding of the highest good, as will be demonstrated in this chapter.
the highest good. Furthermore, in going beyond the confines of the Dialectic, in interpreting Kant's discussion of the highest good in the Analytic and Methodology sections of this *Critique*, the highest good appears in a more organic manner insofar as it becomes integrated into Kant's overall ethical project. Consequently, interpreting the highest good using all of these parts of the second *Critique*, it could be argued that most of this *Critique* in some way or another addresses the issue of the highest good.² That the highest good is the most crucial issue of the second *Critique* is not really an issue for my analysis. Instead, I am concerned with presenting the highest good in a way that is most true to Kant. In so doing, I have chosen to concentrate on the second *Critique* since it is one of the first (and only) sustained treatments of this complex object. My strategy for doing so follows as a direct result of my desire to demonstrate that although the same text is being treated, two rubrics for analysis can be drawn out of the text. That is, in demonstrating that the highest good supports the two rubrics for analysis I have highlighted in this one work, a more convincing case is made for my overall thesis. This thesis asserts that: there is only one highest good which has been appreciated, more

²This argument has in fact been made by John Silber. Silber has argued that Kant's doctrine of the highest good offers a means for understanding the second *Critique* insofar as the entire *Critique* deals with the establishment and implementation of this concept in one way or another. See John Silber, "The Importance of the Highest Good in Kant's Ethics," *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political and Legal Philosophy*, 73 (1962-3), 179-97.
and less accurately, from different perspectives relative to the particular parts of Kant's discussion of the highest good on which different commentators have concentrated. The highest good is a complex object able to be appreciated in myriad ways, and key to this appreciation is realizing that these ways are complementary, not competing or exclusive. In sum, when these various interpretations of the highest good are integrated, we are able to see that not only is the highest good present in its role as an object of the law, but it also includes a developmental plan for its consummate realization. With regard to the multifarious understandings of the highest good, they come about even when the analysis of the highest good is centered on only one of its textual presentations, as Chapters One and Two demonstrate. Hence, my analysis results in the two rubrics for categorizing these interpretive analyses (unifier and moral ideal) for which I argue in Chapters One and Two respectively.

As a reminder, the thesis of this chapter is that the highest good manifests itself as a moral ideal insofar as it provides a guiding concept for action in its function as a final end of moral action. I will argue for this thesis through: 1) establishing that Kant recognizes that the human will requires a moral ideal as a guide for conduct; 2) establishing that in the command to actualize the highest good possible in the world, the need for a moral ideal is
satisfied; and 3) addressing the consequences of understanding the highest good as moral ideal.  

Kant’s Argument for a Moral Ideal

In understanding the highest good as a unifier of the human moral will, we are left with a notion of the highest good that contributes nothing to the day to day workings of the moral will. Instead, in the abstract, we have an object of the will that unifies the human will’s pursuit of its moral good (virtue) and its natural good (happiness). In so doing, the highest good provides the unified object of pure practical reason that includes the totality of objects pursued by the duality of the human moral will. Yet in the consequences of its pursuit so far articulated, this concept of the highest good leaves the moral will without a substantive end. That is, understood merely as the all inclusive object of pure practical reason, the highest good only includes the command to pursue the ends of the will which the moral will would be

3In short, as in Chapter One, these consequences consist of interpreting the highest good under the rubric of moral ideal, not only as it appears in the second Critique, but also as it appears elsewhere in the corpus of Kantian commentary.

John Silber supports this interpretation of the highest good as a unifier of the heterogenous aspects of the good. He discusses this issue relative to Kant’s ambiguity in the language of the terms moral good and natural good. See Silber’s article: “The Moral Good and the Natural Good in Kant’s Ethics,” The Review of Metaphysics, 36 (December, 1982), 397-437.
pursuing anyway. That is, the highest good merely conditions the pursuit of the ends that are already in place in the moral will as the highest good merely consists of the command to pursue the moral good through which the pursuit of the natural good is conditioned.\(^5\)

Yet it is important to realize that not only does the highest good provide the object through which human moral volition is unified, but it also satisfies the need of the human will for an end of volition. This is obviously a fine distinction which can be clarified as the analysis of the highest good develops. However, a brief, preliminary elucidation is appropriate here, and possible in Kant's own words.

...the highest good (is) the entire object of pure practical reason, which pure practical reason must necessarily think as possible because reason commands us to contribute everything possible to its realization.\(^6\)

In the prior chapter, the highest good as object of the law, was seen to determine the form of the action of the human moral agent insofar as the pursuit of the agent's natural end was conditioned by her pursuit of her moral

\(^5\)This understanding of the highest good is of course not where this analysis will stop. It is my purpose in this section of the chapter only to demonstrate the problems with which we are left if the analysis of the highest good were to stop with this understanding of the highest good.

\(^6\)...ist das höchste Gut das ganze Objekt der reinen praktischen Vernunft, die es sich notwendig als möglich vorstellen muß, weil es ein Gebot derselben ist, zu dessen Hervorbringung alles mögliche beizutragen. [CPR, 119 (Beck, 123)].
end. Through this unification, we arrived at the “entire object” of pure practical reason. This is the case because it was through this conception of the highest good that it was possible to account for all of our pursuits. After the determination of the highest good as the entire object of pure practical reason, something more must be attended to: we must necessarily think of the highest good as possible. Kant articulates the possibility of the highest good as “necessary according to practical principles.” The law commands that the highest good be pursued. Thus, we must think of the highest good as possible since the moral law does not command the impossible. This requirement, to pursue the highest good, established after the highest good is demonstrated as the all inclusive object of the will, is necessary since we are required to “contribute everything possible to its realization” (from prior quote). This leaves us with a notion of the highest good as not only that object which is able to account for all of our desires in the world, but as also a necessarily possible object which gives us guidance towards how to act in the world in the ends that we pursue. The highest good gives us a guide for conduct as we strive to bring about the highest good, a pursuit which is a requirement, as a consequence of the will being determined by the law. This definition of the highest good, as that which gives us a substantive guide for conduct as the

7 \textit{nach praktischen Prinzipien notwendig...} [Ibid., 120 (124)].
final end of moral action, is that which shall receive treatment in this chapter.  

In proving that the moral law requires the realization of the highest good as the most complete object of pure practical reason, Kant recognizes that something else is necessary to the operation of human moral agency. Hence the conception of the highest good as unifier is not and cannot be all that the highest good provides. That is, with an understanding of the highest good as merely the complete object of the pure practical reason, Kant realizes the will would lack a substantive end that could guide our moral action. Kant articulates this human need as he warns:

> Without an end of this sort a will, envisaging to itself no definite goal for a contemplated act, either objective or subjective (which it has, or ought to have, in view), is indeed informed as to how it ought to act, but not whither, and so can achieve no satisfaction.

Thus, the will, if it is to be effective must somehow provide a substantive end for the moral agent. In the previous discussion of the highest good, the presentation concentrated on that aspect of the highest good through which

---

8 The highest good as the final end for action, and thus the complete end to be pursued is that which guarantees the efficacy of the law in its employment. For further explication of this point see Stephen Engstrom, “The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant’s Moral Theory,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 52: 4 (December, 1992), 747-81.

9 ohne welche eine Willkür, dir sich seinen weder objectiv noch subjectiv bestimmten Gegenstand (den sie hat oder haben sollte) zur vorhabenden Handlung hinzudenst, zwar wie sie, aber nicht wohin sie zu wirten habe, angewiesen sich selbst nich Gwige thun kann. [REL, 4 (Greene and Hudson, 4)].
the object was that which determined the form of the pursuit of other objects. Yet Kant himself articulates that the human will requires something more. Kant explicates a requirement of the human will as that which demands a goal for its action. That is, the will must have a goal for its acts; it must not see itself as performing individual isolated acts, but it must be able to conceive of some sort of whole to which its acts can contribute. The highest good provides a definite goal for the will. The highest good provides an end which serves as a final end to individual moral acts, thereby performing a valuable service to the will, which is now able to envision in what its acts will result. Without this goal, obviously the will knows how it ought to act--always so that the law is the ground for its action--but the will is not able to know if it should act. Kant posits this goal of human action as the means through which the human will achieves satisfaction; yet in its being brought about, no commands of the law are transgressed.10

It should be highlighted that this requirement for an end of action does

10 It should be noted that there is obviously some difference in the role of the highest good as a moral ideal and as a final end. Yet this difference is not crucial to my argument. For present purposes, I discuss the highest good as a moral ideal that serves as a final end. As an ideal, the highest good is that concept which determines our final end. The final end is that which is to be realized, while the moral ideal is that which is to guide the realization. For a more detailed discussion of this differentiation in the roles of the highest good see John Silber, “Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good as Immanent and Transcendent,” The Philosophical Review, 68 (1959), 469-92.
not arise as a result of a shortcoming of the law in its ability to determine the human will. Duty itself requires nothing outside of itself to be obeyed. As Kant says,

The moral law is the sole determining ground of the pure will... though the highest good may be the entire object of a pure practical reason, i.e., of a pure will, it is still not to be taken as the determining ground of the pure will: the moral law alone must be seen as the ground for making the highest good and its realization or promotion the object of the pure will.\(^\text{11}\)

The moral law alone is always to be the determining ground of the will if the will is to be autonomous. Hence the will that requires some other motive in order to be determined by duty is thus a pathologically determined will and thereby heteronomous. The law consists of the sole autonomous determining ground of the will. Yet in so doing, the law not only determines us, but it also provides us with a goal for our action. This goal is brought about as we make the “realization or promotion” of the highest good the end of the pure will. This command to make the highest good the object or end of the will is always understood as being conditioned by the law. Needless to say, this provision of the law, in an object or end of the pure practical reason, satisfies a human

\(^{11}\)Das moralische Gesetz ist der alleinige Bestimmungsgrund des reinen Willens... Mithin mag das höchste Gut immer der ganze Gegenstand einer reinen praktischen Vernunft, d.i. eines reinen Willens sein, so ist es darum doch nicht für den Bestimmungsgrund desselben zu halten, und das moralische Gesetz muß allein als der Grund angesehen werden, jenes und dessen Bewirkung oder Beförderung sich zum Objekte zu machen. [CPR, 109 (Beck, 113)].
need. Angels would have no use for the highest good because their wills are entirely holy and pure insofar as they are free of sensuous determinants. Thus the highest good is a need satisfied within the limits of the law.\(^{12}\) In having a goal for our action, we are in no way subverting the law as the ground of our action. Kant explains how this is possible in an oft quoted passage of the second *Critique* where Kant even goes so far as to say that it is possible for the highest good, that which also serves as an end, to determine the will. This is the case because:

...it is self-evident not merely that, if the moral law is included as the supreme condition in the concept of the highest good, the highest good is then the object but also that the concept of it and the idea of its existence as possible through our practical reason are likewise the determining ground of the pure will.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\)As John Silber writes:
The moral law does not have its foundation in some object, nor is it incomplete as the law of morality if it fails to determine an object. The concern for the determination of an object stems from a human need. It is the need of the human will for an object in the act of volition that forces Kant to this consideration of ends and the extension of the law beyond its own limits alone to the condition of man.

See Silber, “The Importance...,” 192-93.

\(^{13}\)Es versteht sich aber von selbst, daß, wenn im begriffe des höchsten Guts das moralische Gesetz als oberste Bedingung schon mit eingeschlossen ist, alsdann das höchste Gut nicht bloß Objekt, sondern auch sein Begriff und die Vorstellung der durch unsere praktische Vernunft möglichen Existenz desselben zugleich der Bestimmungsgrund des reinen Willens sei; [CPR, 110 (Beck, 114)]. In addition, Kant explains how it is that the highest good can serve as a goal for our action in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Kant’s explanation of this will receive treatment in Chapter Three.
Thus the highest good can be seen, within the very careful qualifications Kant delineates, as a determining ground of the pure will. This is possible only so far as the *bonum supremum*, the supreme aspect of the highest good is seen as the primary ground of the highest good. That is, in the will's consideration of all other objects and ends, these are possible in their pursuit only as they are conditioned by the moral law. The *bonum supremum* or the moral law itself is always the ultimate ground of the will. This is true for the will when it is considered in isolation as well as when it is considered through its object, the highest good. In sum, although the requirement for an end is a merely human requirement, the will's requirement of an end is allowable within the constraints of the law.

Kant argues that not only is it allowable for the will to have an end that serves as a goal, but the will must also envision a goal for itself. Throughout his discussion of the highest good, in its confusing vacillations between end, object, and their entailments, Kant is careful to highlight that we are humans and the will is determined by this glory and frailty. Thus, if the moral law is to inform us not only how to act but also enjoin us to actually act, it must provide an end of this sort, an end that answers the demand of a goal for our action. That is, the law must not only provide the means through which we are allowed to harmoniously combine both aspects of ourselves as
supersensuous and sensuous beings (in providing the highest good as a dialectical ideal of reason), but the law must also provide a guide for our action such that we are able to determine: "What is to result from this right conduct of ours?" In arriving at and being guided by a result of the law, the law is given vision, and we are further able to ascertain its demands.

That Kant considers what our good action will result in is really of no surprise. Throughout his work, Kant was consistently critical of a rationalistic, to him vacuous, notion of the law and the good. This is evidenced in his criticisms of the rationalistic ethics of Wolff and Baumgarten. Kant thought these rationalistic ethics had little practical significance, hence he characterized such an ethic as follows:

...a medical man told a patient suffering from constipation that he ought to loosen his bowels and to perspire freely and digest his food well. This is just telling him to do what he wants to know how to do. Such propositions are tautological rules of decision.

Hence, for the good to be practically efficacious, it must include something further than the command merely to do this good. Kant realizes this and realizes the law must somehow inform us as to how to do what it is we have to

---

14 was dann aus diesem unserm Rechthandeln herausskomme, [REL, 5 (Greene and Hudson, 4)].

15 This point is made, and this passage is cited by Silber. See Silber, "Importance," 186-187; in which he cites Kant's Lectures on Ethics, trans. Louis Infield (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 25/6.
do. In so doing, Kant points to a need of the human will. This is a further need of the will, further in the sense that not only does the will require an object insofar as all volitions have objects, but also that the will has a need for a goal. It is through the specter of the projection of a goal that the individual’s objects of volition are to be considered.

It would be helpful at this point to consider Kant’s language. As was previously discussed, there is an ambiguity in Kant’s language. That is, Kant refers to the highest good as well as the moral good as both an object, end, and as an object that serves to guide our action (as a moral ideal). In and of themselves, these constitute no great difference, but in realizing how each of these are made manifest, the role of the highest good becomes more clear. The highest good, as well as the moral good, are the objects of the will. In this sense, these objects are required to be adopted by the will, as determined by the law. This is an adoption of a non-material object, and much more aligned with the discussion of the highest good as presented in Chapter One. Yet the highest good also serves to guide our action, it serves as a moral ideal. That is, in its conception as an object, sometimes referred to as a concept of an object, the highest good serves as a moral measuring stick. For example, when other objects are being determined as to whether or not to be brought about in the practical realm, these objects (as states of affairs or actions) can be compared
to this moral ideal and thereby assessed as to how effective they are in
furthering the highest good. This assessment serves as a criterion for
determining whether or not the action should be brought about. In both
instances the highest good is an object, or end, as the coincidence of virtue and
happiness, but it is also a guide for action insofar as it determines the objects
that will bring about its actualization. Kant thus says of the highest good that
its possibility

belongs wholly to the supersensual relations of things and
cannot be given under the laws of the world of sense, even
though the practical consequence of this idea, i.e., the actions
which are devoted to realizing the highest good, do belong to this
world. 16

It is in this manner, as stated above, that the highest good serves as a guide for
action under which our objects as ends of action are able to be subsumed. As
a moral ideal the highest good does belong “wholly to the supersensual
relations of things.” This is the case insofar as the highest good follows from
the law, which relates to the supersensual aspects of ourselves. Yet, the
practical consequences of this aspect of the highest good take place in the
world as we strive to bring about the highest good. These practical
consequences consist of the objects we seek to bring about as the ends of our

16...gänzlich zum übersinnlichen Verhältnisse der Dinge gehört und nach Gesetzen
der Sinnenwelt gar nicht gegeben werden kann, obzwar die praktische Folge dieser Idee,
nämlich die Handlungen, die darauf abzielen, das höchste Gut wirklich zu machen, zur
Sinnenwelt gehören: [CPR, 120, (Beck, 124)].
action—as the objects of the highest good. These specific actions work to bring about the highest good, but they are able to be subsumed under the organon of the concept of the highest good as object since the concept of the object of the highest good contributes to their being accomplished. This contribution consists of the highest good’s role as moral ideal and guide for conduct.\(^{17}\)

As a consequence of the will’s need to perceive of an end for action, the will then requires a mechanism through which we can perceive a guide for our actions and somehow maintain a vision of what will come about as their result. It is my position that the highest good as a moral ideal provides just that as it demonstrates exactly what will result from this right conduct of ours. For it is through the highest good as a moral ideal, that end which the law determines, that we ascertain

\(^{17}\)Once again, Kant seemingly collapses the terms end and object, and object and concept of an object, in reference to the highest good. In the passage quoted in footnote thirteen Kant uses the term *Objekte* and *Gegenstand* to refer to the highest good. Yet, a few paragraphs later [CPR, 111 (Beck115)], when the highest good is referred to as something to be concretely brought about in the world Kant refers to it as: *Objekte, Gegenstand* and *Zweck*. As was discussed in Chapter One, object has more than one meaning for Kant, in this instance it should be understood as both a setting for the will and as a state of affairs to be brought about (objective), the latter which conforms more closely to Kant’s depiction of Zweck. In short, there seems to be no consistent use of the terms *Objekte, Gegenstand* and *Zweck* in reference to the highest good. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the highest good primarily as an end for this chapter and as an object for Chapter One in order to highlight the different roles at stake for the highest good, thereby imposing some sort of system where none seems to exist.
...towards what, as an end--even granted it may not be wholly subject to our control--we might direct our actions and abstentions so as at least to be in harmony with that end...\textsuperscript{18}

In directing our action towards harmony with an end, the will fulfills its ambition to bring about the effects of the law in the world. This need for direction, result and guide is that which Kant has enumerated for the human will and is that to which the next section turns as I will outline how it is that the highest good satisfies this need.

The Highest Good as Moral Ideal

Although Chapter One treats one of the integral roles of the highest good, it is not an exhaustive portrayal of the highest good. In what follows I will work out Kant's presentation of the highest good insofar as it consists of a moral ideal and guide for action. In so doing, the highest good will be demonstrated to be a substantive guide for moral conduct through which we are able to actualize the requirements of the moral law. In understanding the highest good as a moral ideal, it becomes something far from an empty object or end of the law; instead, it will be shown to fulfill the demands of the human will as they were articulated in the previous section. It is Kant's position, as

\textsuperscript{18}Und worauf wir, gesetzt auch, wir hätten kieses nicht völlig in unserer Gewalt, doch als auf einen Zweck unter Thun und Lassen richten könnten, um damit wenigstens zusammen zu stimmen. [REL, 5 (Greene and Hudson, 4)].
was argued in the previous section, that this moral ideal is required if the human moral agent is not only to know what should be done, but to actually do it. Through this conception of the highest good as a moral ideal, we bear witness to the world that is determined as a consequence of a commitment to the moral law.

As it has been presented thus far, with the highest good understood merely as a dialectical ideal of reason, the moral law leaves us without the tools for its application. That is, the law must provide some way of guiding the translation of the law at its noumenal level into an actuality for our phenomenal lives. Kant accomplishes this through the highest good as it includes a command to be brought about in the world. I will demonstrate how this is the case through presenting the highest good as: 1) including a command to pursue happiness in proportion to desert, 2) including a command to bring about a state of affairs in the world that complies with happiness in proportion to virtue and 3) it is discussed as the ectypal world in the Analytic of the second Critique through which the law automatically seeks to become manifest in the sensuous world.

The highest good consists of a moral ideal insofar as we are given guidance into what morality requires as Kant's moral law commands us to pursue this highest good. In so doing, we are called to make actual, as far as
possible within human limitations, the highest good in the world. The content of the highest good which we are called to actualize is the very same as that of the dialectical ideal: happiness in accord with virtue. Hence, what was perceived as a mere theoretical possibility becomes a practical actuality as Kant includes within its consequences not only a determination of the will, but also a command to pursue the state of affairs this determination includes—happiness in accord with virtue. Thus what was, in its establishment, demonstrated to include the unity of goods human moral agents pursue, in its consequences can be demonstrated to include the pursuit of these goods in accord with the aforementioned unity.

In discussing the highest good in this manner, the form of the command of the law is given content. This is possible insofar as the highest good includes the command to bring about this highest good in the world. In discussing the highest good as the “entire object of pure practical reason,” Kant goes on to say that “reason commands us to contribute everything possible to its realization.” Furthermore, in giving the form of the command some content in commanding us to pursue the highest good, there is no issue of heteronomy. That is, the highest good and its pursuit is allowable, as was previously discussed, because it is an end that was deduced from the law and

---

19 *ganze Objekt der reinen praktischen Vernunft, ...weil es ein Gebot derselben ist, zu dessen Hervorbringung alles mögliche beizutragen.* [CPR, 119 (Beck 123)].
not an end that determines the law. Thus, the command to pursue the highest good is a concrete command in that it includes an actual program for action. This program consists of the way in which we are called to the realization of the highest good. The command includes a call to bring about a state of affairs within ourselves as well as in the world, a state of affairs where happiness accords with the worthiness to receive it. As Kant directs our pursuit of the highest good individually and socially, he describes these ends as follows:

Inasmuch as virtue and happiness together constitute the possession of the highest good for one person, and happiness in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy) constitutes that of a possible world...

From the above, it is evident that Kant differentiates the task of the highest good in its individual and social pursuit. Not only are we to bring about a highest good for ourselves insofar as we strive to make equitable our possession of happiness in proportion to virtue, but we must also seek to make this a global condition in the world. The consequences of this distinction demonstrate that the highest good does include a pursuit that takes place in the world, and not merely within the will of an individual. That is, the

---

20 Sofern nun Tugend und Glückseligkeit zusammen den Besitz des höchsten Guts in einer Person, hierbei aber auch Glückseligkeit, ganz genau in Proportion der Sittlichkeit (als Wert der Person und deren Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein) ausgeteilt, das höchste Gut einer möglichen Welt ausmachen. [Ibid., 111 (115)].
individual is to work to make her own happiness commensurate with her
toxoy as a condition of worthiness. In addition, the moral agent is to seek to
bring about a state of affairs in the world where this condition persists.

According to the above, it is not enough to be as worthy of happiness as
possible. The moral agent must also strive to actually make her happiness
commensurate with her worthiness to receive it. That is, individual moral
agents cannot become moral martyrs, working to make their own wills as
virtuous as possible with no regard for the commensurability of their
happiness. In and of itself, this condition is highly difficult to imagine without
its determination being conditioned by pathological motives and thereby
condemning the moral agent to a state of heteronomy. Furthermore, this
condition would not be natural, insofar as human moral agents are not pure
will, but within them abides a sensuous nature as well. This nature is worthy
of respect and must not be ignored. Hence, in bringing about the highest
good, the moral agent must act so as to be virtuous in order to be deserving of
happiness. In addition, when opportunities for happiness arise, the moral
agent must seek to appreciate these opportunities, recognizing that her
appreciation of said happiness is always conditioned by her worthiness to
receive it.\footnote{With regard to the connection between happiness and virtue, Kant
explains that if a virtuous individual receives happiness and is not deserving of}
Beyond the command to make the highest good an actuality for oneself, Kant articulates a command to pursue the highest good in the world, for all humanity. That is, the task of the highest good does not stop with the commensurableness of one's own happiness and virtue. We must work to bring about the highest good in the world, creating a state of affairs such that virtue is commensurable with happiness for everyone. This notion of the highest good as including a social component, in bringing about a possible world, will receive detailed treatment in Chapter Three. I mention it here only to demonstrate that even in his early treatments of the highest good, Kant recognizes that it is a task to be made manifest individually and socially.

With the command to bring about a state of affairs of happiness in proportion to virtue, it is possible to look at other passages in Kant's work in order to gain still more insight into the role of the highest good as a moral ideal. That is, in looking at what Kant has said about happiness in the

it, she is unable to enjoy that happiness. As Kant explains:

...the upright man cannot be happy if he is not already conscious of his righteousness, since with such a character the moral self-condemnation to which his own way of thinking would force him in case of any transgression would rob him of all enjoyment of the pleasantness which his condition might otherwise entail.

Und in der Tat kann der Rechtschaffene sich nicht glücklich finden, wenn er sich nicht zuvor seiner Rechtschaffenheit bewußt ist; weil bei jener Gesinnung die Verweise, die er bei Übertretungen sich selbst zu machen durch seine eigene Denkungsart genötigt sein würde, und die moralische Selbstverdammung ihn alles Genusses der Annehmlichkeit, die sonst sein Zustand enthalten mag, berauben würden. [Ibid., 116 (120).]
Analytic of the second *Critique*, we may glean valuable information on the pursuit of happiness. In the above I argued that we are to make our happiness commensurable with our virtue; yet how is this to be accomplished? Kant gives some concrete guidelines for the pursuit of happiness, and it is to these which we shall now turn.

Happiness is to be pursued insofar as we are worthy of it; yet even once we are worthy of happiness, its pursuit is conditioned by very special caveats:

The mere form of a law, which limits its material, must be a condition for adding this material to the will but not presuppose it as the condition of the will. Let the material content be, for example, my own happiness...it can become an objective practical law only if I include within it the happiness of others.\(^{22}\)

For Kant the pursuit of happiness is conditioned by the form of the law. This means that the pursuit of happiness is conditioned by universality as the form of the law. Hence, the pursuit of happiness is possible only insofar as we pursue the happiness of others.

This articulation of the conditions for the pursuit of happiness adds content to the law insofar as it leaves us with some concrete guidance for our own pursuit of happiness. First and foremost, we are to pursue our individual

\(^{22}\) Also *die bloße Form eines Gesetzes, welche die materie einschränkt, muß zugleich ein Grund sein, diese Materie zum Willen hinzuzufügen, aber sie nicht vorauszusetzen. Die Materie sei z.B. meine eigene Glückseligkeit...kann nur alsdann ein objektives praktisches Gesetz werden, wenn ich anderer ihre in dieselbe mit einschließe.* [Ibid., 35 (35)].
happiness only as we are worthy of said happiness. Yet this is not all of the information we are given in regulating our pursuit of happiness. Kant further informs us that in our individual pursuit of happiness, this pursuit is to be conditioned by the form of the law—as universal. We are only able to pursue our own happiness, then, insofar as we pursue the happiness of others.

Beyond the above, there is also the function of the highest good as a moral ideal in its most obvious guise. That is, in fulfilling the command to pursue the highest good possible in the world, we are able to immediately appeal to the command to apportion happiness with virtue in our daily moral dealings. That is, in instances where it is possible, we should distribute happiness to those who are worthy. As trite as this may sound, there is some guidance available in this simple command. As John Silber has explained:

..in rearing children, serving on juries, and grading papers one tries to do and actually can do something “about apportioning happiness in accordance with desert.”

It is possible to apportion happiness with desert, if only in this very mundane manner. The command of the law is nothing more than that which can be

---

23 In his later works, Kant articulates the highest good concretely as the ethical commonwealth. In so doing, he explicates stages to be achieved in its being brought about, thereby giving an even more detailed and concrete program for enacting the highest good in the world. These issues will be treated in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

24 Silber, “The Importance...” 183.
expressed in so banal a way. Kant never articulates the pursuit of the highest good as that which is to be a super human endeavor. Instead, the command to pursue the highest good is merely to be understood as the command which follows from the very human adoption of this object as an end for action, insofar as it is demanded of the law.  

Kant gives another clue as to the way in which the highest good becomes manifest in the world as a moral ideal in the Analytic section of the second Critique. In the Analytic section, Kant articulates how it is that the highest good, as a consequence of the will making the moral good its object, is brought about. As a reminder, as was previously discussed in Chapter One, the human moral will is a will of desire. This is true for us as phenomenal beings in that we have desires for sensuous objects, and as moral (noumenal) beings as well. In giving an object for the merely moral will, Kant accounts for the way in which a will determined by law takes the moral good as its object. This is required in order to demonstrate that even though a will is moral, it is still able to have objects and ends. Yet with this merely moral end, Kant recognizes that if he does not then again relate the determination of the

---

25Jeffrie Murphy argues that it is impossible to apportion happiness with desert since we are in no way able to determine what human beings deserve. Obviously, it is my position that this is simply wrong, a discussion I will save for Chapter Five. See Murphy, “The Highest Good as Content of Kant’s Ethical Formalism,” Kant-Studien 56 (1965) 102-110.
supersensuous aspect of the will to this other aspect of the will, that which determines our other objects, moral and otherwise we are left with an empty moral object. With the moral object remaining abstract in this state of affairs, the law remains a supersensuous concept lacking any sort of connection to the world. Thus, Kant needs to provide the moral will with some sort of tool through which it will be able to transcend the disparate realms of the supersensuous and sensuous. In so doing, the will is provided with a guide for conduct, an ideal, insofar as the form of the supersensuous will is to determine the matter of the sensuous will.

In the Analytic section of the second Critique, Kant points to a means through which we are able to conceive of what will become of our action as determined by the law. That is, Kant points to a bridge between the supersensuous and sensuous realms through which we are provided an end for action. This moral ideal is possible as a consequence of the adoption of a good will, a will determined by the law as its end or object. This end comes about as a consequence of recognizing the moral good as the object of the pure moral will. As a consequence of the will's adoption of this end, Kant argues that the will is transferred into a supersensuous realm insofar as the will is free. In being so located in the supersensuous realm, the moral law immediately drives us to bring about the state of affairs dictated by the law—the highest good. As
the law determines our supersensuous self, it then determines our sensuous self, and the world wherein this sensuous self abides. If this were not to be the case, the law would not be effective in the world, but merely in the noumenal realm as that which determines our will.

For, in fact, the moral law ideally transfers us into a nature in which reason would bring forth the highest good were it accompanied by sufficient physical capacities; and it determines our will to impart to the sensuous world the form of a system of rational beings. The least attention to ourself shows that this idea really stands as a model for the determination of our will.

Here Kant demonstrates that merely by adopting the moral law as the ground for our will, reason is driven to bring about the highest good as an end in the world. In so doing, the will is determined to “impart to the sensuous world the form of a system of rational beings.” Hence, it is through the moral law that the command to pursue the highest good in the world appears. Included in this command to bring about the highest good is the role of the highest good as a model for the determination of the will.

In what follows I will unpack the sources and consequences of the way in which the law, in determining the will, and in the human moral agent accepting that determination, results in an ideal for our action. This ideal

---

26 Den in der Tat versetzt uns das moralische Gesetz der Idee nach in eine Natur, in welcher reine Vernunft, wenn sie mit dem ihr angemessenen physischen Vermögen begleitet wäre, das höchste Gut hervorbringen würde, und bestimmt unseren Willen, die Form der Sinnenwelt, als einem Ganzen vernünftiger Wesen, zu erteilen. [CPR, 44 (Beck 45)].
consists of the way, as articulated above, in which we are required to transfer
Kant’s archetypal world into the sensuous realm, resulting in the ectypal
world. 27

It is important to remember that this discussion takes place in the
Analytic section of the second Critique. This is important insofar as we should
keep in mind that Kant’s task in that section is the deduction of the idea of a
concept for the pure practical reason. In so doing, Kant is careful to stress
that the object or end of the law is determined after the law, and in no way
prior. Hence, he is anchoring the law in the a priori realm, whereby it is in no
way contingent or empirical. In this way, Kant removes the possibility of
compromising the universality and necessity of the law. In being universal and
necessary and completely free of sensuous matter, the law is able to result in
the autonomous determination of the will. As Kant says:

The law of this autonomy is the moral law, and it, therefore is the
fundamental law of supersensuous nature and of a pure world of
the understanding... 28

27 This transference from the archetypal world to the ectypal world resulting
in a moral ideal is the main focus of the work of Thomas Auxter. Auxter then
goes on to use this interpretation to exclude any other from serving as a moral
ideal. See especially: Thomas Auxter, “The Unimportance of Kant’s Highest

28 Das Gesetz dieser Autonomie aber ist das moralische Gesetz; welches also das
Grundgesetz einer übersinnlichen Nature und einer reinen Verstandeswelt ist, [CPR, 43
(Beck, 44)].
The moral law and the will which is determined by it reside in a "pure world". This world is named by Kant the archetypal world. The archetypal world only contains the conditions of the moral law; it contains no guide for its implementation, and as such it can serve as no guide for our action. In addition, the "archetypal world (natura archetypa)" can be known "only by reason." Hence, as was previously articulated, the demands of the moral law require more than the archetypal world alone can provide. Insofar as the archetypal world is where the law resides, Kant must articulate a means to overcome the limitations of this realm and thereby allow the law to become active in the sensuous realm. Without this further articulation, the supersensuous, pure realm is where the law would remain. That is, alone and without an object or end, the law relates merely to our will, but it is not merely a moral will that we are; we are creatures in and of this world. When the law is unable to connect us to our world, it is only a vacuous concept without import for our practical lives.

Yet as was seen in the prior quote, once the will is determined by the law, we are immediately transferred "into a nature in which reason would bring forth the highest good...". This transference is accomplished through the determination of our will to "impart to the sensuous world the form of a

29Man könnte jene die urbildliche (natura archetypa), die wir bloß in der Vernunft erkennen, [Ibid., 43 (44)].
Thus, through the moral law, in its adoption of the end of the law—the highest good—the will is connected to the sensuous realm as a consequence of its being grounded in the supersensuous realm. Kant, then, provides a means through which the archetypal world immediately transfers us into the sensuous realm—by means of the concept of the highest good. In so doing, the moral law and its object or end, insofar as it resides in the archetypal world, must create:

    a counterpart (which) must exist in the world of sense without interfering with the laws of the latter.\(^{31}\)

This counterpart is made manifest through bringing about the highest good in the world. What has served as a unifying object for the will now is able to serve as an end (object as a desired state of affairs) of the will insofar as we are commanded to strive towards bringing about this state of affairs. Kant names the counterpart to the archetypal world “the ectypal world (\textit{natura ectypa}), because it contains the possible effect of the idea of the former (the archetypal world) as the determining ground of the will.”\(^{32}\)

Through the ectypal world Kant allows us to fashion the sensuous world

\(^{30}\text{Ibid., 44 (45), as quoted in footnote twenty-seven.}\)

\(^{31}\text{...\textit{deren Gegenbild in der Sinnenwelt, aber doch zugleich ohne Abbruch der Gesetze derselben existieren soll}. [Ibid., 43 (45)].}\)

\(^{32}\text{...\textit{weil sie die mögliche Wirkung der Idee der ersteren als Bestimmungsgrundes des Willens enthält, die nachgebildete (\textit{natura ectypa}) nennen}. [Ibid., 43 (45)].}\)
of which we are members into a reflection of our moral selves. As Thomas Auxter, the main advocate of this role of the ectypal world explains, it is through the determination to work to bring about the ectypal world that we are provided with "an ideal we can use in our moral efforts to fashion the world we are given."\(^{33}\) This ectypal world is that which the highest good determines in its role as a moral ideal. This is the highest good, insofar as Kant originally said, as it consists of what would be brought about through the transference of the form of the supersensuous world (the archetypal world) into the sensuous world (the ectypal world). In short, it is through the highest good as end of the moral law, an end which the moral law requires and commands us to bring about, that we apply the law to the world; thus the supersensuous meets the sensuous, and we are given a guide for action.

In sum, the above has argued for an understanding of the highest good as moral ideal. This role for the highest good gains credence through its basis on Kant’s own articulation that the will requires such a guide for conduct. Furthermore, the highest good is shown to fulfill this requirement of the will as reason commands that this all inclusive object as the totality of our ends be brought about in the world. Included in the command to bring about the highest good in the world is the command to make one’s own happiness

\(^{33}\)Auxter, “Unimportance” 126.
commensurate with one's own virtue and then to make this a state of affairs in
the world. In addition, this command is further fleshed out through the
caveats Kant gives with regard to the pursuit of happiness. This command
also gains content through an examination of the way in which we can reward
virtue with happiness in our daily existence. One final means by which the
highest good serves as a moral ideal is through the way in which the law, in
determining the will, automatically seeks to become manifest in the sensuous
world.

In analyzing the issue of the highest good as a moral ideal, it would be
wise to consider two related points of controversy. First, there has been some
controversy concerning where the highest good is located. Second, there has
been some controversy concerning whether or not it is possible to achieve the
highest good. It is my view that both of these controversies collapse into the
same issue and that an extended discussion of either of them consists primarily
of energy ill spent. Yet, for the sake of the present analysis, I will demonstrate
why it is not purposeful to give these concerns extended consideration.

The primary question at issue in the above controversy is typically
articulated as whether or not the highest good is possible. I will treat this
question first, because if the highest good is not possible, it makes no sense to
discuss "where" the highest good is not possible. In response to the question,
there can be no doubt that the highest good consists of a real possibility for the Kantian ethical system. This is the case, because Kant's ethics requires that the highest good be at the very least possible because its pursuit is required as a demand of reason. It is my view that there is something behind these points of controversy. That is, the issue as stake is not really whether or not the highest good is possible in Kant's system, this point is clearly made by Kant throughout his work. Rather than the issue of the possibility of the highest good, these commentaries seek to establish whether or not the highest good is justified or necessary to Kant's system.\(^{34}\) For my purpose, such considerations are not germane. It is my task to be as true as possible to Kant's texts. I am not attempting to correct Kant, or develop a new ethic. Instead, my analysis merely seeks to present a means through which the Kantian ethic, in its object the highest good, is best understood.\(^{35}\)

The second aspect of this controversy, is where is the highest good to be realized. That is, if the highest good is a real possibility in the Kantian system is it to be actualized in this world or the next? This issue is more complicated

\(^{34}\)In addition to the questions of justification and necessity, concerns with the possibility of the highest good often consist of a desire to eliminate God from Kant's system. See Auxter, *Kant's Moral Teleology*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982) especially Chapters Five and Six.

\(^{35}\)At the conclusion of the antinomy of practical reason Kant states his conclusion very clearly. The highest good "is practically possible", as this antinomy has proven....*ist praktisch möglich*, [CPR, 115 (Beck 119)].
than the former. The complication lies in the ambiguity of Kant's texts. Kant has articulated a concrete program for action through which the highest good is to be made manifest here on earth. In addition, he has demanded that humanity be immortal, to account for the moral progress that the highest good requires. The highest good could possibly take place in this world. However, Kant has often expressed doubts as to the actuality of such a program being brought to fruition in the time in which humanity is to reside on the earth. Kant's support of the view that the highest good takes place in the next world is necessarily limited since his discussion of such a possibility is obviously limited by the way in which the categories could conceive of such a possibility. In short, there is evidence for either view and nothing to be gained by attempting to exclude one or the other under the pretext of having found the correct view. Thus in answering the question where the highest good is to be realized, Kant would perhaps answer that concern with such a question is dangerous insofar as it could possibly lead to heteronomy insofar as humanity could possible seek the realization of the highest good as an incentive towards moral conduct. Rather, we should strive with all our power and possibility to make the highest good a reality with little concern for its location, and thus without concerns for the location of the possible rewards in which such

36 See the presentations of the highest good in: TTP, REL and PP.
The Consequences of the Highest Good as Moral Ideal

To conclude, this chapter has articulated an analysis of the highest good as moral ideal. Obviously this analysis has depended to a great extent on those points established in the previous chapter. A lesson to be learned from this is that the various manifestations of the highest good, whether they be categorized under the rubric of unifier or moral ideal, are to a great extent symbiotic. They are symbiotic insofar as there is not a clear distinction between where the role of unifier and moral ideal begins and ends. This is no great surprise in a Kantian concept. Kant's project is very complex and the way in which he deals with the highest good varies relative not only to his philosophical acumen but also to the difficulty of the tasks to which he turns his attention. Kant presents the highest good differently as he approaches it from different perspectives relative to which aspect of the highest good each of his discussions highlights.

This lack of a clear distinction is not a disadvantage or weak point to this analysis. Instead, it provides further evidence for my position, which holds that there is a consistent concept of the highest good. The highest good appears inconsistently and in a contradictory manner only when its various
interpretations are treated in isolation, as competitive and not complementary. It is with this in mind that we turn to Chapter Three and the presentation of the highest good as it is contained in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. In this presentation of the highest good, Kant specifically articulates the highest good as an object of the law that is both a unifier and a moral ideal. In addition, this concept contains an added social component through which the moral law is given further vision as Kant stresses that the ethical commonwealth is the consummate articulation of his highest good.
CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL HIGHEST GOOD: KANT'S ETHICAL COMMONWEALTH

In the previous chapters, I sought to establish that within the Kantian corpus, especially as evidenced in the second Critique, there is a conception of the highest good as a unifier and a conception of the highest good as a moral ideal. Chapter One established one notion of the highest good and Chapter Two determined this was not an exhaustive notion of Kant's complex object. Likewise, Chapter Three will establish that these notions of the highest good, as expressed in the previous chapters, do not consist of an exhaustive understanding of the highest good. There is an additional conception of the highest good, established through the presentation of the highest good as it is contained in one of Kant's most accessible works, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. In this work, Kant sets as his goal to make apparent the relation of religion to human nature, or in his own words, he sets out to explain how "morality leads inevitably to religion."¹ In so doing, he presents

¹die Moral führt unausbleiblich zur Religion. [REL, 8fn (Greene and Hudson, 7fn)].
one of the most well rounded articulations of the highest good, including the addition of a substantive social aspect.

In what follows I will demonstrate that the conception of the highest good in Kant's *Religion* adds a new dimension to the object of pure practical reason. This new dimension primarily consists of a social component that has not been present in the previous articulations of the highest good. In addition, it is through this articulation of the highest good that the representations discussed in the prior chapters are brought together. I will approach the explication of this new dimension through addressing the following two questions. First, what is the notion of the highest good at work in Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*? Next, how is this notion of the highest good fulfilled? Through answering each of these questions, we are given a complete explication of Kant's complex object afoot in this work. Furthermore, it is my position that this understanding of the highest good, which will become apparent through answering the above questions, is the consummate articulation of the highest good.²

First, what is the notion of the highest good at work in Kant's *Religion*? It is my thesis that this conception of the highest good consists of its role as a unifier and moral ideal which serves to anchor God in the role of moral

² This claim will receive extensive treatment in Chapters Four and Five.
guarantor. In this discussion of the highest good, God is required because, as
has been previously discussed, the highest good must be possible if the moral
law is not to be meaningless. In being required as a condition of the moral end,
therefore, God is necessary and thereby anchored. Although God has played
this role previously for the highest good, it is in this discussion of God (in the
Religion), as moral guarantor, that the consequences of God's role become more
apparent. Kant's moral argument for God is not without controversy. However, it will be deemed as such for this analysis, since the specific
relationship between God and morality is not presently at stake. Rather, what
is at stake is the consequence of the above pairing, resulting in a notion of the
highest good through which the Kantian notion of God is anchored.

In the Religion, Kant portrays a markedly different notion of the highest
good. I will argue that this new aspect of the highest good becomes apparent
in the discussion of how the highest good is fulfilled. That is, in establishing
how the notion of the highest good—as unifier and moral ideal, and an end
which requires God—is to be fulfilled, its new aspect as a social end of human
life becomes evident. This will be demonstrated through answering the second

3I do not directly address the controversy surrounding the moral argument
for God in the Kantian corpus. In short, I do not support the position that in
his later work, Kant repudiated his moral argument for the existence of God.
For a detailed discussion of these issues see: G. A. Schrader, "Kant's Presumed
Repudiation of the 'Moral Argument' in the Opus Postumum: an Examination
of Adickes' Interpretation," Philosophy, (July, 1951).
question, as it is expressed above.

In addressing this second question, "How is this notion of the highest good, as it is expressed through question one, fulfilled?" it is my thesis that this notion of the highest good is fulfilled through Kant's notion of the ethical commonwealth. Kant provides us with an answer to the question, "How is the highest good to be fulfilled?" as he articulates a very specific program for the manifestation of this formulation of the highest good. This concept of the highest good, as ethical commonwealth, although hinted at elsewhere in Kant's works, is arguably one its most attractive formulations. For here, in calling us to overcome our propensity to evil, the origin of which lies in our social nature, Kant urges us to transform our social interactions (by leaving the ethical state of nature) into moral interactions. In so doing, we would be working to bring about an ethical commonwealth which would consist of moral interactions with others as that nexus "in which and through whose unity alone the highest moral good can come to pass."4

In what follows I will discuss what the highest good is and how it is to be made manifest as presented in the Religion. I will do so by: 1) explicating the notion of the highest good as unifier and moral ideal, an end that requires God; 2) addressing how this conception of the highest good becomes manifest

4in welchem und durch dessen Einheit es allein zu Stande kommen kann, [REL, 98 (Greene and Hudson, 89)].
through the ethical commonwealth, explicating its source as the required consequence of the social origin of evil that we must overcome as we are called to leave the ethical state of nature and work to bring about the ethical commonwealth; and finally 3) broadly describing the ethical commonwealth, leaving the task of a more detailed description to Chapters Four and Five. By taking Kant seriously in his presentation of the ethical commonwealth, we are able to address yet another manifestation of the highest good as it appears in the corpus.

The Conception of the Highest Good in the Religion

As was asserted previously, the conception of the highest good in the Religion consists of three aspects. The highest good serves as the unifying end of our purposiveness as sensuous and supersensuous agents, it serves as a moral ideal and guide for our conduct, and the highest good serves to anchor the Kantian conception of God as moral guarantor. In looking at the presentation of the highest good in the early sections of Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, these three aspects of the task of the highest good will become evident as they take their respective places in the moral venue.

The roles of the highest good as unifier and moral ideal were discussed individually in Chapters One and Two respectively. However, in the Religion,
these two aspects of the highest good are not considered in isolation. That is, the highest good of the *Religion* includes both aspects of the highest good as previously articulated. In the *Religion*, the highest good serves as a unifier which guides our action. Now, in the *Religion*, just as in the second *Critique*, we are talking about the same highest good, yet the task of this highest good, insofar as it consists of the union of the two tasks in the same concept, is even more apparent. In what follows, I will demonstrate that Kant’s conception of the highest good in the *Religion*, insofar as it serves as a unifier which guides our action serves as an anchor for the Kantian conception of God. In short, the conception of the highest good in the *Religion* combines both aspects of the highest good as previously presented (unifier and moral ideal) while contributing a new social dimension to the highest good.

In the preface to the first edition of the *Religion* Kant begins by asserting that the moral law in and of itself is enough. It is enough to determine our will, and it is enough objectively insofar as when we have other needs, they are subjective needs, and not required or conditioned by the law. Instead, these needs arise as a result of our being human. After making these assertions, Kant continues to examine this status of the law as it relates to our being human. That is, although the law has no need for any supplements, perhaps it provides us with something of that nature. Throughout this discussion Kant
remains faithful to his conception of the moral law as not requiring anything at all for it to become manifest. In its manifestation, morality becomes related to an end not in such a way that the end is the ground of moral action but rather the end comes about as a result of the sum of the consequences of the law. With these caveats, Kant clears a path for the appearance of the highest good as a unifying and guiding moral end to which we shall now turn.

Kant has presented the command to bring about the highest good possible in our sensuous world as a command that goes beyond the moral law. This is so since the law requires that we give no consideration to consequences in considering our duty. The moral law commands without qualification, making duty an object of respect "without proposing to us an end (or a final end)" through which we are helped to determine what duty recommends to us or through which we are given an incentive to pursue our duty.\(^5\) This is the case because in waiving any concern with the consequences of duty, we thereby make duty an object of the highest respect without regard to any other end that could perhaps wrongly serve as an incentive to the fulfillment of our duty.

However, Kant continues in his explanation of our relation to the law, realizing that the above relation of respect is not a complete account of human

\(^5\)Ibid., 6fn (6fn).
experience. Although the law alone should be enough to determine our morality, "it is one of the inescapable limitations of man and of his faculty of practical reason...to have regard, in every action, to the consequences thereof".  

Often, the law alone is not enough to determine our actions; as humans we constantly seek to go beyond the mere moral determination of our will and consider how the end of the action that is brought about will serve us. Kant claims that although consequences come about last in actual practice, it is often the case that they actually are considered first in the representations and intentions of our call to moral action. This state of affairs can be understood as a direct result of the structure of our volition.

As human beings, we strive to bring about states of affairs in the world (and in our wills) through action. These actions are not brought about merely because we are supersensuous, but because we are sensuous empirical beings as well. The things or states of affairs we desire to bring about are the objects of our inclination. Thus, in acting, we attempt to actualize our desires for the fulfillment of our ends as objects of inclination. As human, rational, and end desiring beings, Kant describes our having our own happiness as a subjective

---

6Ibid., 6fn (6fn).

7This does not preclude our recognizing that there are ends or objects of our will that are self existing, objective ends. Rather, this discussion merely stresses that often these conditions are brought about as a consequence of the conditions, as states of affairs in the world, being objects of inclination.
end. Thus, in being human we seek to bring about what we understand as pleasing states of affairs in the world which, as a consequence of taking place in the world, can only bring about synthetic (empirical) propositions. Likewise, any call to fulfill this end can only be a subjective, empirically determined call just as anything resulting from it is of the same nature.

However, as rational moral beings we are not merely empirical and our actions are not only determined by our empirical synthetic ends. There is of course another determining ground within us, other than that of our own happiness, a determining ground that we ought to have and one that is proposed to us by reason alone -- the law. The law, since we are called to fulfill it not through the "craving for possession of a thing through one's action," has ends which are not objects of inclination. Instead, the law is an object of respect, and the ends that the law commands "are those proposed to

---

8By our nature as beings dependent upon circumstances of sensibility, we crave happiness [Glückseligkeit] first and unconditionally. Yet by this same nature of ours...as beings endowed with reason and freedom, this happiness is far from being first, nor indeed is it unconditionally an object of our maxims; rather this object is worthiness to be happy, i.e., the agreement of all our maxims with the moral law [Würdigkeit glücklich zu sein, d.i. die Übereinstimmung aller unserer Maximem mit dem moralischen Gesetze.]. That this is objectively the condition whereby alone the wish for happiness can square with legislative reason--therein consists the whole precept of morality; and the moral cast of mind consists in the disposition to harbor no wish except on these terms. [REL, 46fn (Greene and Hudson, 41-42fn)].

9Ibid., 6fn (6fn).
us as such by reason alone."\textsuperscript{10} As humans, then, we are pulled by our two different ends. The one end, characterized as subjective and empirical is determined by happiness; the other, characterized as objective and practical is determined by the law through reason alone.

It is a fact of our being human that we have two aspects of ourselves expressed through our determinations as moral beings and as worldly beings. We desire the fulfillment of our ends and we are called to fulfill the commands of the law. These aspects of ourselves Kant describes as empirical and rational respectively. However, with regard to both of these disparate ends and aspects of ourselves, there is a possibility that these ends can be "directly presented to him (the moral agent) by reason alone," through which the moral agent is able to seek "something that he can love." In this final end, the aspects of ourselves as rationally and empirically determined are united. In addition, through this unification, this very same end guides the pursuit of the empirical ends that we are naturally drawn to pursue. Hence the law provides us with an end as unifier which guides our conduct.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 6fn (6fn).

\textsuperscript{11}It should be noted that the present discussion of the highest good integrates the two approaches articulated in Chapters One and Two. The relationship of the highest good as a unifier and as a moral ideal is not an exclusive one. Rather, the two tasks are combined in the same object or end of the will. The discussion of each of the previous chapters isolated these aspects of the highest good in order to highlight the way in which
The highest good serves as a unifier which guides our conduct in its role as a final end. Kant recognizes (as was discussed previously), that to be human and to seek to bring about an effect of our will, the will must be aimed towards some object. The object Kant postulates as the highest moral object is the highest good. The justification for such an end is given in terms that are not usually classified as Kantian, for it is through such an end that the agent gains satisfaction. This satisfaction is of course, in typical Kantian terminology, not to be the ground of the agent's action but rather a result of the agent's action being grounded in the law. The satisfaction of the moral agent lies in her being able to have a definite goal for her acts and thereby see "towards what, as an end...we might direct our actions and abstentions..." This end is the end that arises out of morality as was discussed in the earlier

contemporary scholarship on the highest good has isolated the tasks of the highest good without integrating them. In short, the highest good is always a unifier, and always a moral ideal. Yet like Kant's presentation, this one has concentrated on one aspect or another in order to highlight the roles of the highest good. In what follows, the two previous presented roles will be demonstrated to be included in the understanding of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth.

12"For in the absence of all reference to an end no determination of the will can take place in man, since such determination cannot be followed by no effect whatever; and the representation of the effect must be capable of being accepted...as an end conceived of as the result ensuing from the will's determination through the law." [REL, 4 (Greene and Hudson, 4)].

13Ibid., 4 (4).
section of this chapter. As such, the highest good, in the form

of an object which takes the formal condition of all such ends as
we ought to have (duty) and combines it with whatever is
conditioned, and in harmony with duty, in all the ends which we
do have (happiness proportioned to obedience to duty)\textsuperscript{14}
serves as a unifier which guides our moral life. It unifies our ends as those
which we ought to have (supersensuously determined) and those which we do
have (sensuously determined). Through this unification, we are given a guide
for all of the ends that we pursue, an end that is in harmony with duty. Thus,
it is through the highest good that we are able to have an unifying and guiding
end for our moral actions. This end serves our human need for the unification
of the disparate aspects of ourselves and for the envisioning of an end that
allows for the determination of the will through which we can act in a way
that will better serve the demands of the law.

In sum, it is through this notion of the highest good as a unifying moral
guide for conduct that we are pushed to recognize action as characterized not
by what it achieves, but rather by the grounds according to which it was
determined. In so doing, the highest good, in being an end beyond the law, is
still in accord with the law. That is, in the highest good's role as a unifier and
moral ideal, the highest good relates to action merely insofar as it is a

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 4 (4).
consequence of the law.¹⁵ This end, in being provided by reason alone, is
provided through the law insofar as

the law, which merely arouses his (the moral agent's) respect, even
though it does not acknowledge this object of love as a necessity
does yet extend itself on its behalf by including the moral goal of
reason among its (reason's) determining grounds.¹⁶

That is, the moral law can provide us with an end that allows us to integrate
the demands that are a part of our experience as human beings. Through such
an end we are left with an object which we can love as well as respect.

By means of all of this explanation of ourselves as drawn to be
empirically determined and thereby limited in our moral capacities, and drawn
to be rationally determined and thus unlimited in our moral responsibilities,
Kant is progressing to explain how the moral law leaves us with the following
proposition: "Make the highest good possible in the world your own final

---

¹⁵With regard to the aspect of the highest good as both a unifier and as a
final end Kant says, as a final end, the highest good:

...provides them (the moral agents) with a special point of focus
for the unification of all ends)[der Vereinigung aller Zwecke
verschafft]; for only thereby can objective, practical reality be
given to the union of the purposiveness arising from freedom
with the purposiveness of nature Zweckmäßigkeit aus Freiheit mit der
Zweckmäßigkeit der Natur]

[Ibid., 5 (5)].

¹⁶das Gesetz also was ihm bloß Achtung einflüszt, ob es zwar jenes als Bedürfnis
nicht anerkennt, erweitert sich doch zum behuf desselben zu ausnehmung des moralischen
Endzwecks der vernunft unter seine Bestimmungsgründe [Ibid., 7fn (6/7fn)].
Kant asserts that this command of the law is a synthetic proposition *a priori*, introduced by the moral law itself through which practical reason extends itself beyond the law. This extension is accomplished and allowed as a result of the moral law being a law for human beings. That is, for all of our actions, we are required to apply the supersensuous law to sensuous circumstances. Thus, since we undertake our actions in the empirical world in order to bring about states of affairs in the world, it is typical for humans to conceive of an end over and above the supersensuous law. For example, when I would seek to treat others as ends in themselves, this formal law could become manifest through an act the end of which could be feeding the hungry. Hence, in treating others as ends in themselves, I would be going beyond the law in seeking to bring about a state of affairs wherein I would be providing food to those who lack it. Kant allows for this extension beyond the law only because, in so doing, we have ends (such as the highest good) that embrace the *a priori* principle of the determining ground of a free will. That is, through this extension of the law, we are giving witness to the effects of morality since in its ends we provide a demonstration of the objective though merely practical reality of the concept of morality as being causal in the world.

---

17 *mache das höchste in der Welt mögliche Gut zu deinem Endzweck!* [Ibid., 7fn (7fn)].

18 Ibid., 6/7fn (6/7fn).
In seeking to bring about this final end, the highest good possible in the world, we are subject to the strictest obedience to the moral law which is to be considered the cause which ushers in the highest good as end. In so doing, we are brought face to face with our human limitations since human beings, in our limited capacity, are not able to completely and exhaustively bring about happiness in the world proportionate to worthiness to be happy.\(^{19}\) This leads Kant to his postulation of God as "an omnipotent moral Being...as ruler of the world, under whose care the [balance] occurs."\(^{20}\) God is now a logical condition for the adoption of the highest good serving the role of an omnipotent guarantor of our final end.

In establishing how it is that God enters the scene, Kant seeks to establish how it is that morality is able to "extend itself to the idea of a powerful moral Lawgiver, outside of Mankind," without becoming untrue to its original project.\(^{21}\) In a lengthy footnote, a place where Kant often conceals a wealth of information, he indicates the solution to this quandary. Here, Kant traces the justification for God through the idea of a highest good in the

\(^{19}\)There are some ways in which we can bring about happiness in proportion to virtue, this is discussed by both John Silber and Philip Rossi.

\(^{20}\) *ein allvermögendes moralisches Wesen als Weltherrscher angenommen werfen, unter dessen Vorforge dieses geschieht* [REL, 8fn (Greene and Hudson, 7fn)].

\(^{21}\) *wodurch sie sich zur Idee eines machthabenden moralischen Gesetzgebers ausser dem Menschen erweitert* [Ibid., 6 (5/6)].
world,

for whose possibility we must postulate a higher, moral, most holy, and omnipotent Being which alone can unite the two elements of this highest good.\textsuperscript{22}

It is because of this that morality for Kant leads inevitably to religion. For morality leads to the highest good, and the highest good requires God for its possible completion; hence, because it is the organization around God, religion comes about. Thus, in unpacking the requirement to pursue the highest good as a synthetic, a priori proposition, Kant delineates the connection between God and the highest good. In what follows, I will unpack this explanation which serves to anchor Kant's presentation of the role of God as moral guarantor of the highest good.

God is required as guarantor because the highest good is a required end of the pure practical reason. As a command of reason, the highest good must be possible. If the highest good is to be possible, its possibility requires "bringing about happiness in the world proportionate to worthiness to be happy."\textsuperscript{23} Human capacities are insufficient to exhaustively bring about this end; hence, the highest good requires the existence of God to deal with the

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{das ist, die Idee eines höchsten Guts in der Welt, zu dessen Möglichkeit wir ein höheres, moralisches, heiligtes und allvermögendes Wesen annehmen müssen, das allein beide Elemente desselben vereinigen kann; [Ibid., 5 (4-5)].}

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{die Glückseligkeit in der Welt einzustimmig mit der Würdigkeit glücklich zu sein zu bewirken [Ibid., 8fn (7fn)].}
aspects of the world that we are unable to overcome. Thus, it is through the highest good that Kant anchors his conception of God as the logical condition for the possibility of our final moral end, the highest good. And so it is that "morality leads inevitably to religion."\textsuperscript{24}

As the above demonstrate, God is required for the highest good to be brought about in the world. An idea of divinity is necessary in this context for Kant "as the cause supplementing our incapacity with respect to the final moral end."\textsuperscript{25} Our own powers, no matter how moral and perfected they might be would still leave us short of any coherent realization of the highest good. This is the case since it is through the highest good that we confront the sensuousness and this-worldliness of our being human. That is, we are unable to effect, consistently through our own endeavors all that would be required for the world to bring about, for ourselves and others, happiness to the degree that they are deserving.

As human beings, we are unable to be certain of our effect on anything but our own moral dispositions.\textsuperscript{26} This, in and of itself, is more than enough

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24}die Moral führt unausbleiblich Religion [Ibid., 8fn (7fn)].
\item \textsuperscript{25}als ergänzende Ursache unseres Unvermögens in Ansehung des moralischen Endzwecks vorstellen [Ibid., 183, (171)].
\item \textsuperscript{26}Although in effecting our own moral dispositions, we may consequentially effect other things, e.g. the happiness of others. This is not a primary effect, since if it were the goal of our pursuit, it would have to be a heteronomous
\end{itemize}
to ready ourselves for the aid of "a gracious Providence." However, we are unable to effect, with any sort of consistency, that way in which our desires for states of affairs in the world are brought about or fall short.\textsuperscript{27} The world in which we live is not under our control. We are unable to have the states of affairs in the world consistently conform to our desires for happiness.

Included in this idea of a falling short is the way in which our own moral status cannot guarantee our happiness. As evidence of this incapacity Kant appeals to the world around us as symptomatic of our inability to have happiness rewarded in proportion to virtue. Rarely is the righteous man or woman the one with the greatest worldly reward. The nexus of this resolution is the highest good which serves to resolve the incommensurableness of the world with our moral desert. For it is through the highest good that not only our purposiveness as happiness seekers and moral beings are united, but also that the ends of the world as enacted in the natural realm are unified as nature facilitates the satisfaction of the empirical aspect of our desires which our pursuit insofar as its ground would be pleasing others, and not in the law. Even when we seek to make others happy, thereby universalizing happiness as a pursuit, this is a pursuit primarily conditioned by our moral disposition insofar as the disposition is the source of the effect.

\textsuperscript{27} An expression for everything wished for, or worthy of being wished for which we can neither foresee nor bring about through our own endeavors according to the laws of experience; for which, therefore, if we wish to name its source we can offer none other than a gracious Providence [\textit{gütige Vorsorge}] [(REL, 107fn (Greene and Hudson, 98fn))].
demand for happiness necessitates.\textsuperscript{28}

The presentation of the highest good as that which unifies the natural purposiveness of the world as the vehicle for happiness with the moral purposiveness of humanity as the condition for our deserving said happiness is important in the \emph{Religion}, but for different reasons than in Kant's other works. Here the deficiencies of humanity to affect the natural world are pointed to as a causal explanation of the need for God in the moral project. In Kant's other works, this union of purposiveness in and of itself was of the greater import insofar as it points to a useful and constitutive aspect of the concept of the highest good.\textsuperscript{29} Although not the key issue of this presentation of the highest good, here Kant still remains faithful to the concept of the highest good as unifier. This unification accomplished in the moral object integrates the demands of the moral call which requires its manifestation and its enactment through the moral agent's utilization of her agency in both the supersensuous and sensuous realms.

In the preceding explanation, an aspect of the highest good that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Moral purposiveness and natural purposiveness are united for the same reasons that are cited in Chapter One. Without this cooperative unification, all desires to bring about the highest good in the world end in frustration.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{29}For a more detailed discussion of this notion of the highest good, as a dialectical ideal of reason through which the duality of purposiveness is united, see Chapter One.
\end{itemize}
received prior treatment has surfaced again. In the *Religion* Kant presents the
highest good as unifying the different sorts of purposiveness afoot in the
world. However, this aspect of the highest good is part and parcel of the
notion of the highest good as requiring God as moral guarantor. That is, the
unification of purposiveness is a symptom of the illness of our general human
inadequacy to bring about the highest good in the world. The solution to this
shortcoming comes through God as the champion of the concept of the
highest good. Without the postulation of the existence of God the moral call
to pursue the highest good would necessarily lead to conflict or frustration
from our sheer inadequacy. Thus, it is through the highest good that the
demands of all realms are met and satisfied.

In sum, with this more descriptive idea of the highest good, we are given
a substantive, filled-out notion of the highest good which has as its task the
unification of our ends as a guide for action. Throughout this discussion of
the highest good Kant continues to stress that although the highest good is
that which we are required to pursue, its pursuit would be impossible were it
not for God who guarantees its completion.\(^{30}\) With this articulation of the

---

\(^{30}\)Kant uses variously illustrative descriptions for the highest good
throughout the Preface to the First Edition of the *Religion*.

"some sort of final end", "the concept of a final end of all things", "union
of the purposiveness arising from freedom with the purposiveness of nature", "a
final end for his duties, as their consequence".
notion of the highest good present in the Religion, there remains only the task to determine the form through which this understanding of the highest good is to be made manifest. That is, what does the highest good which serves as unifier, moral ideal and anchor for God look like?

The Fulfillment of the Highest Good

I have articulated above what will be accomplished through the highest good (moral guidance and unification of purposiveness), and what, beyond our worthiness, is required for its manifestation (God as moral guarantor). What remains is to consider the form of this highest good and why it is that the highest good takes this form. In what follows, I will demonstrate how it is that here, in the Religion, Kant introduces a conception of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth. This conception of the highest good differs from the traditional understandings of the highest good as they were considered in the other chapters. This notion of the highest good is unique in that it includes a social dimension. As such, the responsibility and duty to be moral is no longer that of the individual in her moral isolation. The moral agent is no longer able to

apply himself exclusively to his own private moral affairs and relinquish to a higher wisdom all the affairs of the human race (as
regards its moral destiny)."\textsuperscript{31}

The ethical commonwealth goes beyond an understanding of virtue as a primarily individual task articulated through individual acts. Hence, the requirement to pursue the highest good no longer lies solely with the moral individual in her isolation, for now it is placed on the species as a moral unity.

As Kant describes:

Now here we have a duty which is \textit{sui generis}, not of men toward men, but of the human race toward itself. For the species of rational beings is objectively, in the idea of reason, destined for a social goal, namely the promotion of the highest as a social good.\textsuperscript{32}

To bring about the highest good is the destiny of the human species, as a species, and as such it is a social good. We are thus required to pursue the highest social goal, which follows from our primary duty to pursue and make perfect our own virtue. The highest good takes this social form as a consequence of Kant's full scale treatment of human evil. In presenting Kant's ethical commonwealth, I will present Kant's doctrine of evil in order to

\textsuperscript{31}als ob ein jeder nur seiner moralischen Privatangelegenheit nachgehen, das Ganze der Ungelegenheit des menschlichen Geschlechts aber (seiner moralischen Bestimmung nach) einer hohen Weisheit üburlaffen dürfe [REL, 100 (Greene and Hudson, 92)].

\textsuperscript{32}Hier haben wir nun eine Pflicht von ihrer eignen Art nicht der menschen gegen Menschen, sondern des menschlichen Geschlechts gegen sich selbst. Jede Gattung vernünftiger Wesen ist nämlich objectiv, in der Idee der Vernunft, zu einem gemeinschaftlichen Zwecke, nämlich der Beförderung des höchsten als eines gemeinschaftlichen Guts, bestimmt. [Ibid., 97 (89)].
demonstrate that the ethical commonwealth is required in order to overcome the inherent evil of human nature. This is the case because as humans we are radically evil and this state, at the most basic level, is that which thwarts our efforts to seek to perfect our state of virtue. As radically evil, we are thereby left in an ethical state of nature which we are also required to depart from and overcome through our moral relations in ethical community (represented as the highest good). As a function of the drive to seek our own moral perfection, we must strive to bring about this social highest good as a means to facilitate and preserve our own virtue, thereby fulfilling the command of the law. For present purposes I will articulate the primary characteristics of this conception of the highest good concentrating on its social aspects and how it is a manifestation of what morality requires. In what follows I will present this social highest good relative to its underlying basis in Kant's interpretation of radical evil.33

In Kant's doctrine of radical evil he goes far towards describing why we

---

33This chapter will not include an exhaustive account of Kant's ethical commonwealth. Instead, I will present the basic aspects of the ethical commonwealth in terms of its origin as the means through which the sovereignty of the good principle is to come to pass. The other issues relative to this understanding of the highest good, such as how the ethical commonwealth is connected to the other understandings of the highest good will be addressed in Chapter Four. Furthermore, the means for the formation of the ethical commonwealth, as well as a critical assessment of this consummate notion of Kant's highest good will be addressed in Chapter Five.
act and do what we do and, most relevantly, why it is that we transgress the law. Kant's explanation of evil arises as a result of his need to hold us morally culpable for our actions that go against the law. Prior to this work Kant had said very little about how it is that we could go against our moral vocation and still remain free, for free action is moral action and thus autonomous. Yet when we look out at the world, we are not surprised to see that moral agents everywhere appear to be going against the law, and to be doing so freely, that is without coercion. Hence, for persons to be held culpable for their actions Kant must give an account of how they come about while preserving human freedom.34

Kant demonstrates that the moral status of our actions as good or evil is chosen and that, as such, we are responsible for this choice as it is a function of our freedom. To establish this, Kant examines the source of morally good and morally evil actions. In so doing, it becomes apparent that the origin of our moral actions, whether they be good or evil, if they are to be free, cannot be a result of the sensuous inclinations of moral agency. If this were the case, an individual moral agent would not be responsible for her actions because

34John Silber, in the introduction to this work explains the problem as follows:..."Kant had to show how necessity can be combined with freedom in a single relationship." John Silber, "The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion," introduction to Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone translated by Greene and Hudson, (New York: Harper Torchbooks)1960, lxxxi.
they would be understood as a consequence of something over which she had no control, her natural state. That is, evil as a part of the sensuous nature of moral agents would not originate in free choice; it would in some way be hard-wired into the natural being of agents.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, in order for action not to be sensibly determined, its origin must lie elsewhere than in the sensuous drives of the moral agent, and, as such, the origin of action must be freely chosen. In order to fulfill these criteria, Kant concludes that as acting moral agents, our actions are determined by maxims which we freely choose. These maxims that we choose and those which govern our acts are those parts of us that are determined by "nature" where nature is understood in a non-sensible manner.

Kant describes this non-sensible nature as follows:

\ldots let it be noted that by "nature of man" we here intend only the subjective ground of the exercise (under objective moral laws) of man's freedom in general; this ground--whatever is its character is the necessary antecedent of every act apparent to the senses.\textsuperscript{36}

Nature, then, is not that which is the opposite of freedom, since that would contradict the possibility of our being culpable for our action. Here, nature is that means through which we are anchored in "human nature" as we make a

\textsuperscript{35}Man himself must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil he is or is to become. Either condition must be an effect of his free choice; for otherwise he could not be held responsible for it and could therefore be morally neither good nor evil. REL, 44, (Greene and Hudson, 40).

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 21 (16).
commitment to a subjective disposition for action. This over-arching
disposition serves as the ground for all other actions for morally culpable
beings. As such, this subjective ground is and must always be an expression of
freedom. If this were not the case, the use or abuse of the agent's power of
choice "in respect of the moral law could not be imputed to him nor could the
good or bad in him be called moral."\(^{37}\)

In establishing the character of what Kant calls the over-arching
subjective predisposition of our nature, he discusses the pulls that are at work
in us as moral beings. We previously established that the moral agent is pulled
toward fulfilling the demands of her moral self—following the law; the moral
agent also is pulled toward fulfilling the demands of her sensuous self—
pursuing her own happiness. These are the two incentives, termed
propensities, that govern us and are most relevant for the determination of our
overall maxim.

These incentives are specifically good or evil insofar as they serve as the
means through which the underlying moral propensity of human agency is
actualized. That is, through the determination of our underlying moral
maxim, as specifically either good or evil, the subjective determination of the
human moral agent is realized. For Kant, the propensity is that which inheres

\(^{37}\)in Ansehnung des sittlichen Gesetzes ihm nicht zugerechnet werden und das Gute
oder Böse in ihm nicht moralisch heissen [Ibid., 21 (17)].
in the moral agent and thereby determines the subjective disposition at the root of all subsequent acting. As he says:

...by the concept of a propensity we understand a subjective determining ground of the will which precedes all acts and which, therefore is itself not an act.\textsuperscript{38}

As a result of this account of moral action, the term "act" has two meanings, both of which are reconcilable with the concept of freedom. An "act" in the first and more primary sense applies to the general adoption of the basic propensity (towards good or evil) which becomes the basis for all other actions. These other actions are "acts" in the second sense and their status as good or as evil is determined in accordance with their determination through the original act. The pull toward morality or toward evil is actualized at the most primary level, in the first sense of "act". For the true moral or evil status of an individual is not determined by "act" in the second sense, but only in that most primary adoption of the basic moral predisposition. The point of this differentiation in the two senses of act for Kant lies in safeguarding the freedom that underlies our action. We freely choose the underlying ground of our maxims as a propensity towards good or evil. After this choice, our actions regardless of whether or not they specifically follow from that original maxim,

\textsuperscript{38}versteht man unter dem Begriffe eines Hanges einen subjectiven Bestimmungsgrund der Willkür, der vor jeder That vorhergeht, mithin selbst noch nicht That ist [Ibid., 31 (26)].
are determined as such. Thus, our goodness or evil is determined at the most basic of volitional levels.\textsuperscript{39}

As a consequence of this explanation of our maxims, evil is possible only as a determination of a free will. This is the case since the will can be appraised as good or evil only by means of its most primary underlying maxim. Thus the propensity to evil consists in the underlying ground of the maxims. This underlying maxim is subjective insofar as it is freely chosen and could be otherwise. In short, whatever the determination of the moral agent’s underlying maxim—as good or evil—it has a subjective status. This is the case, since the underlying maxim results from our choosing this particular propensity towards good or evil, and since the propensity was chosen freely, it could always be otherwise.

As a result of this, good and evil are not discerned from performed actions. That is, moral agents are not evil or good by virtue of their performance of evil actions (actions contrary to law), or good actions (actions springing from the law); instead, they are good or evil because there is present

\textsuperscript{39}Kant says of the more basic and fundamental sense of act, it: 

...is intelligible action, cognizable by means of pure reason alone, apart from every temporal condition; of the second sense of act, as individual actions he says, it:

...is sensible action, empirical, given in time (\textit{factum phoenomenon}).

Ibid., 32/33 (26/27).

In addition, this dual understanding of act can be seen in light of the comparable notion of object in Chapter one.
in the acting agent an underlying maxim which is either evil or good. Whether
or not the determination of the underlying maxim consists of a commitment
to good or evil is inaccessible to human cognition. This is the case since the
subjective determination of the underlying moral maxim is a determination
that takes place as a part of our noumenal selves. The true status of the
underlying maxim is only apparent to an all knowing being. Hence to
determine someone's moral status requires the a priori inference of an
underlying good or an underlying evil maxim.\textsuperscript{40}

In short, the above has argued that Kant provides a program through
which moral culpability is retained, while at the same time freedom is
preserved. This system demonstrates its goal of moral culpability insofar as we
are able to say of a moral agent that she is by nature good or evil. To be by
nature good or evil means only that there is in us an ultimate ground
(inscrutable to us) of the adoption of good maxims or of evil maxims (i.e.,
those contrary to law). In addition, this primary predisposition towards good
or evil forms the basis for the adoption of all of the subsequent maxims,
through which actions are brought about. This organization comprises what

\textsuperscript{40}More on the status of our inner disposition will be explained relative to
the ethical commonwealth as establishing the good over the evil principle in
our maxims. For now, it is enough to realize that "the ultimate ground of the
adoption of our maxims,...cannot be a fact revealed in experience," [Ibid., 22
(17)].
according to Kant, it is to be human; it is our “nature”.

As a result of the above system of moral culpability, it makes no sense to speak of good or evil as that which determines the will. Freedom is preserved and, consequently, we determine the goodness or the evilness of our will as we freely adopt the maxims that result in such a good or evil determination. The determination of the will itself can only lie in maxims, that which consists of those rules made by the will for the use of its freedom. Human moral agents are then demonstrated to be the originators of the good or evil that is a part of our characters. This is the case since the ultimate grounding of our maxims is posited freely as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom in experience. With the introduction of the above conception of adopting a maxim, Kant preserves moral culpability and freedom, something that has not been completely clear in his previous works. 41

Agents are never indifferent with respect to the moral law; they are never neither good nor evil. This is the case as a result of our adoption of our ultimate moral disposition. 42 This disposition is the ultimate subjective

41 We freely choose a subjective maxim, determined by our will (as willkür). Our subsequent acts, as good or evil, are then a result of the expression of our freedom and as such they can be moral or immoral. Ibid., 44ff (44ff).

42 ...if it were merely a question as to whether the law or the sensuous impulse were to furnish the incentive, man would be at once good and evil: this, however, ...is a contradiction. Ibid., 44 (40).
ground of the adoption of maxims, it is singular and applies universally to the whole use of freedom. That is, whatever the dominant disposition within a moral agent, that disposition serves as the determining factor in the agent's moral status, as good or evil. As was established previously, human agents possess a drive to morality and the very same toward happiness or self-love. Relative to these drives, the moral agent is good or evil contingent upon which drive is subordinated to the other.

...Hence the distinction between a good man and one who is evil...must depend upon subordination (the form of the maxim), i.e., which of the two incentives he makes the condition of the other.43

It follows, then, that the agent who has subordinated her moral drive to her drive to fulfill the need for self-love has a morally evil predisposition and is thus an evil individual. Likewise, that agent who has subordinated her need for self-love to her drive to fulfill the moral law has a morally good disposition and is a morally good individual.

As a result of the above, the determination of moral evil and goodness can be understood as based upon the hierarchical relation of the ground of all maxims. From this, Kant concludes that the human species is evil by nature. This claims encompasses the entire moral status of the species. Generally, it

---

43 Also muß der Unterschied, ob der Mensch gut oder böse sei, nicht in dem Unterschiede der Triebfedern, die er in seine Maxime ausnimmt (nicht in dieser ihrer materie), sondern in der Unterordnung (der Form derselben) liegen: welche von beiden er zur Bedingung der andern macht. [Ibid., 36 (31)].
can be concluded that humanity has perverted the appropriate hierarchy of the subordination of maxims. Humanity has subsumed the principle towards good under the principle of self-love.

Kant’s explanation of humanity’s propensity towards evil is contradictory. That is, he is claiming to have knowledge of what he previously asserted was cognitively inaccessible. Kant attempts to make his claim that humanity is evil through demonstrating that both the moral principles and the principle of self-love are enough to determine our will. Furthermore, it is only natural for us in being human that there is some mixture of these incentives in the determining of our actions. However, humans have demonstrated time and again that they are morally evil. From this empirical and historical point, Kant concludes that our species is morally evil insofar as we have perpetually subsumed the urge to morality under the principle of happiness and self-love.44

The evil of humanity is a radical evil. It is radical insofar as its source lies at the root of all of our maxims and as their ground, corrupts all of them. It is, as a natural propensity, inextirpable by human powers. This is the case

44For more on this see: REL, 36-7 (Greene and Hudson, 31-2); 28/9 (27): ...from what we know of man through experience we cannot judge otherwise of him (that he is evil), ...we may presuppose evil to be subjectively necessary to every man, even to the best
Ibid., 27 (26)
It is not really clear how Kant can go from an analysis of human volition to a statement about the status of said volition.
because any sort of moral revolution, a revolution which would reverse the immoral hierarchical relation of principles, would have to occur through the adherence of good maxims in the moral predisposition. This would be an impossible state of affairs, since the ground of all maxims is a corrupt ground. Thus good maxims could not take hold in the corrupt ultimate subjective ground of all maxims. In establishing evil as radical, there is a danger. That is, if humanity is to be free (as well as culpable), evil must be possible to overcome.\(^{45}\) If evil is an inescapable condition, humanity is no longer free, but determined by its evil nature. It is no surprise that Kant provides a means through which the underlying evil of humanity is overcome. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the means for this overcoming of radical evil consists of the emergence of the highest good as ethical commonwealth.

The conception of the highest good as ethical commonwealth is a social understanding of the highest good through which that which is good in us is able to regain its sovereignty over that which is evil in us. As we have seen, human beings are radically evil in that within their original and most basic disposition lies a propensity to evil. As a result of this underlying propensity towards evil, humanity has a dual motivation to pursue the highest good. That is, not only is the highest good a duty in that it is the object of the moral

\(^{45}\)Ibid., 37 (32).
law, but it is also a duty in a more fundamental sense. In working to bring about the ethical commonwealth we are not only working to bring about the highest good, that object which the moral law requires, but we are also working to re-establish the sovereignty of the good principle within our internal subjective moral hierarchy of dispositions, thereby fulfilling the command of the moral law in our duty to improve our virtue.

The society of the ethical commonwealth which Kant has claimed as the highest good, is required insofar as it is Kant's conception of the highest good. Furthermore, it is required to overcome our propensity towards evil. That is, no matter how much an individual has managed to have the good principle overcome the evil principle in their maxims, this correct ordering of things is constantly coming under attack from others who have not done such a good ordering. Thus, it can seem impossible for one to overcome their predisposition to evil since no matter how far the moral individual manages to

46 About our duty to pursue the ethical commonwealth, Kant writes: The idea of such a state (the ethical commonwealth) possesses a thoroughly well-grounded objective reality in human reason (in man's duty to join such a state), even through, subjectively, we can never hope that man's good will will lead mankind to decide to work with unanimity towards this goal
die Idee in der menschlichen Vernunft ihre ganz wohlgegrundete objective Realität hat (als Pflicht sich zu einem solchen Staate zu einigen), wenn es gleich subjeciv von dem guten Willen der Menschen nie gehofft werden könnte, daß sie zu diesem Zwecke mit Eintracht hinzuwirken sich entschließen würden [Ibid., 95 (86)].

47 Ibid., 93 (85).
change her own predisposition, her own progress becomes threatened when she comes into contact with others. Furthermore, moral agents can misunderstand this social threat to their individual morality and thereby become convinced that the evil of their maxim is not their fault, but rather that "of mankind to whom he (the moral agent) is related and bound." This is obviously a misguided understanding of the overcoming of evil which as a result of the exercise of our freedom, it can be, and must be, possible to overcome. It must be possible to overcome our evil because we have no commands to do that which is impossible. Furthermore it is our responsibility to strive with all of our power to overcome the sovereignty of the evil principle over the good principle within us.

The fact that we are responsible for our own evil does nothing to diminish the effects, through our social contact, with others. For it is through social interaction with those who are evil, as well as with others just because they are human, that we are led to the inevitable corruption of our predispositions. This is the case no matter how great our effort has been to keep our moral dispositions pure. As a result of this condition of the social corruptibility of our dispositions we are called to:

48Ibid., 93 (85).
49Ibid., 44 (40).
the forming of an alliance uniquely designed as a protection against this evil and for the furtherance of goodness in man--of a society, enduring, ever extending itself, aiming solely at the maintenance of morality, and counteraction of evil with united forces...

This union is the ethical commonwealth. It is Kant's highest good insofar as it consists of the highest possibility of morality in society, through which our pursuit of happiness is to be conditioned. Without such a union, we are forever doomed to moral failure insofar as all of our individual moral progress will count for naught since it will be lost as soon as we meet with others. Thus it is through the formation of the alliance at the root of the ethical commonwealth that we are able to keep safe and increase our moral progress.

That is, through the establishment of an ethical society we are able to safeguard the moral progress that we have already made. In addition, it is only through the ethical commonwealth that we are able to combat our radical evil and work towards the establishment of the sovereignty of the good principle within our subjective predisposition.

...the sovereignty of the good principle is attainable, so far as men can work toward it, only through the establishment and spread of a society in accordance with, and for the sake of, the laws of

---

50 eine ganz eigentlich af die Verhütung dieses Bösen und zu Beförderung des Guten im Menschen abzweckende Vereinigung als eine bestehende und sich immer ausbreitende, bloß aus die Erhaltung der Moralitäts angelegte Gesellschaft zu errichten, welche mit vereinigten Kräften dem Bösen entgegenwirfte [Ibid., 94 (85-86)].
This social union is the highest good insofar as it serves to safeguard and nurture that which is moral within humanity. In so doing, the highest good would promulgate the establishment of the good principle's sovereignty over the evil principle. In this way, the burden of virtue is shared by an entire society rather than by each individual in her isolated moral combat with the evil principle. From this conception of the highest good, as an ethical commonwealth understood as following from a duty to overcome our propensity to evil and to seek to bring about this state in others, the face of the highest good changes insofar as it is no longer that union for individual virtue and happiness. Instead, the highest good requires

a union of such individuals into a whole toward the same goal—into a system of well-disposed men, in which and through whose unity alone the highest moral good can come to pass... 

As required to be brought about, the highest good represents the moral life as a social and collective undertaking given the general way in which evil and its
requirements to be overcome are ascribed to the whole species. Just as the promulgation of evil is socially rooted, so is the means through which it is to be conquered. It is not enough to do everything within your power to change your inner self, the moral agent must also strive to create such a society that has as its basis "a system of well-disposed men."

The form of this commonwealth is to be realized as a result of the moral progression of the citizens that are already in a political commonwealth. These citizens would voluntarily leave their ethical state of nature. This ethical state of nature is likened to the political state of nature, which is a state "of war of every man against every other." The ethical state of nature is similar to political state of nature because it too is a state of war.

the ethical state of nature (is) one of open conflict between principles of virtue and a state of inner immorality which the natural man ought to bestir himself to leave as soon as possible.

As such, the ethical state of nature is a bellicose atmosphere made up of the

---


54 REL, 97 (Greene and Hudson, 88).

55 So ist der ethische Naturzustand eine öffentliche wechselseitige Befehdung der Tugendprinzipien und ein Zustand der inner Sittenlosigkeit, aus welchem der natürliche Mensch so bald wie möglich herauszukommen sich beflissenig soll [Ibid., 97 (89)].
conflicts between our own inner dispositions of good and evil and those same
in all others. In being required to leave the ethical state of nature the moral
agent is being required to pursue a new sort of duty. This is a duty of the
society as a whole. Of this whole, Kant explains:

...the idea of such a whole, as a universal republic based on laws
of virtue, is an idea completely distinguished from all moral
laws...\textsuperscript{56}

In being so distinguished, this duty requires our working towards something
that is not in our power. This is the means by which Kant introduces God into
the idea of the ethical commonwealth as the moral guarantor of this social
understanding of the highest good.

With the ethical commonwealth not totally under the auspices of
human domain, the conditions for the bringing about of the ethical
commonwealth rely strongly on the role of God as moral governor and
guarantor. We work to bring about a union of moral agents united for the
furtherance of virtue, but we have very little guidance towards how, through
our humanity alone, this will occur. Kant hints that its establishment will
arise out of its basis in the republican constitution.\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, the main

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 97 (89).

\textsuperscript{57}This is part of the developmental notion of the highest good that will
meet with in depth treatment in Chapter Four, see also REL, 94-5 (Greene
and Hudson, 86-7).
guidelines Kant gives for the establishment of the ethical commonwealth share
their origins with his political theory in that they are subject to the
requirements of public legislation. This public legislation must be made up of
laws which must "be capable of being regarded as commands of a common law-
giver."\textsuperscript{58}

With the above, a picture of the ethical commonwealth takes form. For
it is within the universal ethical commonwealth where the laws are internal,
that we look to God as the common law-giver.

Hence an ethical commonwealth can be thought of only as a
people under divine commands, \textit{i.e.}, as a \textit{people of God}, and indeed
under laws of virtue.\textsuperscript{59}

With God as the moral governor of the ethical commonwealth, the moral law
is now recognized as the divine command of this lawgiver. With God taking
on this role in the ethical commonwealth, the people within the
commonwealth come together under the auspices of this moral ruler united, as
a "people of God."\textsuperscript{60}

As a result, the members of the ethical commonwealth understand

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}, 98 (90).

\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Also ist ein ethisches gemeinses Wesen nur als ein Volk unter göttliche Geboten, \textit{d.i.}
as ein Volk Gottes, und zwar nach Tugendgesetzen, zu denken möglich. [Ibid., 99
(91)].}

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, 99/100 (91).
themselves as a people of God, a consequence of which consists in their formation of a universal church of God. That is, Kant dictates that the people of God come together in no other form than that of a church, which will serve as the formal organon and archetype to be actualized on earth in order for the ethical commonwealth to be brought about. When the archetypal "invisible church" is actualized in its ectypal form of the "visible church" we know we are on the right path towards the achievement of the ethical commonwealth. 61

With the role of God demonstrated as moral guarantor through the form of the church, the highest good as ethical commonwealth shares some of the same characteristics of the more traditional, individualistic notions of the highest good. Within the ethical commonwealth, we are acting such that we make our moral selves worthy to deserve God's assistance as we seek to make actual the invisible church on earth. God's assistance is required in order that we are able to make commensurate the ends of morality with the world as well as we are able to make our own moral ends commensurate with our subjective

61"The true (visible) church is that which exhibits the (moral) kingdom of God on earth so far as it can be brought to pass by men"
Die wahre (sichtbare) Kirche ist jene, welche das (moralische) Reich Gottes aus Erden, so viel es durch Menschen geschehen kann, darstellt... [Ibid., 101 (92)].

This discussion of the invisible and visible church is like the discussion of the bringing about of the archetypal and ectypal worlds in the Analytic of the second Critique. See Chapter Two for a discussion of this connection.
desires for happiness.

Mankind (rational earthly existence in general) in its complete moral perfection is that which alone can render a world the object of a divine decree and the end of creation. With such perfection as the prime condition, happiness is the direct consequence, according to the will of the Supreme Being. 

Only as moral agents work to make themselves worthy of divine aid, in being “morally perfect,” through working to bring about the invisible church on earth, will divine aid be forthcoming. However, in working toward this ethical commonwealth, we are not to use it as that way in which to determine our actions (heteronomously). That is, we are not to seek to bring about the ethical commonwealth for the sake of happiness in the world nor are we to zealously look to God for assistance. We have no knowledge of the connection or timetable God uses to determine his role in the manifestation of the ethical commonwealth. Even though a concern with the divine timetables is anxiety provoking, Kant implores us to have no concerns. It is only "essential to know what man himself must do in order to become worthy of this (God’s) assistance." This is assistance that will bring about the ethical

---

62Das, was allein eine Welt zum Gegenstand des göttlichen Rahschluffes und zum Zwecke der Schöpfung mach kann, ist die Menschheit (das vernünftige Weltwesen überhaupt) in ihrer moralischen, ganzen Vollkommenheit, wovon als erster Bedingung die Glückseligkeit die unmittelbare Folge in dem Willen des höchsten wesens ist. [Ibid., 60 (54)].

63Ibid., 52 (47).
commonwealth as well as our own moral conversion as it stresses the role of God as guarantor of the concept of the highest good.

To sum up, in this chapter I have argued that the highest good in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* is similar and different from Kant's other presentations of the highest good. This notion of the highest good is similar insofar as it serves: as a unifying moral ideal and requires God in order for it to be made manifest. Consequently, the notions of the highest good as presented in Chapters One and Two are demonstrated to be complementary and not competitive or exclusive. Hence, through the ethical commonwealth, the two notions of the highest good as expressed in the second *Critique* are united and made manifest. Thus to fulfill the command to pursue the ethical commonwealth is to fulfill the command to pursue the highest good as articulated in the second *Critique*. In addition, this notion of the highest good in the *Religion* differs from the previous notions. This notion of the highest good is a social conception of the highest good in the form of Kant's ethical commonwealth. Central to the social aspect of the ethical commonwealth is the way in which it fosters a notion of collective virtue that includes an orientation towards others in creating a more perfect social union as a church on earth. Hence with this third chapter, the similarities and differences between Kant's conceptions of the highest good are brought to
light. From the establishment of this integrated interpretation of the highest good, Chapter Four will consider the possibility of a developmental plan through which we are able to actualize this integrated interpretation of the highest good. This will be done as Chapter Four demonstrates the way in which the Kantian corpus contains a developmental program for achieving the ultimate articulation of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace, that object which morality requires.
CHAPTER 4

KANT'S DEVELOPMENTAL PLAN:
THE CONSUMMATION OF THE HIGHEST GOOD

In the prior chapters I have argued for the three predominate themes of the highest good, in order to explicate and distinguish the various manifestations of Kant's complex object. To sum up, the highest good appears in primarily three guises: first, as that dialectical ideal for the unification of our purposiveness, as demonstrated in Chapter One; second as that moral ideal which serves as a guide for our action, as demonstrated in Chapter Two. Third and finally, the highest good appears as the ethical commonwealth. In this manifestation of the highest good, the two prior appearances of the highest good are combined as the highest good is made manifest as a unifying moral ideal with a required social component as the means through which radical evil is to be overcome. This third conception of the highest good consists of the ethical commonwealth. It is this third manifestation of the highest good, that which received treatment in Chapter Three, that Kant articulates as the supreme manifestation of the highest good. Hence in what follows, instead of interpreting the highest good through these various
instances, I will present my main thesis, that duty determines just one object, the highest good, the consummate articulation of which is made manifest through a developmental plan culminating in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace.

Implicit in my thesis is the following: to grasp the highest good in its complete relation to the moral law and moral agents is to appreciate the moral object as it is manifested in its entirety, that is, within what is falsely, albeit commonly, delineated as Kant's separate realms. These faux separations are often articulated as those of the individual as compared to society, the realms of the political as compared to the ethical, and that of right contrasted to virtue, just to name a few. Yet in its entirety, the most complete consummation of the highest good comes about as a consequence of the integration of these realms by way of a developmental plan. The blueprint for this plan is contained within Kant's corpus, but is by no means obvious. What I have done is to piece together the integral parts of this plan through a careful analysis of several of Kant's developmental texts. This analysis leaves an understanding of the highest good that not only serves as a means through which these disparate, perspectival, and exclusive statements of the highest good are integrated, but it also requires cooperation among them. In addition, analysis of this developmental plan results in the removal of the false
polarizations within the Kantian project which serve as a barrier for comprehending the Kantian vision of what morality requires.

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, duty determines just one object. That is not to say that many objects are not compatible with the law. However, there is only one object which we are given a command to pursue. Many actions are required and we have many duties as a result of the command to obey the law, yet the law itself commands that we work to bring about only one object, the highest good as happiness in harmony with moral worthiness. In what follows I will further demonstrate how it is that duty determines just one object, the highest good, irrespective of whether or not this is done relative to a "moral", "political", "individual" or "social" project. I will accomplish this through addressing the connections and removing the roadblocks between the above multifarious notions of the place from which one seeks to pursue and achieve the highest good. Included in this will be an analysis of the object of pure practical reason insofar as it includes a developmental plan for its consummate articulation. In short, I will demonstrate that there is just one conception of the highest good -- that object that duty requires in its practice. However, the specific requirements in content of this object vary and are to be understood perspectively as relative,
that is, contingent on one's place in the moral venue.\footnote{Part of my argument includes the claim that it is nonsensical to speak of a "moral" highest good and a "political" highest good. The highest good is that object which combines the greatest possible happiness in accord with the greatest possible enactment of duty (virtue) relative to that particular context, e.g. between individuals, among citizens, amidst republics, etc. This argument is substantiated in what follows, however it is useful for the explanation to give this short elucidation here.}

In order to establish my thesis, that duty determines just one object, the highest good; the consummate articulation of which is made manifest through a developmental plan culminating in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace, I will: 1) demonstrate that the practice of duty consists of the highest good. This is the case insofar as through the practice of duty there is a developmental plan which culminates in the ethical commonwealth. Thus after establishing step one, I will: 2) present the developmental plan that culminates in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. This plan consists of three moments, the moments of: a) a person, b) a state, and c) humanity. This becomes apparent, through presenting the stages of the highest good insofar as they are actualized in these realms. Finally, after the above discussion I will: 3) present the consequence of this highest articulation of Kant's complex object. In short, these consequences will consist of the expression of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace which comes about as a result of the developmental
ascendence of the prior notions.

The Practice of Duty is the Highest Good

Throughout the previous three chapters I have dealt with various definitions of the highest good. In each of these conceptions of the highest good some aspects have remained common while others have varied. Attention to these similarities and differences enables us to regard the highest good from a more unified point of view. Within each presentation of the highest good three factors have remained constant. Always and in every case, the highest good is that object that is determined by the law, insofar as it is the object of pure practical reason. Second, as determined by the law, this object is required to be pursued insofar as the law includes a command to pursue the highest good. Third and finally, the abstract notion of the highest good contains a general program as its task. This task is the creating of an environment such that it becomes possible to achieve happiness in proportion to our worthiness to receive it. With regard to the conception of the highest good in Chapter One, as a dialectical ideal of reason, the environment of happiness in proportion to virtue is brought about within the moral will. With regard to the conception of the highest good in Chapter Two, as a moral ideal, the environment of happiness in proportion to virtue is brought about
within the world. With regard to the conception of the highest good in Chapter Three, the ethical commonwealth, the environment of happiness in proportion to virtue is brought about both internally and externally. This is the case insofar as we are required to bring about a commonwealth and overcome our internal propensity to evil. In brief, the highest good is the object of the law, required to be pursued, and that which brings about the coincidence of happiness and virtue. However, as we have seen in the earlier chapters, for each of these three factors, there are as many incidental differences. It is my thesis that these incidences of difference are expressed as a consequence of the perspective from which the highest good is being made manifest.

In short, there is one highest good, the program for which is determined differently in its specifics relative to the perspective in the moral venue from which the highest good is being pursued. That is, each notion of the highest good shares at least the above three characteristics. What differs about the various manifestations of the highest good is the perspective relative to duty from which each of these objects of pure practical reason is pursued. The three perspectives from which to pursue the highest good manifest themselves
relative to the principles of morality, right, and moral right. Thus it is through these various perspectives from which to perceive duty that the theoretical form of the highest good is required to be practiced as an object of the law.

Furthermore, the three principles upon which the individual manifestations of the highest good are based (morality, right and moral right) are each perspectival manifestations of duty. As a manifestation of duty, the object of each is the highest good as that practice which 1) the law determines, 2) duty requires and 3) happiness is present in proportion to virtue. Hence in what follows I will examine and prove the claim that the practice of duty, perspectivally relative, is the highest good. The essay in which Kant devoted extended treatment to this relation between duty and its practice, “On the Proverb: That may Be True in Theory But is of No Practical Use,” is an obvious choice as that place from which to begin.

With regard to the conception of the highest good as a dialectical ideal, the environment to be created, where happy moral right, I am describing the formulation of Kant’s theory of duty that provides the basis for the ethical commonwealth. Here, what was once merely internal laws are now legislated externally. More simply, moral right is that place where morality agrees with politics determined by what Kant refers to as the Tugendgesetzen – laws of virtue [REL 94, (Greene and Hudson, 86)].

A brief note to clarify terms. The object of duty (theory) is the highest good (practice). Duty can be approached from three perspectives: 1) a person (individual), 2) the state (political), 3) humanity (people or world). The principle underlying the approach of the perspectives is: 1) morality, 2) right,
Kant begins this essay and its treatment of the relationship of theory to practice by clarifying his terms and thereby setting the stage for his presentation of the highest good as it entails the practice of the theory that is duty. He defines a theory as an aggregation of rules, even of practical rules, in which these rules are thought of as principles possessing a certain generality and, consequently as being abstracted from a multitude of conditions that nonetheless necessarily influence their application. Kant then elaborates that the theory with which he is exclusively concerned is none other than a theory based on the concept of duty. Since this theory is based on a concept of duty, its practice must be possible. This follows from the definition of duty, which would be empty if it were not possible to be pursued, for how could there be optional or occasional duties. Theory based on duty is that place from which we draw the law that determines our matters of morality, including both moral and legal duties, (what Kant refers to as moral right. All of this results in the following manifestations of the highest good: 1) summum bonum, 2) the state, which has multiple stages [a) civil commonwealth, b) federation of states, c) perpetual peace], 3) ethical commonwealth, based on perpetual peace. The above is what the chapter will seek to establish, but it is helpful to have a preliminary explanation of terms in place.

*TTP, 275 (Humphrey 61).*
These matters of morality are decided through the mediation of an act of judgment in the determining of our action, which can be thought of as a practice when it is "brought about in consequence of certain generally conceived principles of procedure," accomplished as a certain effect of our will.

Throughout his prefatory remarks, Kant continues emphasizing that the practice of duty is not useless and it is an affront to philosophy to think of it as such. In addition, its pursuit is worthwhile as it is based "entirely on its appropriateness to its underlying theory," and there is no more appropriate theory than duty. Through emphasis and hyperbole Kant presents as ludicrous the possibility that the moral law has no relevance for the real world. His is no impotent theory with a vacuous notion of practical consequences, rather it is a theory with carefully constructed practices which follow from it.

Being mindful of Kant's introduction to this essay, how is it that we can interpret the practices that he goes on to discuss, the practices of duty, as

---

5At this point in Theory to Practice Kant is very clear that both moral and legal duties, those things which fall under the doctrine of virtue and right respectively, are both considered moral matters. This comes as no surprise when perpetual peace is recognized as that place which allows for the agreement of morality and politics, an agreement that is also a moral matter.

See TTP, 277 (Humphrey 62) and PP, 370-373 (Humphrey 127-129).

6TTP, 275 (Humphrey 61).

7Ibid., 277 (62).
made manifest through the highest good? The evidence is presented by Kant himself, through his depictions of the object of duty, pursued as the practice of duty and therefore articulated in each of the latter sections of Kant's essay. There can be no doubt that throughout the three sections of *Theory to Practice* Kant is concerned with the practice of duty since he explicitly states his task as such. Truly, duty can be practiced in a multiplicity of ways. However, Kant maintains throughout his writings that the consummate object of the moral law can be none other than the highest good. That is, many objects are in accord with duty, but duty itself determines only one object. This is the case because it is through the highest good that we combine our supreme good -- virtue, with our natural good -- happiness.\(^8\)

The object of the theory of duty, that theory which gives us the law, is under consideration throughout this essay. In each of the sections of the essay, Kant articulates the object that he considers as theory's practice, doing so relative to the individual perspectives from which the object of duty can be approached as well as criticized. The standpoints are each perspectives from which to evaluate the object of duty, to understand it as it develops the doctrine through which we approach the achievement of the highest good, and to present Kant's relation of theory to practice. It is with this in mind that

---

\(^8\)For more analysis and substantiation of this point, see Chapter One.
Kant sets forth to meet his critics in three realms wielding the practicality of his theory as it is variously manifested in its development toward the highest good. 9

The Development of Duty’s Object

Keeping this in mind, we will begin our approach through continuing to concentrate on the essay Theory to Practice, in order to articulate the object of theory’s practice. This essay is particularly suited to this enumeration since it is here that Kant gives the most complete articulation of that object (the practice), which duty (the theory) determines and the manifest ways in which duty determines it. In addition, through the format of this essay Kant addresses his critics directly, thereby demonstrating the consistency of the possibility of the highest good as it specifies the practical consequences of his moral theory.

As has been mentioned earlier, Kant’s presentation of the three

9With regard to the perspectives through which to evaluate the relationship between theory and practice Kant says:

I divide this essay in accordance with the three different standpoints from which a gentleman who boldly criticizes theories and systems usually judges his objects, thus from three attitudes: (1) the private person who is yet a man of affairs; [als Privat-, aber doch Geschäftsmann] (2) the statesman; [als Staatsmann] (3) the man of the world [als Weltmann (oder Weltbürger überhaupt)]

(or citizen of the world in general).

See TTP, 277/278 (Humphrey 62).
standpoints from which to perceive the relationship between theory and practice is of great import. He addresses this issue near the end of the introduction to *Theory to Practice*. For our purposes, this relates to the perspectives from which the practice of theory (its object) is presented and pursued. From the standpoint of each of the three different perspectives Kant enumerates the way in which the three aforementioned general points about the highest good are to be concretized. He does this by first articulating the nature of the concept of the highest good in the most abstract of terms and then by addressing the consequences of the highest good understood as the practice of duty enacted in three realms, those of: 1) the person; 2) the state; and 3) humanity. Kant himself refers to these three moments in the development of duty's object as he outlines the contents of the rest of *Theory to Practice*:

Thus we shall present the relationship of theory to practice in three sections: first, in morality in general (in relation to the well-being of each man); second, in politics (in relation to the well-being of nations); third, in cosmopolitan perspective (in relation to the well-being of the human race as a whole and insofar as its well-being is conceived as progressing through a sequence of developments during all future times).

---

10 See footnote 8.

11 Kant articulates the perspectives as: morality [*Moral*], politics [*Politik*], and in cosmopolitan perspective [*kosmopolitischer Betrachtung*]. He then goes on to express how these "express the relationship of theory to practice in morality [*Moral*], political right [*Staatsrecht*] and international right [*Völkerrecht*]"
And thus shall I proceed to present the relation of theory to practice from these standpoints.

In treating these perspectives, I will enrich this analysis through appealing to Kant's other writings. That is, the perspective of the individual has already met with some treatment in Chapters One and Two. Furthermore, the perspectives relative to right, where Kant discusses the practice of duty relative to the state and the human race are given further treatment in The Metaphysics of Morals. It is then through appeal to the essay Perpetual Peace and Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone that we are able to further comprehend the ramifications of these perspectives. For in "the human race as a whole", Kant proposes that the highest good as theory's practice is characterized by progressive, developmental moments that culminate in the actualization of the highest good throughout the world, in its final form, none other than an ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace.

If these manifestations of the highest good as they appear throughout these works are isolated and thereby viewed individually, that is, in not "seeing the parts in their reciprocal interrelations," the controversy about the highest good can be sustained in perpetuity. However, the debate over the highest

[Ibid., 278 (63)].

12See footnote number one, in the introduction.
good can be silenced, or at least quieted a good bit, through recognizing that the highest good consists of a tripartite development, consisting of the three perspectives articulated above, culminating in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. In short, the confusion over the highest good is a consequence of not recognizing its unity and thereby putting forth competing notions of it. The best presentations of these notions that end up in competition with one another are found in Kant himself, when they are taken in isolation and not as diverse manifestations of the object of the moral law (diverse insofar as they are pursued from various perspectives). Hence it is through appreciating these diverse, apparently competing moments as Kant articulates them that we take his view most seriously.

Moments: A Person

In Theory to Practice, the first perspective which Kant addresses is that of the moral person, through his response to the criticisms of Garve relative to his presentation of the demands of the law on moral individuals. This perspective is one that is very prevalent throughout Kant’s work. It is the perspective from which we initially meet the law and fulfill our purpose as moral beings.

Here Kant points to and describes the end required by duty, as dictated
by morality in general. It seems redundant at this point to argue that the theory with which Kant is here concerned is duty. It is not a controversial claim to assert that morality is the duty of the individual. The interesting aspects of this claim, the means through which Kant expresses the claims of the moral law on us and the determination of the object that the individual is required to pursue, are addressed in the previous chapters. Suffice it to say that morality is based on the theory of duty as it relates to duty and the demands of the law on the moral individual. As such, the moral individual is required to pursue certain ends and is subject to this requirement as she is required to preserve a will not in conflict with duty.13

Kant also describes the end of the individual moral agent as an action. This is the case in that it expresses an end the agent should actively seek to pursue. Kant describes the pursuit of the highest good as a consequence of a determination of the will. Once the will has accepted its determination “the basis of which is that if we stand in certain moral relations to things in the world, we must everywhere obey the moral law;” the will is obliged to pursue a further duty. This duty is the practice of the theory of morality, and thus a consequence of the “moral” perspective from which to pursue our duty. This perspective consists of the

13TTP, 278 (Humphrey 63).
further duty to strive with all one's abilities to ensure that such a relationship (a world conforming to the highest moral ends) exists.\textsuperscript{14}

Hence the highest good is demonstrated as that end that follows from the law. The highest good, as the end of the agent who has made a commitment to the moral law is required to be pursued. For the highest good, as determined by the theory that comes from duty is the agent's moral end. Kant describes this end of a will determined by moral duty in a manner that is familiar. This end is

...the highest good possible in the world (the purest morality throughout the world combined with such universal happiness as accords with it).\textsuperscript{15}

This end, as the highest good, includes a concern for the relationship of morality to the individual's well being where that well being is understood as a will not in conflict with duty. This is the end of the moral agent whether she is an acting agent in the state, as a member of the human race, or a singular agent. The end itself never changes; it is always happiness in proportion to our worthiness of it.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{eine Welt, den sittlichen höchsten Zwecken angemessen}. Elsewhere in the footnote, Kant refers to the highest good as: \textit{[eine Welt als das höchste auch durch unsere Mitwirkung mögliche Gut]} and \textit{[das höchste Gut]}, all wordings consist of that object which follows from the law and is required to be pursued,-- \textit{die beim Menschen Pflicht ist}. [Ibid., 280 fn (64fn)].

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{das höchste in der Welt mögliche Gut} [Ibid., 279 (64)].
In bringing about a morally good world, from the various perspectives Kant describes, the specific distractions and pitfalls that are present vary. However in this section Kant merely describes the moral agent individually as she interacts with the world. Here she is her own nemesis as she battles to keep happiness and selfishness away from the ground of her action. That is, Kant rehearses the arguments that are present elsewhere regarding the difficulties of the pursuit of the highest good and the impurity of the will.\(^{16}\)

Kant stresses in this section that regardless of the skepticism of his critics and the evidence in the world, pure motives are in principle possible. They are states for which we should strive and that which society should encourage.\(^{17}\) Consequently, Kant is concerned not so much with establishing the highest good and its viability, as he is with the establishment of its possibility relative to the perspective from which the theory of duty is

---

\(^{16}\)These difficulties are the familiar ones of:
- The highest good is not a need of morality, but a consequence of the will's needing an object to act.
- The highest good is not a ground for action, the principle of morality is the only determinant of a moral will.

See TTP, 279-81, (Humphrey 64-65).

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 288 (71).
articulated in its practice.\textsuperscript{18} This practice itself is my main concern since it is the highest good. However, the issue of perspectivalism is likewise of concern since it grounds the various notions of the highest good that are present in the corpus as the practice of duty appreciated from the various points of view.\textsuperscript{19}

Moments: A State

Once Kant establishes the practice of duty with regard to the principle of morality and the perspective of the moral individual, he goes on to discuss the practice of duty with regard to the principle of right and the perspective of the state. Here Kant articulates political right as that principle which is a reflection of the theory that is duty as it relates to its practice in the formation...
of the state. 20

The understanding of right as a reflection of the theory that is duty, is somewhat controversial. Although controversial, this interpretation is easily sustained. The basis of this interpretation lies in the status of right consisting of the understanding that freedom must be able to be expressed in the world if the moral law is to have any veracity. Through right, Kant is providing a system that allows for coercion and force in order to protect the minimum rights of individuals, within the context of his moral system.

The concept of an external right in general derives entirely from the concept of freedom in the external relations among men...Right is the limitation of each person’s freedom so that it is compatible with the freedom of everyone, insofar as this is possible in accord with a universal law... 21

Hence right supplies us with systematized moral principles in the format of laws which allow the guarantee of an environment in which we can pursue our duty, based on freedom. These laws themselves are based on right as the external formulation of duty.

As moral agents we are free, and this freedom, and its pursuit must be protected. The protection of these “rights” is accomplished through political

---

20 All translators cite the difficulty of the term Recht in English. However, with that stated, I will follow normal procedure, using the term right for the German Recht.

21 TTP 290, (Humphrey 72).
organization, based on a system of duty. It is a system of duty, because it is derived from a first principle and remains on the level of principles that can be known a priori to be binding. For as Kant says, "Right is therefore the sum of the conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom." This law of freedom dictates our duty and as such, right is not some separate realm for Kant, it is a further formulation of a context based on the theory of duty.

What then is the object of duty with regard to the realm of the political? Very simply stated, Kant advocates that moral individuals come together to form a nation in order to protect their freedom, because however well disposed and law-abiding men might be, it still lies a priori in the rational Idea of such a condition (one that is not rightful) that before a public lawful condition is established, individual men, peoples, and states can never be secure against violence from one another, since each has its own right to do what seems right and good to it... That is, moral agents are required to leave the state of nature and enter into the civil commonwealth. This is required since the rights that are nevertheless...

---

22MM 230, (Gregor 56).


24MM, 312 (Gregor, 124).
present in a natural state have no means for protection. That is, when conflict arises, there is no arbiter present to settle disputes. Hence when disputes arise, there is no means through which we are able to guarantee that the rights based on freedom will be respected and upheld. Thus as human moral agents, we “ought above all else to enter a civil condition.”\(^{25}\) This required formation of a nation is brought about as the practice of duty. In this instance, the practice of duty is determined by its form as determined by the principles of civil right manifested in a civil constitution. The bringing about of a nation is required, and moral agents can be brought out of their state of nature by force, if they are not willing to fulfill the requirement of the law.

Kant’s argument stresses that a civil state is the only form that a nation may take, if it is to be grounded in the moral law. This civil state is arguably the highest good since it is that end, as practice, which follows from the theory that is duty. As the practice of duty, the civil state is an end that is required by the civil realm of moral life. This embodiment of the highest good consists of a unique type of contract that establishes the civil state, based on the law based on theory, that follows from duty, our civil right.

The civil contract has some of the properties of common contracts, "Uniting many for some (common) end (that they all have)," but it is unique

\(^{25}\)Ibid., 312 (124).
since it also acts

as an end in itself (that each of them ought to have) and, consequently as an end that is an unconditioned and primary duty with respect to every external relation in general among men.\(^{26}\)

Thus the pursuit of this contract is required for the establishment of duty's object relative to right in the form of the civil state. Like the non-contentious, traditional understanding of the highest good, where the individual as a sole moral agent must not act to pursue her happiness alone, but act out of duty, the society must act from duty as well. This duty takes the form of an ought based on the civil law. This object of the law, the civil state, is the manifestation of the theory that gives us civil right. The means for the satisfaction of the contract establishing the civil state consists in the pursuit of a Republican Constitution embodying: 1) the freedom, of human beings, 2) the role of the subjects as equal, while being dependent on legislators, and 3) the concept of a citizen, as wholly independent and equal.\(^ {27}\)

With regard to the practice of duty (as the highest good) consisting of happiness in proportion to virtue, this formulation serves that end. The civil commonwealth guarantees happiness insofar as it allows for the equal pursuit of happiness (and virtue). However, it does not establish the pursuit of

\(^{26}\)TTP, 289 (71).

\(^{27}\)TTP, 290 (Humphrey, 72 ) and PP, 350fn (Humphrey, 112).
happiness as a ground for the establishment of the commonwealth. Instead, what is stressed is the basis of the commonwealth on the rights of freedom; rights that are secured for everyone through the establishment of the commonwealth by law.\textsuperscript{28} As such, civil right ensures the equal pursuit of happiness insofar as an environment based on the law is created. Hence civil right leaves us with a necessary concern not only for our own well being, but also for the relation of morality to the well being of people in interactions. In establishing a civil commonwealth, we recognize that we are pursuing the end determined by duty's demand. This demand or requirement of duty is understood through our appreciating that as we are given rights that follow from freedom, they are grounded in freedom and allow for our happiness only insofar as we base the society on the duty that follows from this freedom.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus the highest good when based on duty, reflected in this context as

\textsuperscript{28}TTP, 290 (Humphrey, 72).

\textsuperscript{29}With regard to the formation of the state as guaranteeing happiness in proportion to worthiness to be happy, Kant explains:

\textit{The proposition salus publica suprema civitatis lex est remains undiminished in value and esteem; but the [aspect of the] public's well-being to receive first consideration is precisely that legal contract securing everyone's freedom through laws, that contract whereby each person remains at liberty to seek his happiness in any way he thinks best so long as he does not violate that universal freedom under law and, consequently, the rights of other fellow subjects.}

Ibid., 298 (78). \textit{[The public well-being is the highest law of the people].}
right, consists of a commonwealth that secures the pursuit of happiness in accord with conformity with right enacted through a civil constitution.\textsuperscript{30} As such, Kant has defended the practice of duty, relative to the perspective of politics, from deteriorating into a Hobbesian "might makes right" civil state. His would be an empty moral theory if that was the world to which it would lead. Kant's practice based on duty in the form of the highest good emphasizes that a society united for the satisfaction of the desires of select individuals is not our goal. Such a society would not satisfy his theory, since its end would not be determined by duty. The theory of duty, in the form of right, determines its practice in the form of the pursuit of a civil commonwealth. This commonwealth, as determined by right is required to be pursued insofar as its establishment guarantees, as much as possible, freedom. In its formation, based on a civil constitution, this object of duty has as its goal the greatest possible (pursuit of) happiness in conformity with right.

At this point, it would be helpful to summarize our progress thus far. In the previous section I have argued that as a consequence of the practice of duty, moral agents are required to pursue the highest good, expressed relative to a specific perspective, two of which have been addressed. From the first

\textsuperscript{30}The civil commonwealth is the highest good manifested within this context. It is important to remember that any singular manifestation of the highest good taken in isolation is not the complete highest good, but rather a moment in the development towards the complete highest good.
perspective, that of the individual, moral agents are required to pursue what has been commonly known as the summum bonum. From the second perspective, that of the state, moral individuals are required to come together to form civil commonwealths. Now that the possibility of a moral nation is established, I will discuss the next developmental move in the realization of the ethical commonwealth, this step is the consideration of the highest good from that of a moral people. In what follows, I will argue that this final step is comprised of the evolutionary developments that arise from the unity of various nations. After which I will present the way in which an organization of nations works towards the agreement of morality and politics in an ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace.

Moments: A People

At this point, the discussion becomes somewhat more complex since it is no longer present in one unified treatment or Kantian text. In this section,

\[31\] See Chapters One and Two for a discussion of the traditional notion of the highest good as summum bonum (the combination of happiness in proportion to worthiness to be happy); that object the individual is commanded by the law to pursue.

\[32\] It should be pointed out here that Chapter Three represents Kant's social depiction of the highest good—as the ethical commonwealth. As the consummative articulation of the highest good, the ethical commonwealth is brought about through the previous section (a state), but actually corresponds to the section that follows (a people).
using various Kantian texts, I will argue, that the progression from theory 
(duty—the moral law) to its practice (the highest good) that left us with the 
formation of the moral state, requires our pursuit of still another object. This 
is the case because those rights which were safeguarded through the 
establishment of a civil commonwealth are “up for grabs” in relations among 
nations. In order to safeguard that which has been secured by means of right 
in a nation, among nations and for the human race in general, moral agents are 
required to fulfill their duty to pursue the establishment of an ethical 
commonwealth based on perpetual peace. Thus, in what follows I will follow 
the progression of the moral state through to its fulfillment in relations of 
perpetual peace. Once perpetual peace has been established, I will argue that 
moral agents are required to pursue yet another object of duty. That is, they 
are required to leave their ethical state of nature and pursue that object which 
the law requires in the form of an ethical commonwealth. This object is 
presented as a “universal republic based on laws of virtue”. 33

As a universal, virtuous republic, the ethical commonwealth is a 
complex commonwealth. It includes a large debt to morality insofar as it is 
based on virtue, but it also includes a large debt to politics insofar as it is a 
commonwealth. “An ethical commonwealth must rest on public laws and

33 *als einer allgemeinen Republik nach Tugendgesetzen* [REL, 98(Greene and 
Hudson 89)].
possess a constitution based on these laws”, hence the ethical commonwealth would not be such as it is without proper attention given to politics. That is, the ethical commonwealth is the most complete manifestation of the highest good but its establishment is contingent upon the manifestation of the object of the theory of right, relative to the perspectives of international and cosmopolitan right. As will be shown in what follows, the ethical commonwealth has its political basis in perpetual peace as the highest manifestation of the object of theory appreciated from the perspective of right. For it is through perpetual peace that we are given the possibility of a state of affairs where morality agrees with politics. Hence the task at hand is to articulate the ethical commonwealth as the highest good (the object of duty) through which this final standpoint, the consummation of virtue and happiness, is made complete.

I will present the ethical commonwealth as the consummate articulation of the highest good by, of course, building on the previous analysis. By building on the aforementioned, I will first address the perspective of object of duty as it is determined relative to the principles of international and cosmopolitan right. Kant treats these conceptions of right in both of the

---

34Nur so fern ein ethisches gemeines Wesen doch auf öffentlichen Gesetzen beruhen und eine darauf sich gründende Berfassung enthalten muß [Ibid., 96 (88)].
essays *Theory to Practice* and *Perpetual Peace*. From there, with the formation of perpetual peace, we can move onto the plan Kant dictates in section three of *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* in order to establish the bringing about of the ethical commonwealth. Finally, through the results of this analysis, begun in *Theory to Practice*, continued in *Perpetual Peace* and concluded in the *Religion*, the consummate articulation of the highest good in the formation of an ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace will be made evident.

With this in mind, we move on to the next development of the object of duty which Kant deals with in *Theory to Practice*. Here, in the section entitled *On the Relationship of Theory to Practice in International Right, Considered from a Universally Philanthropic, i.e. Cosmopolitan Point of View*, Kant addresses the object that is determined by duty relative to international right. That is, once moral individuals have come together out of their state of nature to form nations to have their conflicts adjudicated under the principle of right, Kant advocates that nations come together and unify under the concept of international right in order that their conflicts can be adjudicated as well.

In this problem the only difference between the state of nature of individual men and of families (in relation to one another) and that of nations is that in the Right of Nations we have to take

---

35 They also receive helpful treatment relative to this task in Kant's work *The Metaphysics of Morals*. 
into consideration not only the relation of one state toward another as a whole, but also the relation of individual persons of one state toward the individuals of another, as well as toward another state as a whole.\(^{36}\)

By working towards a League of Nations we are able to address the problems that arise between individual nations which have established themselves under constitutional right, and those others that surround them. It is through the establishment of this object of duty as dictated from the perspective of international right that we further fulfill our obligations. For it is only through an association based on the concept of International Right (the right of nations) that we are able to preserve the relations of right that have already been forged. This object dictated by international right Kant names as the “sole remedy” for the conflicts that arise between nations and which can eventually lead to war between nations.\(^{37}\)

This object, dictated by duty from the perspective of international right consists in the formation of what Kant calls variously a “League of Nations”, a “League of Peace”, and a “World Republic”. Thus the league of nations is dictated by duty as the object of international right. As dictated, its pursuit is required. Relative to the relations between nations, (and no longer among individuals directed at the formation of nations), the moral end is no longer

\(^{36}\)MM, 344 (Gregor, 150).

\(^{37}\)TTP, 313 (Humphrey, 89).
dictated by constitutional right but by international right. As such, this end is dictated as an object of the law. As that object dictated by duty in the relations among nations, states are required to come together to work towards bringing about a league of nations, as "a rightful state of federation that conforms to commonly accepted [principle of] international right.

Hence the highest good articulated as the object of duty in this context follows from right as we are morally required to pursue a peaceful union among nations adjudicated by international right. Kant justifies the requirement for the pursuit of peace among nations as it allows for moral progress. He purports, reasonably enough, that in a peaceful nation, moral agents are better able to pursue moral progression and their personal betterment. Hence in a peaceful state, "succeeding generations...will be able even in a moral sense to make ever more progress towards bettering themselves." As such, this object is that organon providing the greatest possible happiness relative to an organization of nations. This is the case because in a league of nations those rights achieved in the formation of nations are preserved and not subject to acts of aggression.

In what follows, I will demonstrate that in the essay Perpetual Peace, Kant picks up on the themes he describes in Theory to Practice. That is, this

---

38 Ibid., 311 (88).
essay articulates a further development of the concrete program for bringing about the highest manifestation of the object of duty relative to right. Kant appropriates the model given in *Theory to Practice* and demonstrates that the republican constitution as it was developed in *Theory to Practice* is here understood as the only ground for perpetual peace. Without necessarily passing through this stage there would be no perpetual peace. That is, although the previous practices of duty are the consummate articulation of the highest good within their context, they are mere conditions for actual consummate articulation of the highest good context independent. As such, they are required as a developmental stage leading to the highest good. This status as condition is clear in the establishment of the republican constitution, because

Not only is a Republican Constitution pure in origin, whose source is the pure concept of right, it provides the only foundations of perpetual peace.\(^{39}\)

As we have seen, after grounding his approach dictated by theory as it is manifested in constitutional right, Kant further characterizes the development of the enlightened people as ending up in a unity of states. This is the same progressive movement that was discussed as a requirement of international right.

\(^{39}\)PP, 351 (*Humphrey*, 113).
Through the league of nations we are brought close to the actual culmination of the moral human race as it brings about perpetual peace. The pursuit of perpetual peace is only possible through the formation of the league of peace. As such, its pursuit of ends required by duty as it is manifested from the point of view of the global realm of moral life can also be assessed from the perspective of cosmopolitan right. Through cosmopolitan right, the perspective becomes that of the moral individual as a citizen of the world, thus combining the best aspects of all three of the previously articulated political realms.

Just as duty gave us the moral law as it was manifested from the standpoint of the individual and then gave us constitutional right as it was manifested from the standpoint of the state, we are now given cosmopolitan right as we are able to appreciate the ultimate standpoint of humanity. Through the recognition of cosmopolitan right, we are further impelled towards the formation of states based on a republican constitution interacting within a league of nations (based on international right), as a precondition for perpetual peace as the highest end of the Kantian political system. For it is

---

40 "Only in a universal association of states (analogous to that by which a people becomes a state) can rights come to hold conclusively and a true condition of peace come about." Thus Kant presents "perpetual peace" [as], "the ultimate goal of the whole Right of Nations." See MM, 350 (Gregor, 156).
Through perpetual peace that we are allowed to look for the appearance and
genesis of the ethical commonwealth, where morality agrees with politics.
However, with cosmopolitan right, this is taken further.\textsuperscript{41} Reason can provide
the way for related nations not to be at war or lawless through nations giving
up their savage lawless freedom, just as individual persons do, and by
accommodating themselves to the constraints of common law; establishing a
\textit{nation of peoples} that will finally include all the people of the earth.\textsuperscript{42} This is the
same notion of right that is tied to the formation of relations among nations
relative to this principle of right. This same principle of right is what drives
the moral individual out of her solitude, into the formation of nations,
towards what is morally required, perpetual peace. However through
cosmopolitan right, it evolves in such a manner that it allows for the
possibility of morality to enter the scene by way of an establishment of
perpetual peace.

Perpetual peace is not merely the condition of the possible cessation of
wars through the republican constitution, for the republican constitution can

\textsuperscript{41}With regard to Cosmopolitan Right, Kant says:
This right, since it has to do with the possible union of all nations
with a view to certain universal laws for their possible commerce,
can be called \textit{cosmopolitan Right (ius cosmopoliticum)}.
Ibid., 350 (156).

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 357 (117).
be brought about by a nation of devils held in check by their desires for trade and fear of punishment.\(^{43}\) Perpetual peace as our "moral objective" goes beyond the realms of politics and morality, arises as a consequence of its foundation in duty, and allows for the highest agreement of happiness in accord with virtue in this world in a law governed commonwealth determined by right. As Kant says:

\[
\ldots\text{establishing universal and lasting peace constitutes not merely a part of the doctrine of Right but rather the entire final end of the doctrine of Right within the limits of reason alone...}^{44}\]

This is the case among individual nations via constitutional right, between nations in international right, and allowing for perpetual peace via cosmopolitan right.\(^{45}\)

In going beyond the realms of the merely political and the merely moral and encompassing them both, perpetual peace includes another kind of commitment. This further commitment, required for the complete manifestation of perpetual peace is described by Kant in his work *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Here, in describing the "founding of a kingdom of God on earth," Kant is describing in a more concrete way the

\(^{43}\)Ibid., 366, (124).

\(^{44}\)Ibid., 355, (161).

\(^{45}\)With regard to perpetual peace as a moral objective, see PP, 365 and 379 (Humphrey, 123 and 133).
ethical aspect of the ethico-civil commonwealth made manifest through perpetual peace. As was previously mentioned, a peaceful state of affairs could be brought about by devils. However, true perpetual peace is the pre-condition and reciprocal condition for the ethical commonwealth as a kingdom of god on earth.\(^{46}\) Perpetual peace is then the possibility we are left with as the consummate culmination of the developments that have arisen out of each of the manifestations of the highest good relative to right.

As was previously mentioned, once perpetual peace has been established, Kant explains that we are to pursue yet another object, relative to yet another perspective. This perspective is that of moral right, or that presence of duty relative to the laws of virtue. This command of duty takes the following form:

\begin{quote}
Man ought to leave his Ethical State of Nature in order to become a Member of an Ethical Commonwealth.\(^{47}\)
\end{quote}

That is, just as the state of nature prior to the establishment of the civil state, and the establishment of the league of nations is one of war, so too is the

\(^{46}\)The relationship of perpetual peace to the ethical commonwealth is explicitly expressed as the former serving as a precondition of the latter. But, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, the establishment of the ethical commonwealth guarantees perpetual peace. In short, like so many other things, the connection between these two aspects is not simple.

\(^{47}\)Der Mensch soll aus dem ethischen Naturzustande herausgehen, um ein Glied eines ethischen gemeinen Wesens zu werden. [REL, 96 (Greene and Hudson, 88)].
ethical state of nature. Here, as was discussed in Chapter Three, the good principle, which resides in all individuals, is continually attacked by the evil which is found in him and also in everyone else. Thus it is through the establishment of an ethical commonwealth that we are able to create an environment where the rights and morality that are not protected prior to this association are guaranteed.

As was argued in Chapter Three, the ethical commonwealth was demonstrated to consist of Kant’s social understanding of the highest good. Thus it is not necessary at this time to repeat those arguments. To summarize the conclusions of that chapter, the ethical commonwealth is the object of the law determined by the laws of virtue (moral right), its pursuit is required, and it is the best means possible for the guarantee of happiness in proportion to virtue. Unlike the aforementioned objects of the law determined by duty relative to the principles of right, the ethical commonwealth does not require a justificatory explanation of its status as the highest good. This is the case since Kant explicitly states that the ethical commonwealth is the object of duty as the highest good. In short, as Kant himself says, “The species of rational beings is objectively, in the idea of reason, destined for a social goal,
namely, the promotion of the highest as a social good."\textsuperscript{48}

Instead of demonstrating that the ethical commonwealth is a manifestation of duty's object relative to moral right, I will demonstrate how it is the consummation of the highest good in this developmental plan. That is, we have shown how individuals must come together to form states, and states must come together to form a league of peace, and this league of peace must work towards perpetual peace. Thus it is only left to consider how the league of peace, based on international and cosmopolitan right must serve as the basis for the ethical commonwealth. Once this point is established, the culmination of the developmental plan will be complete, and the various understandings of the highest good will be shown to be complementary in their concretization via the ethical commonwealth.\textsuperscript{49}

It is the task of the ethical commonwealth "rationally to impress these laws (of virtue) in all their scope upon the entire human race."\textsuperscript{50} This is a duty

\textsuperscript{48}Jede Gattung vernünftiger Wesen ist nämlich objektiv, in der Idee der Vernunft, zu einem gemeinschaftlichen Zwecke, nämlich der Beförderung des höchsten als eines gemeinschaftlichen Guts, bestimmt. [Ibid., 97 (89)].

\textsuperscript{49}The actual form of the ethical commonwealth relative to Kant's understanding of the one true church will be explicated in Chapter Five. That is, once the ethical commonwealth is established as the consummate articulation of virtue and happiness, we will go on to discuss the details of its construction.

\textsuperscript{50}REL, 94 (Greene and Hudson, 86).
and is accomplished insofar as the ethical commonwealth consists of moral individuals coming together under moral right, for the formation of society. “And so far as these laws are public, an ethico-civil (in contrast to a juridico-civil) society or an ethical commonwealth” is formed.\(^{51}\) In its formation, the ethical commonwealth builds on the aforementioned conceptions of the highest good. This is the case insofar as the ethical commonwealth has its basis in the political commonwealth; “indeed, unless it is based upon such a commonwealth it can never be brought into existence by man.”\(^{52}\) The ethical state, must have as its basis the establishment by law, of the minimum criterion of freedom as it is dictated by right. Through the civil state (the object of right), we have created such a situation of individuals united under laws, based on their status as citizens of the state. This status as citizen must be preserved in the establishment of the ethical commonwealth. That is, the constitution and form of the ethical commonwealth

\begin{quote}
shall contain nothing which contradicts the duty of its members as citizens of the state--although when the ethical pledge is of the genuine sort the political limitation need cause no anxiety.\(^{53}\)
\end{quote}

Thus the ethical commonwealth must be based on the prior development of

\(^{51}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{52}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{53}\text{Ibid., 95 (88).}\)
the object of duty, as it was determined from the perspective of right, by means of perpetual peace. And, as was previously shown, the association of individuals organized into a civil commonwealth is a precondition for perpetual peace. This precondition is made manifest as a requirement of the law, in bringing about the highest good (as the civil commonwealth) from the perspective of the state or politics. Consequently, all of the prior stages contribute to the development of the manifestation of the ethical commonwealth.

The final form of an ethical commonwealth is an ethical whole. That is, what we were left with in perpetual peace is the league of nations where each society relative one to another, and amongst its members can be represented as in the ethical state of nature. That is, when a league of nations is formed under the doctrine of international right, peace is established, but not based on laws of virtue. It is as if we have peace by force rather than peace by conversion through the sovereignty of the good principle preserved via the ethical commonwealth. Even with the addition of cosmopolitan right, we are still dealing with right and that means for its preservation in external coercion and not internal legislation. This is the situation with separate political states which have united through a public international law, but not through the laws of virtue. However, when a people comes together under the laws of
virtue we have the ethical commonwealth, which is not merely based on perpetual peace, but guarantees perpetual peace, not externally, but by virtue of its establishment through the law of virtue.

Such, therefore, is the activity of the good principle, unnoted by human eyes but ever continuing—erecting for itself in the human race, regarded as a commonwealth under laws of virtue, a power and kingdom which sustains the victory over evil and, under its own dominion, assures the world of an eternal peace. 54

The ethical commonwealth thus goes beyond the understanding of perpetual peace as its precondition, and becomes its guarantor. Thus, through the analyses begun in *Theory to Practice and Perpetual Peace*, then completed in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, we are able to see the concretization of the culmination of the highest good through the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. This understanding of the highest good takes us beyond the facile understanding of Kant's ethics as merely deontological toward a rich understanding of the deontological ethic with an eye for teleology requiring social and political philosophy for its completion. It leaves us with the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace and a perpetual peace based on the ethical commonwealth.

54 *Das ist also die menschlichen Augen unbemerste, aber beständig fortgehende Bearbeitung des guten Princips, sich im menschlichen Geschlechtaals einem gemeinen Wesen nach Tugendgesetzen eine Macht und ein eich zu errichten, welches den Sieg über das Böse behauptet und unter seiner herrschaft der Welt einen ewigen Frieden zusichert.* [Ibid., 122 (114)].
To conclude, the above analysis has demonstrated that there is a tripartite developmental plan that culminates in the supreme articulation of the highest good, the ethical commonwealth. In so doing, the ethical commonwealth integrates many of the understandings of the highest good. This occurs as a consequence of the various perspectives through which the highest good must be made manifest in order for the ethical commonwealth to be achieved. In short, this leaves us with an understanding of the highest good that consists of complementary, rather than competing interpretations insofar as these interpretations have been shown to contribute to the realization of the consummate articulation of the highest good—the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. The next chapter addresses the way in which this consummate articulation of the highest good is made manifest.
CHAPTER 5
KANT'S KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH:
THE ETHICAL COMMONWEALTH AND
ITS CONSEQUENCES

Having previously determined that the highest good has a different face contingent upon the perspective from which it is being approached, it is time to approach its best face. This consists of the consummate articulation of the highest good, the ethical commonwealth, based on the concept of perpetual peace. As was determined in Chapter Three, the ethical commonwealth is Kant's social highest good. As was determined in Chapter Four, the ethical commonwealth is the most complete articulation of the highest good. In what follows, I will consider how it is that this consummation of the moral law in the world is to be brought about, concretely. That is, it has been established, relative to the aforementioned developmental plan, that it is a duty of the human race sui generis to pursue the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace, but how is it that once this stage of development has been attained, the ethical commonwealth is actually to be made manifest.¹ In this chapter, I will

¹See REL 95/96 (Greene and Hudson, 88/89).
articulate: what the ethical commonwealth is like, how we bring it about, and whether the ethical commonwealth is to be hoped for or expected. It is my position that Kant answers these questions primarily in his work Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, and secondarily in his work The Conflict of the Faculties. From a careful analysis of these works, I will argue: 1) the ethical commonwealth is demonstrated to be a people of God under laws of virtue, 2) the ethical commonwealth is pursued by means of humanity's organization in a church, and 3) the ethical commonwealth is to be hoped for or expected insofar as we make ourselves morally worthy of God's assistance in the formation of His (Kant's pronoun) kingdom. These are the concerns I will take up in what follows.

After further describing and examining the ethical commonwealth by dealing with the above, the only aspect of the project left to be pursued is the relationship of this understanding of the highest good to the contemporary literature on the highest good. Throughout this study, present in the background, has been a dissatisfaction with contemporary interpretations of the highest good. These approaches are inadequate in that they are problematic. I consider these approaches problematic insofar as they do not

---

2For instances of Kant's use of a masculine pronoun for God, see the Religion, from the Introduction to the Conclusion. See especially footnote eight and Book Three of the Religion.
recognize, or do not completely recognize the nature of the highest good as comprised of developmental moments which culminate in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. Thus with a complete understanding of the ethical commonwealth in place in the first half of this chapter, I will conclude the chapter with an analysis of the repercussions of my overall approach on contemporary Kantian scholarship as it relates to the highest good.

In short, as has been previously mentioned, it is my view that the contemporary scholarship on the highest good approaches the object of pure practical reason in a manner that is either misguided and mistaken or in a manner that is isolationist and exclusive. In the second half of this chapter, I will meet the texts of the contemporary critics and commentators on the highest good and in so doing demonstrate their shortcomings while at the same time demonstrating the merits of the tripartite developmental interpretation of the highest good with which this project has been concerned.

What is the Ethical Commonwelath?

I have previously established that the ethical commonwealth is social, and that it is required for the overcoming of evil. How and why this is the case was treated in Chapter Three. Now I will address how it is that the
ethical commonwealth appears. Relative to its importance in his system, Kant
treats the ethical commonwealth relatively briefly. A detailed treatment of the
ethical commonwealth is contained in the third book of *Religion Within the
Limits of Reason Alone*, and is summarized in what follows.

Before approaching the ethical commonwealth, it is important to
remember the lessons learned from Chapter Four. That is, it is only when
humanity is prepared to come out of its ethical state of nature that humanity
is able to begin to progress towards the ethical commonwealth. This is the
case only when humanity has made sufficient progress toward the highest
political good. This highest political good is, of course, perpetual peace.  

In Chapter Three I discussed how it was that humanity is impelled to pursue the
ethical commonwealth and in Chapter Four I discussed how it is that
humanity is impelled to leave his ethical state of nature. Yet once the ethical
state of nature has been left, where are we to go? Kant explains, by giving
some content to the notion of an ethical commonwealth and to the means to
its formation; as he says: "The concept of an Ethical Commonwealth is the

---

3See Chapter Four for a discussion of the relationship between perpetual
peace and the ethical commonwealth. For a discussion of perpetual peace as
Kant's highest political good, see MM, 355 (Gregor, 161). In short, Kant
refers to perpetual peace as the highest political good. Yet political is only
that perspective from which the highest good relative to right, both civil and
international, is perceived. Hence in calling perpetual peace the highest
political good, Kant stresses that perpetual peace is a manifestation of the
highest good relative to the perspective of the principle of right (politics).
Concept of a PEOPLE OF GOD under Ethical Laws. There are two major issues contained within this statement. First, the notion of what is entailed by the claim that those in an ethical commonwealth are "a people of God" and secondly, to what extent is a people of God "under ethical laws"? In explaining these two notions, that of the ethical commonwealth as a people of God and that of those very same people of God as governed by the laws of duty, a full picture of Kant's ethical commonwealth will appear.

Kant explains how it is that an ethical commonwealth is a people of God through differentiating the ethical commonwealth from the juridical commonwealth. The juridical commonwealth for Kant has as its keystone the people giving themselves the law. That is...

...if the commonwealth to be established is to be juridical, the mass of people uniting itself into a whole would itself have to be the law-giver (of constitutional laws), because legislation proceeds from the principle of limiting the freedom of each to those conditions under which it can be consistent with the freedom of everyone else according to a common law, and because, as a result, the general will sets up an external legal control.

What makes this commonwealth itself juridical is that the law is legislated externally, and enforced externally. This organization would not suffice for

---

4This is the title of section three of the third book of the Religion. Der Begriff eines ethischen gemeinen Wesens ist der Begriff von einem Volke Gottes unter ethischen Gesetze. [REL, 98 (Greene and Hudson, 90)].

5Ibid., 98/99 (90).
the ethical commonwealth because moral actions cannot be legislated externally. Once legislated externally, actions complied with under these restrictions are merely legal and not moral, since a moral action is one that takes place freely, not through coercion. That is, Kant is interested in the formation of an ethical commonwealth—free from coercion, not a juridical or civil commonwealth—governed by means of coercion. This ethical commonwealth is a commonwealth with its underlying principle being the law of virtue and not merely the law of the land, or right. Thus in the establishment of an ethical commonwealth, Kant explains:

...if the commonwealth is to be ethical, the people, as a people, cannot itself be regarded as the law-giver. For in such a commonwealth all the laws are expressly designed to promote the morality of actions (which is something inner, and hence cannot be subject to public human laws) whereas, in contrast, these public laws—and this would go to constitute a juridical commonwealth—are directed only toward the legality of actions, which meets the eye, and not toward the (inner) morality, which alone is in question here.\(^6\)

As opposed to “the people” being regarded as the giver of the laws as in a state, the ethical commonwealth is a union of people under moral laws. Yet it is not enough that “the people” give up the right to be the source of the law. They must take a further step insofar as they recognize that what has previously been only an inner law (of morality) must be submitted to as public

\(^6\)Ibid., 98 (90).
legislation, under a law-giver that the entire community may regard as the
giver of the law. Thus as a commonwealth,

...all single individuals must be subject to a public legislation, and
all the laws which bind them must be capable of being regarded
as commands of a common law-giver.7

Hence as a commonwealth, the ethical commonwealth requires its constituents
to be subject to its laws, and as not merely concerned with legality, their
source cannot come from the people. If the laws were to emanate from the
people as law-giver, their status would be human laws (or civil laws), and
thereby subject to enforcement by means of coercion. Yet external public
enforcement of laws cannot serve as the ground for moral action. This is the
case since moral action must come from the individual's commitment to
morality itself and not to her commitment to the mere legality of her action.
Thus the origin of the law-giver must lie elsewhere than in the constituents of
the ethical commonwealth.

It has been established that the laws under which the ethical
commonwealth is ruled are laws of virtue. Yet who is to be the giver of these
laws—the sovereign of the commonwealth? As the "public law-giver" of the
ethical commonwealth, this sovereign cannot be the source of these laws.

7so müssen alle Einzelne einer öffentlichen Gesetzgebung unterworfen werden, und alle
Gesetze, welche jene verbinden, müssen als Gebote eines gemeinschaftlichen Gesetzgebers
angesehen werden können. [Ibid.].
Rather, the highest law-giver of the ethical commonwealth must be that one for whom "all true duties, hence also the ethical, must be represented as at the same time his commands." Kant determines that God is the only possible sovereign that would fit this criterion. In determining that God is the ethical law-giver, the law cannot be thought of as emanating originally merely from the will of this superior being, for then they would not be ethical laws and the duty proper to them would not be the free duty of virtue, but the coercive duty of law insofar as the laws would then be supernatural and external to human beings. Instead, the sovereign is subject to the laws himself, he must submit to them as well as have them be his commands.

This law-giver must also have other important qualities. He (again, the pronoun Kant uses), must be able to plumb the depths of the human disposition in order to ascertain the individual's true motives and thus whether or not the good or the evil principle has sovereignty within the individual's disposition. Furthermore, the moral ruler must be able to guarantee that "each receives whatever his actions are worth." This ability for discernment and reward is Kant's criterion for a ruler in every commonwealth. However, with the ethical commonwealth, the stakes are much higher. For in this case, the

---

8Ibid., 99 (90/91).

9Ibid., 99 (91).
discernment consists of the status of the individual’s moral disposition as good or evil (not the legality of their action), and the reward consists of the individual’s actual happiness (not the right to the equal pursuit of happiness). Hence the only possible sovereign in this instance and for this commonwealth is God, as God guarantees the rewards for the virtuous and for the virtuous commonwealth.

...this is the concept of God as moral ruler of the world. Hence an ethical commonwealth can be thought of only as a people under divine command, i.e., as a people of God, and indeed under laws of virtue. Thus those in an ethical commonwealth are a people under God. This is so since God is the moral ruler of the world. They are a people under divine command, as well as a people under laws of virtue. Thus with God as the ruler of the ethical commonwealth, the commonwealth retains its status as a commonwealth, insofar as it requires a ruler and its members are subject to a public legislation. This ruler can be regarded as the source of legislation for the law, however this ruler cannot at the same time be regarded as the source of the law. The crucial difference in this distinction lies in the fact that the ruler of the commonwealth does not create the law, he commands the law, but the law arises elsewhere, independently of him. Thus the people of the ethical commonwealth.

\[10\text{Also ist ein ethisches gemeines Wesen nur als ein Volk unter göttlichen Geboten, d.i. als ein Volk Gottes, und zwar nach Tugendgesetzen, zu denken möglich. [Ibid.].}\]
commonwealth are under God insofar as He is the sovereign of the commonwealth, but they are under ethical laws, as the laws that ground God as the ruler of the commonwealth, insofar as the commands that emanate from God, emanate from duty.

In a civil commonwealth the laws emanate from “the people themselves” (externally), in order that the individual people may submit themselves to the command of the ruler, insofar as he is a servant of the law and not a random despot. In an ethical commonwealth, although the laws do not emanate from “the people” as law-giver, the laws are present and known to the individual people (internally). It is in this manner that they too are able to submit themselves to the law, as it can be regarded as having divine rule as the source of its legislation. In this way, God is the legislator of the law and not merely a despotic ruler or source of the law. Thus as the agent of duty’s legislation, God is at the same time a servant of the moral law. Laws of virtue, although public, are not legislated externally. Their power comes from their presence in the internal moral sense of individual people. Yet as legislated, they can be recognized to be contained within the commands of a divine legislator for whom all true duties are at the same time this divine

---

11Kant is anxious to stress that God is not above the moral law, as witnessed in his scathing critique of the call of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. See CON, 63 (Gregor 115) and REL, 187 (Greene and Hudson, 175).
For it is not a question here of a civil (political) government keeping the people under discipline, but of a government which has as its end the essence of this people's moral attitude of will (hence, a divine government).  

God is the ruler of this divine government, which has as its end the correct internal setting of the will. Consequently, people are not to be externally forced to comply with the law, since that would leave us with a civil or juridical commonwealth, where actions conform to the law but need not spring from it. Rather, the people are to be compelled to internally have the law as the ground or source of their actions, thereby working to form God's kingdom on earth.

To summarize, the ethical commonwealth looks like a political commonwealth insofar as it has public laws, yet it is different insofar as it has a different law-giver. Unlike the political commonwealth where "the people" is the law-giver, the ethical commonwealth has God as its law-giver. God is not the source of the law, but rather its legislator. Thus the ethical commonwealth has its laws publicly legislated with their legislation centered in God. As such, this commonwealth is established as ethical and not juridical

---

12 REL, 99 (Greene and Hudson, 90/91).

13 Denn es ist hier nicht von einer bürgerlichen, das Volk unter Disziplin haltenden (politischen), sondern einer auf das Innere der moralischen Gessinnung abzweckenden (mithin göttlichen) regierung die Rede. [CON, 67 (Gregor, 123)].
because its goal is something inner, namely morality. In working toward the
morality of its members, the ethical commonwealth seeks that its constituents
recognize their own inner moral law as that same law publicly legislated by
means of God as the divine ruler of this "republic under laws of virtue, i.e., a
people of God."  

The Establishment of the Ethical Commonwealth

The ethical commonwealth is an organization of which God is the ruler.
It is in this sense termed a "people of God". In addition, God as well as the
members of the commonwealth recognize the veracity of the moral law. The
commonwealth is in this sense "under ethical laws (laws of virtue)". With
this established, I will now move on to our second concern, that is, now that it
is understood what it means to be a people under God and at the same time
under ethical laws, how is this state to be brought about. In his own words, in
the title to the fourth section of this third book, Kant asserts, "The Idea of a
People of God can be Realized (through Human Organization) only in the

\[14\text{einer Republik unter Tugendgesetzen, d.i. mit einer Volke Gottes, [REL, 100}
(Greene and Hudson, 91)].

\[15\text{For the source of these quotes, see footnote number three.}\]
Form of a Church.”¹⁶ It is here that he discusses what in actuality human moral agents must accomplish in order for the ethical commonwealth (people under God) to be brought about. In short, the way in which the ethical commonwealth is to be made manifest consists in the establishment of a church. Thus, to work towards the ethical commonwealth is to work towards bringing about a church. Consistent with this is the organization of humanity as a divine commonwealth under God as the divine moral ruler of this kingdom.

For Kant, the church provides the organizational framework for bringing to fruition the ethical commonwealth. This consists in bringing about what exists as a “mere idea of the union of all the righteous under direct and moral divine world government”¹⁷ as real and concrete in the world. That is, we are obligated to bring about in the world what exists as a mere idea, insofar as the idea serves as the “archetype of what is to be established by men.”¹⁸ What this archetype represents, Kant terms the “invisible church” which in its being brought about consists of the “visible church”. As the

¹⁶Die Idee eines Volks Gottes ist (unter menschlicher Veranstaltung) nicht anders als in der Form einer Kirche auszuführen. [REL, 100 (Greene and Hudson, 91)].

¹⁷eine bloße Idee von der Vereinigung aller Rechtschaffenen unter der göttlichen unmittelbaren, aber moralischen Weltregierung, wie sie jeder von Menschen zu stiftenden zum Urbilde dient. [Ibid., 101 (92)].

¹⁸Ibid.
visible church, whose form is dictated by the invisible church, the visible
church represents the way in which the actual union of moral individuals can
come to represent the ideal of the ethical commonwealth. 19 Kant gives very
little attention to this distinction between the invisible and the visible church.
In the glancing mention of the distinction that he does make, it would seem
that it is through the invisible church as archetype that we are able to perceive
what it is that could be brought about with God's assistance. As mere human
beings, we are, at our best, only able to bring about the visible church. This
visible church as a creation of our limited human abilities is the best that we
can do, and it is no small task. Although a "second-best," the visible church is
that means through which we are able to make ourselves worthy of God's
assistance and hence hope for the completion of the ethical commonwealth in
its form determined by the archetype of the invisible church. 20

Once Kant establishes the status of the visible church as following from
the invisible church, he articulates its specifics. These specifics consist of the
way in which the church is to be organized and the principles upon which it is
to be based. These basic organizing principles perform a similar role to that
of a constitution in a political commonwealth. As a church, what Kant terms

19See Chapter Two for a discussion of the relationship between an
archetypal and an ectypal object.

20REL, 100 (Greene and Hudson, 92).
the "true (visible) church", that which serves as the organon of the ethical commonwealth, the visible church must take a certain form. This form consists of certain requirements as criteria to which the church must conform.

I have included these requirements verbatim because each of them is of great importance as it fills in the specifics of how the true visible church is to appear. In addition, these criteria are those conditions which must be fulfilled in order for the visible church to serve as the vehicle for the achievement of the ethical commonwealth. They consist of the following:21

1. *Universality* — and hence its numerical oneness; for which it must possess this characteristic, that, although divided and at variance in unessential opinions, it is none the less, with respect to its fundamental intentions, founded upon basic principles as must necessarily lead to a general unification in a single church (thus, no sectarian divisions).

2. Its *nature* (quality); *i.e.*, purity, union under no motivating forces other than moral ones (purified of the stupidity of superstition and the madness of fanaticism).

3. Its *relation* under the principle of freedom; both the internal relations of its members to one another, and the external relations of the church to political power — both relations as in a republic (hence neither a hierarchy, nor an illuminatism, which is a kind of

---

21 Kant himself introduces these requirements as follows:

*Die wahre (sichtbare) Kirche ist diejenige, welche das (moralische) Reich Gottes auf Erden, so viel es durch Menschen geschehen kann, darstellt. Die Erfordernisse, mitin auch die Kennzeichen der wahren Kirche sind folgende: [Ibid., 101 (92)].*
democracy through special inspiration, where the inspiration of one man can differ from that of another, according to the whim of each).

4. Its modality, the unchangeableness of its constitution, yet with the reservation that incidental regulations, concerning merely its administration, may be changed according to time and circumstance; to this end, however, it must contain within itself a priori (in the idea of its purpose) settled principles. (Thus [it operates] under primordial laws, once [for all] laid down, as it were out of a book of laws, for guidance; not under arbitrary symbols which, since they lack authenticity, are fortuitous, exposed to contradiction, and changeable.22

Kant enumerates these four criteria as the requirements of the true visible church in order to establish the content of that for which we should strive. Through expanding and analyzing these four criteria, I will demonstrate why it is that Kant develops these as the criteria for the establishment of the one true church, and how it is that the one true church comes about. Kant himself gives relatively little attention to these criteria other than in their mere statement. For him, the truth of the true church being based on these criteria as they establish a religion based on the moral principle of reason was apparently self-evident and required little or no explanation. For our purposes some explanation is required, since it is through a religion that is--universal (requirement #1), moral (#2), follows from freedom (#3), and is based on a priori principles (#4), that we are able to work towards the establishment of

22Ibid., 101/102 (93).
the true church which serves as the organon for the ethical commonwealth.

The true visible church has its basis in what Kant calls pure religious faith. Thus pure religious faith shares the above four requirements since they are the organizing principles of the true church, which is based on this faith. Kant uses the terms true church and moral/rational/religious faith almost interchangeably. This is not too great a surprise since both constructs serve as the means for establishing the ethical commonwealth. Throughout this section of Book Three Kant is seeking to establish what can serve as the bringing about (or basis) for a kingdom of God (the ethical commonwealth). This is accomplished through establishing the organization that will serve this end, just as a government provides the organization that seeks to establish and secure a civil commonwealth. The establishment of the ethical commonwealth, including God as the moral law-giver and sovereign takes form in the establishment of the true church. The true church is based on religious/moral/rational faith as a requirement for its being brought about. Thus it is through faith that the church is founded.

Kant demonstrates in his first requirement that the church, with its basis in pure religious faith, must be universal. It must be this way for all to

23Throughout Book Three of the Religion Kant conflates these terms, see especially, REL, 100-103 (Greene and Hudson, 90-95). In what follows I will merely accept Kant’s use of these terms without questioning whether or not he is correct to equate them.
share in the faith and thereby in the church and the ethical commonwealth.

As Kant says, "Pure religious faith alone can found a universal church; for only [such] rational faith can be believed in and shared by everyone." 24 It is this faith that is a rational faith that must be the basis of the church, since it would make no sense to have the faith rooted in anything empirical, as that is so impermanent. In a typical Kantian manner, the origin of faith is not something supernatural, or even natural, but rational. As such, pure religious faith is in no way contingent; it is pure in its nature (Kant’s second requirement), and moral. Rooted in reason, this rational faith grants no one individual or group special access to faith, it is not the case that “the inspiration of one man can differ from that of another, according to the whim of each.” 25 Thus as it is rooted in reason and grounded in moral purity, Kant stresses the way in which this pure religious faith is a moral rational faith.

As a rational, moral faith, pure religious faith must also be rooted in freedom and based on a priori principles. In its being universal, a rational faith is not based on anything that is contingent. As such, it is able to be recognized in all individuals through their cognizance of how it rings true with

---

24 Der reine Religionsglaube ist zwar der, welcher allein eine allgemeine Kirche gründen kann: weil er ein bloßer Vernunftglaube ist der sich jedermann zur Überzeugung mittheilen läßt; [Ibid., 102 (94)].

25 Ibid., 102 (93).
their hearts. Kant addresses this point directly in The Conflict of the Faculties in his discussion of the way in which humans, merely in their being human, are able to be aware of God and the tenets of faith, as he says:

> since we cannot understand anyone unless he speaks to us through our own understanding and reason, it is only by concepts of our reason, in so far as they are pure moral concepts and hence infallible, that we can recognize the divinity of a teaching promulgated to us.\(^{26}\)

Thus, God’s teaching is equally accessible to everyone through their reason and not through anything empirical (e.g. miracles, or appreciation of signs). Furthermore, as it is rooted in freedom, a pure religion relates to its members and the political organization with which it cooperates in a manner that can in no way constrain its members. As free, the pure moral faith is entered into from an internal decision and not by means of external coercion. Freedom is recognized by all in its priority for relations among individuals and thus this increases the evidence that pure religion meets the criteria of universality. In addition, in being based on a priori conditions, such as universality, morality and freedom, a pure religion is not limited to being known only by those who have been introduced and inculcated into its rites. Instead, in being based on the above criteria, a pure faith can be “believed in and shared by everyone”.

After lauding the merits of a pure faith as the only basis of a people

\(^{26}\)CON, 48 (Gregor, 85).
under God, Kant recognizes, that like the moral law, the pursuit of a pure moral faith, universal and based in reason, is very difficult for human beings in their imperfection to pursue. Instead of the pure moral faith, we are to aspire towards its pursuit as it takes form in a revealed faith. Kant calls such a faith ecclesiastical faith. It is through ecclesiastical faith as a “concept of a religion of divine worship instead of the concept of a religion purely moral” that we are able to pursue the true church. Although the true church should be based on a moral rational faith, “by reason of a peculiar weakness of human nature, pure faith can never be relied on as much as it deserves, that is, a church cannot be established on it alone.”

Human weakness as it requires the pursuit of moral rational faith by means of ecclesiastical faith is symptomatic of the human condition insofar as we are not purely rational or purely moral. That is, we are not completely able to understand the demands of the supersensible (“Men are conscious of their inability to know supersensible things;”). If we were better able to perceive that which is required of our rational, moral selves, we would have no need for ecclesiastical faith as a medium to pursue the rational. Moral individuals,

---

27 Allein es ist eine besondere Schwäche der menschlichen Natur daran Schuld, daß auf jenen reine Glauben niemals so viel gerechnet werden kann, als er wohl verdient, nämlich eine Kirche auf ihn allein zu gründen. [REL, 103 (Greene and Hudson 94)].

28 Ibid., 103 (94).
according to Kant, are unable to accept that moral conduct is all that is
required to be a member of God's kingdom (the ethical commonwealth).
Instead, individuals have a need to perform acts of servitude and honor in
order to in some way bear to witness to their faith.

It does not enter their heads that when they fulfil their duties to
men (themselves and others) they are, by these very acts,performing God's commands and are therefore in all their actions
and abstentions, so far as these concern morality, perpetually in
the service of God, and that it is absolutely impossible to serve God
more directly in any other way (since they can affect and have an
influence upon earthly beings alone, and not upon God).\(^\text{29}\)

Rather than realize that moral conduct is the sole requirement of being a
citizen in God's kingdom, further requirements are fabricated by the moral
individuals. Insofar as they are not necessary for morality, these faux
requirements are statutory. Hence, through a religion based on statutory laws
"arises the concept of a religion of divine worship instead of the concept of a
religion purely moral."\(^\text{30}\) This leaves us with an empirical faith, which will
serve as a vehicle for a pure faith, allowing the pure faith itself to flourish only
once the empirical elements of ecclesiastical faith are purged.

In the enumeration of such statutory laws, their origin does not have
the same genesis as the pure moral faith, reason. Since the statutory laws are

\(^{29}\text{Ibid., 103 (94).}\)

\(^{30}\text{...und so entspringt der Begriff einer gottesdienstlichen statt des Begriffs einer reinen
moralischen Religionen. [Ibid.,].}\)
not present to pure reason, their source must lie elsewhere, in what Kant articulates as a revealed state. Thus through revelation we become cognizant of the statutory laws that reveal to us how it is that God wants to be worshiped. Insofar as these laws are made public, they serve as the constitution of the church that is based on ecclesiastical faith.\textsuperscript{31}

In considering how the ethical commonwealth is to be brought about, it remains only to consider how it is that ecclesiastical faith relates to pure religious faith as its vehicle and thus the manner in which such an ecclesiastical faith is to be pursued. Kant argues that the manner in which the ecclesiastical faith is to be pursued is through its laws, based on scripture.

Since, then, it remains true once for all that a statutory ecclesiastical faith is associated with pure religious faith as its vehicle and as the means of public union of men for its promotion, one must grant that the preservation of pure religious faith unchanged, its propagation in the same form everywhere, and even a respect for the revelation assumed therein, can hardly be provided for adequately through tradition, but only through scripture;\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}As Kant explains: the question: How does God wish to be honored in a church (as a congregation of God)? appears to be unanswerable by reason alone and to require statutory legislation of which we become cognizant only through revelation, \textit{i.e.}, an historical faith which, in contradistinction to pure religious faith, we can call ecclesiastical faith.

Ibid., 104 (96).

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 106 (97).
It is through scripture that the statutory laws of ecclesiastical faith gain currency. An important caveat of the statutes is that in no way are they to contradict the requirements of pure religious faith. Thus, we are to interpret scripture not solely as God's word, but rather through the "effect which its content has on the morality of the people." As the Bible has improved the moral worth of the people it is seen as a moral document that has revealed "God's statutory (and so revealed) will." Thus revelation as contained in the Bible gains value as it is a vehicle for the moral faith, its statutory (subjective) aspects must not, and do not, come into conflict with the supreme object of religion (religion's objective aspect), the moral improvement of humanity.

According to Kant, this criterion is fulfilled by the one holy book that seems to have fallen into our hands. That is, through the Bible, Kant recognizes a source for the statutory laws that will serve as the basis for an ecclesiastical faith leading to moral improvement.

How fortunate, when such a book, fallen into men's hands, contains along with its statutes, or laws of faith, the purest moral doctrine of religion in its completeness—a doctrine which can be brought into perfect harmony with such statutes ([which serve] as vehicles for its introduction).

---

33 CON, 63 (Gregor, 115).
34 Ibid., 52 (93).
35 Glücklich! Wenn ein solches den Menschen zu Händen gekommenes Buch neben seinen Statuten als Glaubensgesetzen zugleich die reinste moralische Religionslehre mit
Thus in establishing an ecclesiastical faith, it is to be based on revelation, through scripture, as it is contained in the Bible. This organon serves as the vehicle for religious faith, which when itself is brought about, will consist in the establishment of the true kingdom of God on earth.

To summarize, as humans, the best we can do is to pursue an ecclesiastical faith, which has as its basis the pure moral faith, to which we shall eventually aspire. Through the ecclesiastical faith, founded on a holy scripture, we are to work towards the establishment of a church. Eventually ecclesiastical faith will serve as the vehicle of our belief in a pure faith, devoid of its ecclesiastical trappings. Hence it is through the establishment of a church based under ecclesiastical faith that we work towards the establishment of a people under God, and the establishment of a people under God is the establishment of the ethical commonwealth.  

Vollständigkeit enthält, die mit jenen (als Vehifeln ihrer Introduction) in die beste Harmonie gebracht werden kann [REL, 107 (Greene and Hudson 98)].  

Kant specifically articulates this conclusion in a later discussion of the differences between ecclesiastical and pure faith. The above is a longer form of this very same conclusion, which follows, with the implicit premises included:  

In men’s striving towards an ethical commonwealth, ecclesiastical faith thus naturally precedes (morally this order ought to be reversed) pure religious faith;  

Der Kirchenglaube geht also in Bearbeitung der Menschen zu einem ethischen gemeinen Wesen natürlicherweise (Moralischerweise sollte es umgekehrt zugehen) vor dem reinen Religionsglauben vorher; [Ibid., 106 (97)].
Hopes for the Ethical Commonwealth

Understood within Kant's discussion of the achievement of the ethical commonwealth is contained the warning that regardless of what we do as humans, it is impossible to know if we will bring the ethical commonwealth about on our own. Instead, we must prepare the way for God to come into the picture and He will bring about the ethical commonwealth. With regard to our role then in bringing about the ethical commonwealth:

...man must proceed as though everything depended upon him; only on this condition dare he hope that higher wisdom will grant the completion of his well-intentioned endeavors.\(^{37}\)

Hence, it is only through God that the moral kingdom will come to pass, yet we must act as though its consummation depended on us alone, as we act to bring the kingdom about. We are limited in our ability to bring about the ethical commonwealth since as humans we are limited by the fact that we are not perfect, hence "How indeed can one expect something perfectly straight to be framed out of such crooked wood?"\(^{38}\)

This is the condition in which the human race is immersed. We are not able to bring about God's kingdom alone, just as we are not able to appreciate a moral religion alone. Yet, just as we are assisted towards moral

\(^{37}\)Ibid., 101 (92).

\(^{38}\)Ibid.
faith with ecclesiastical faith as it is presented through its statutes contained in
the Bible, we are to hope for God’s assistance as we work towards our moral
betterment, thereby having “a rational faith and trust in His [God’s] help”. 39
Thus we are still to have hope that we shall achieve the pure faith that will
serve as a basis for the moral religion that guarantees the fulfillment of the
ethical commonwealth. Hence it is through God’s help that we are able to
gradually purify ecclesiastical faith, leaving behind all of its statutory content
(the empirical), and through divine assistance proceed to a pure religious faith
as that which will establish a kingdom of God on earth.

Hence a necessary consequence of the physical and, at the same
time, the moral predisposition in us, the latter being the basis
and the interpreter of all religion, is that in the end religion will
gradually be freed from all empirical determining grounds and
from all statutes which rest on history and which through the
agency of ecclesiastical faith provisionally unite men for the
requirements of God; and thus at last the pure religion of reason
will rule over all, “so that God may be all in all.” 40

This kingdom of God, Kant makes very clear is not to be brought about by
means of external revolution. Pure religious faith will be scourged of the
ecclesiastical only as moral agents realize that the true religion is the moral one
that lies recognizably in everyone’s reason. Through its recognition, the

39 CON, 47 (Gregor, 83).

40 REL, 121 (Greene and Hudson, 112) [Kant’s reference is to I Corinthians
 XV; 28].
human race proceeds in moral action and in hoping for God's grace insofar as they are worthy of it. 41

In sum, the ethical commonwealth is practically possible to achieve, yet not through human means alone. As humanity makes itself worthy of divine assistance through moral progress, divine assistance can be hoped for and thereby guarantee the coming of the kingdom of God in establishing a people of God organized under laws of virtue in the form of a church based on pure religious faith can be hoped for as well.

With this the final discussion of Kant's ethical commonwealth as the consummate articulation of the highest good, there are several lessons to be appreciated. Through the ethical commonwealth Kant gives content to his moral project. That is, we are to concretely strive to bring about certain states of affairs in the world. We are to enter into certain relationships with God and with each other. This is required as a part of Kant's moral theory, it is a demand of the law. This is no vacuous command, but a concrete one, with specific content to be fulfilled; (e.g. follow the law, bring about a republican constitution, establish a league of peace, bring about the ethical commonwealth).

41 "...that is to say that he shall begin with the improvement of his life as the supreme condition under which alone a saving faith can exist.” [Ibid., 118 (109)].
In working to bring about the state of affairs of the ethical commonwealth Kant has not left us without a way to proceed. From the moment the individual realizes she is subject to the law, enters into community to protect her rights and then further into a community that is international and worldly in its scope, Kant’s program guides her. This guidance takes form in the command —Bring about the highest good in the world. And this command takes form in realizing what this command entails as we are engaged moral individuals striving in the face of the law. In so doing, we are given a guide for our action, a moral ideal to pursue. In addition, we are given a means to integrate the two aspects of ourselves as a sensuous being and as a supersensuous being as Kant points to God as a guarantor for the moral project of humanity.

The Kingdom of God and Its Consequences

With this in mind, all that is left is to see how this understanding of the highest good fares against its contemporary criticism and commentary. Commentary on Kant’s highest good is prolific. In its extensive presence in Kantian literature it can be separated into two basic schools of thought: there are those that support a conception of the highest good and there are those that oppose a conception of the highest good. In what follows, I will address
those that oppose a conception of the highest good as I argue that they fail to recognize the entire role of the highest good insofar as I have presented it, resulting in an inaccurate understanding of the highest good as either heteronomous or superfluous. After this treatment, I will address those that support a conception of the highest good as I argue that they too fail to recognize the entire role of the highest good, resulting in an exclusive notion of the highest good insofar as it is one sided and does not appreciate the many aspects of the highest good, the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. 42

In sum, with this understanding of the highest good, as a moral object we are required to pursue in its various forms, culminating in the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace, the playing field of contemporary scholarship on the highest good will hopefully not be so antagonistic. Now, instead of forms of the highest good competing and contradicting one another, the manifestations of the highest good complement one another.

With regard to contradictory understandings of the highest good, these interpretations fall into the categories of understanding the highest good as

42This division of the controversy over Kant’s highest good is summarized very well in the following article by Lance Simmons, “Kant’s Highest Good: Albatross, Keystone, Achilles Heel” History of Philosophy Quarterly, 10: 4 (October, 1993) 355-368.
either superfluous and or heteronomous. In both instances, it is my view that these interpretations are not well founded. With regard to the understandings that assert that the highest good is a viable part of the Kantian project, the claims of interpretation do not go far enough. That is, the proponents of the highest good concentrate on either an individual or a social understanding of the highest good. Again, in both instances of exclusivity, it is my view that these interpretations leave an integral aspect of the highest good out insofar as they do not recognize a tripartite developmental aspect of the highest good that culminates in the ethical commonwealth.

The heteronomous take on the highest good does not appreciate that the highest good must always satisfy Kant's criterion of being grounded in the moral law. That is, the connection between the highest good and the law, insofar as the highest good expresses what Kant calls an extension of the law,

43 The claims of superfluity and heteronomy are made most strongly by Lewis White Beck (see A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, as previously cited; and Thomas Auster (see Kant's Moral Teleology, also as previously cited).

44 With regard to the understanding of the highest good as primarily an individual endeavor, see John Silber as previously cited. With regard to the understanding of the highest good as a primarily social endeavor, see Sharon Anderson-Gold as previously cited.

45 See Thomas Auster, Jeffrie Murphy, et al., for examples of those numbered among the Kantian commentators who hold that the highest good is heteronomous.
is not a heteronomous extension of the law. The highest good is always conditioned by virtue, even when the highest good is seen to be in a reciprocal relationship with the law. This is the case regardless of the format of the highest good, via the individual, politics or within humanity.

With regard to the superfluous take on the highest good, this interpretation does not appreciate that the highest good not only serves as a dialectical ideal of reason, but it also serves as a moral ideal or guide for conduct. As was demonstrated in Chapter One, there is a very strong aspect of the highest good that consists of a dialectical ideal. Yet this is not an exhaustive understanding of the highest good. The highest good consists of a command to pursue the highest good insofar as a moral agent seeks to bring about the highest good in the world. In this sense, the highest good contributes something substantive to the moral project. In short, the accusation of superfluity with regard to the highest good is accompanied by a far too narrow reading of what the highest good entails.

In those instances where Kant scholars have supported Kant’s

---

46 See Chapter Three for the way in which Kant discusses the highest good as an extension of the law.

47 See Chapter Two for the way in which Kant discusses the highest good as reciprocally related to the law as both its source and consequence.

48 The main proponent of the view that the highest good is superfluous to the Kantian moral project is of course, Lewis White Beck.
conception of the highest good, I contend that these interpretations do not go far enough. These interpretations concentrate on either the individual\(^{49}\) or the social perspective of the highest good. \(^{50}\) In so doing, these commentators fail to recognize that the highest good requires being made manifest in both ways. The highest good is not locked into either an exclusively individual or social manifestation, but rather, the highest good is made manifest variously, contingent upon the perspective of duty from which it is approached. Of course, in appreciating these perspectives, it must be appreciated that they culminate in the ethical commonwealth as the consummate articulation of the highest good. The individual manifestations of the highest good do not recognize where this complex object should lead, while the social manifestations do not recognize where this object has originated.

It is interesting to ask why this issue has plagued Kantian scholarship. Some of the reasons no doubt are a direct result of the presence of the highest good in so many places in the Kantian corpus. There is never a unified and complete discussion of the highest good from its justification to its application. Everyone has their favorite texts and a perspective from which to meet them.

\(^{49}\)The main proponent of an individual understanding of the highest good is John Silber, but see also the work of Gerald Barnes, Terry Godlove and Andrews Reath, among others.

\(^{50}\)The main proponents of a social understanding of the highest good are Sharon Anderson-Gold, Stephen Palmquist, and Philip Rossi.
However, it seems that Kant himself may have a more accurate insight as to why this issue has been so problematic. In his essay *Theory to Practice*, as he was addressing those he thought had misunderstood and wrongly criticized him, Kant attempts to explain the genesis of these ill fated and perhaps ill borne approaches to his work.

These exceptions are thus nothing but misunderstandings (for I have no desire to regard them as misinterpretations), whose possibility would be puzzling if such a phenomenon were not explained by the human tendency to follow one's own customary patterns of thought, even in the evaluation of the thoughts of others and so to impose the former on the later. 51

In breaking free from our own biases, we are able to be more true to the Kantian project. In the above sketch, I briefly applied the tripartite interpretation of the highest good to the controversy surrounding it in contemporary scholarship.

---

51 TTP, 281 (Humphrey, 65).
CONCLUSION

THE LESSONS KANT TEACHES:
A CONCLUSION AND SUMMATION OF THE PROJECT

In this project, I have proposed a way of interpreting Kant’s highest good that attempts to integrate his multifarious remarks and explanations of this complex object. In so doing, I have also attempted to demonstrate that contemporary commentators have fixated on the various presentations of the highest good in the corpus in an isolationist manner. That is, commentators on Kant’s highest good often fail to realize that there is a presentation of the highest good occurring throughout most of Kant’s major works and several of the minor works as well. A result of this failure is that Kant commentators often leave us with exclusive or competing concepts of Kant’s highest good. This leaves a false impression that there is not a unified concept of the highest good in the Kantian corpus.

As a result of this disparate environment in Kantian interpretation of the highest good, I have sought to present a unified conception of this complex object. In doing so, my project concentrated on the three presentations of the highest good that I argue are present and crucial in Kant’s
work. There is the role of the highest good as a unifier, as a moral ideal, and as the ethical commonwealth. It is through this last notion of the highest good, the ethical commonwealth, that the two former notions of the highest good are encompassed. This leaves us with a notion of the highest good that not only serves as a unifier and moral ideal, but also anchors Kant's conception of God as moral guarantor, and provides an added social dimension to the highest good.

In its social aspect, the highest good provides us with a program for its fulfillment as we seek to establish the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace. This establishment is accomplished through a developmental plane that takes into account the human moral agent in her individual role, her political role and as a member of the human race. This notion of the highest good can be demonstrated to lead to an ethical community based on the law of virtue and established by making manifest Kant's notion of the invisible church on earth.

With this notion of the highest good in place, the shortcomings of contemporary commentators on the highest good are made evident. Those who have argued that the highest good is superfluous have not recognized its complete role. Those who have argued that the highest good is heteronomous have not realized that it fulfills a human need, and have not seen that it is a
requirement of the law. Other commentators on the highest good have concentrated too exclusively on a small aspect of its comprehensive role, such as that means by which our action is guided, or the means by which humanity is able to overcome evil.¹ By ending their analyses before a complete organic conception of the highest good is articulated these commentators have failed to see the forest for the trees. Hence, my interpretation of the highest good, in presenting it as an organic whole present throughout the corpus, is able to address the problems of conflict among contemporary commentators.

To conclude, there can be no doubt that the doctrine of Kant's highest good is complex and even obscure in places. To address this, I have proposed a way of interpreting the highest good such that it is demonstrated to articulate what morality truly requires. This is the case insofar as we are commanded to bring about the highest good, to bring the object of the moral law to fruition in the sensible world. This task is not easy, nor is its interpretation. In interpreting Kant's complex object, I have attempted to take into account as much of the Kantian corpus as is reasonably possible through my over-arching approach. Am I convinced of this approach?—only insofar as I am convinced of anything of extreme import that appears in its normal ambiguity and consequently without great exactness. As Kant himself

¹See the discussion of the previous chapter of the interpretations of Silber and Anderson-Gold.
says:

...what duty is, is plain of itself to everyone, but what is to bring true, lasting advantage to our whole existence is veiled in impenetrable obscurity...  

The concept of the highest good as the ethical commonwealth based on perpetual peace is that which could bring true, lasting advantage to our whole existence. But the means through which it is to be achieved and brought into existence is most certainly veiled in obscurity. Hence what I offer, and am entirely convinced of, is that in this program for interpreting the highest good, I have offered a viable comprehensive understanding of that which, in its implementation, will be veiled in impenetrable obscurity.

Finally, in offering the above, as a prescription for the confusion over the concept of the highest good and its universal moral echoing, there is an implicit challenge. My analysis has demonstrated what a Kantian morality requires; thus the challenge consists in lifting the veil, revealing the means for its existence and manifestation. In so doing, we would be well served, for Kantian morality is neither so specific nor so antiquated that in the Kantian experience we are left without echoes of our own.

---

\(^2\)was Pflicht sei, bietet sich jedermann von selbst dar; was aber wahren dauerhaften Vorteil bringe, ist allemal, wenn dieser auf das ganze Dasein erstreckt werden soll, in undurchdringliches Dunkel eingehüllt... [CPR, 37 (Beck, 38)].
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY REFERENCES


References to Kant's works will be made in English, with the corresponding reference to the Royal Prussian Academy Edition as explained in the reference section of the dissertation, page iv.
SECONDARY REFERENCES


Auxter, Thomas, Kant's Moral Teleology (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982).


Murphy, Jeffrie, "The Highest Good as Content of Kant's Ethical Formalism." Kant-Studien 56 (1965) 102-10.


________. "Persons as 'End in Themselves'." The Modern Schoolman 57 (November, 1979) 45-57.


Schroeder, H.H. "Some Common Misinterpretations of the Kantian Ethics," The Philosophical Review 49 (1940) 424-446.

________. "The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion." part of the introduction to Green and Hudson's translation of Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (New York: Harper, 1960) xxix-cxxiv.
________. "The Importance of the Highest Good in Kant's Ethics." Ethics 73 (1963) 179-197.


Smith, Steven P. "Worthiness to be Happy and Kant's Concept of the Highest Good." Kant-Studien 75 (1984) 168-190.


VITA

I currently reside in Canfield, Ohio. At this time I am employed by Youngstown State University at the rank of Assistant Professor. My appointment with Youngstown began as of September 15, 1995. My areas of specialization at this time are the history of modern philosophy, especially Kant, and ethics. My areas of competence at this time are the history of philosophy, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of mind, applied ethics and continental philosophy.

Prior to my appointment at Youngstown, I taught philosophy during the Loyola Summer sessions of 1991 through 1993. At this time, I taught logic, at the rank of instructor, while completing my Master's degree (completed in 1991) and my Ph.D. (requirements completed in the Summer of 1995).

Throughout my graduate career, I have received generous financial and tuition assistance from Loyola. This past academic year, 1994 through 1995, I was a recipient of a Loyola University dissertation fellowship. The academic year prior to this year, I was the recipient of a graduate research fellowship with Loyola's Center for Ethics. The Center for Ethics is an interdisciplinary
center for ethics research projects. In addition, while studying at Loyola, I have assisted in several courses; ethics, bio-medical ethic, philosophy of religion and logic. During this time I was a graduate assistant of the philosophy department. My assistantships took place over the academic years of 1990 through 1993.

Prior to attending Loyola, I graduated from Smith College of Northampton, MA. While at Smith, I majored in philosophy and minored in religion. I graduated from Smith in the Spring of 1989. After which I began my graduate studies at Loyola; while being assisted with a graduate tuition scholarship from Smith College's Alumnae Association.

My professional activity at this time consists of a publication and several conference presentations. My publication is "Individuality, Society and Perpetual Peace." This is published in the Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress, a work edited by Hoke Robinson, and published in 1995 by Marquette University Press. In addition, I have participated in several professional conferences; such as the Eighth International Kant Congress at Memphis State University (1995), a graduate student conference at DePaul University (1995) and the Toward Perpetual Peace Conference at Valparaiso University (1994). In the next year, I will be presenting papers at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Phenomenological and Existential
Philosophy (October, 1995) and at the conference Ethics Medicine and Health Care: An Appraisal of the Thought of H. Tristam Engelhardt (September, 1995).

At this time I have proficiency in several foreign languages. I currently have a high level of proficiency in both the speaking and the reading of German. I have a moderate proficiency in the reading of Latin. I also have a moderate proficiency in the speaking and the reading of Spanish. I am currently a member in the following professional organizations: American Philosophical Association, American Association of University Women, North American Kant Society, and finally The Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.
The dissertation submitted by Cynthia A. Brincat has been read and approved by the following committee:

Victoria Wike, Ph.D., Director  
Associate Professor, Philosophy  
Loyola University Chicago

Richard Westley, Ph.D.  
Professor, Philosophy  
Loyola University Chicago

Adrian Peperzak, Ph.D.  
Professor, Schmitt Chair in Philosophy

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy.

August 15, 1995  
Director's Signature