

The Highest Good and the Practical Regulative Knowledge in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason

El Bien supremo y el conocimiento práctico regulativo en la Crítica de la Razón Práctica

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Abstract

In this paper I defend three different points: *first*, that the concept of highest good is derived from an *a priori* but subjective argument, namely a maxim of pure practical reason; *secondly*, that the theory regarding the highest good has the validity of a practical regulative knowledge; and *thirdly*, that the practical regulative knowledge can be understood as the same “holding something to be true” as Kant attributes to hope and believe.

Keywords

Highest good, practical regulative knowledge, hope, believe

Resumen

En este artículo defiendo tres tesis principales: en primer lugar, que el concepto de Bien supremo se deriva de un argumento *a priori*, pero subjetivo, a saber, una máxima de la razón pura práctica. En segundo lugar, sostengo que la teoría concerniente al Bien supremo tiene la validez de un conocimiento regulativo práctico y, en tercer lugar, que el conocimiento regulativo práctico puede ser entendido como un conocimiento que «sostiene que algo es verdad», como Kant atribuye asimismo a la esperanza y a la fe.

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Palabras clave

Bien supremo; conocimiento práctico regulativo; esperanza; fe

Before entering on my analysis, let me clarify what I understand here by a practical regulative knowledge. While the theoretical-regulative knowledge is based on a theoretical interest of reason and makes possible a theoretical use of the ideas of reason and a theoretical teleology, the practical regulative knowledge is based on a practical interest of reason and makes possible a practical use of the ideas of reason and a practical regulative teleology. On the one hand, in *practical regulative* knowledge is in question the idea of a wise and morally benevolent creator of the world and the derivative idea of a morally beneficent nature, i.e., the idea of a nature that fosters the achievement of moral ends to human species. On the other hand, *theoretical regulative* knowledge is based solely on the idea of a wise creator of the world and its derivative idea of a well-organized nature, but not in the idea of well-organized nature that fosters *moral ends*.¹ Therefore both have

¹ This became clearer in this passage: “Although the proper concept of *wisdom* represents only a will's property of being in agreement with the highest good as the *final end* of all things, whereas [the concept of] *art* represents only competence in the use of the suitable means toward *optional ends*, yet, when art proves itself adequate to ideas the possibility of which surpasses every insight of human reason (e.g. when means and ends reciprocally produce one another, as in organic bodies), as a *divine art*, it can also, not incorrectly, be given the name of wisdom - or rather, not to mix up concepts, the name of an *artistic wisdom* of the author of the world, in distinction from his *moral wisdom*. Teleology (and, through it, physic-theology) gives abundant proof in experience of this artistic wisdom. But from it no inference is allowed to the moral wisdom of the author of the world, for the natural law and the moral law require principles of entirely different kinds, and the demonstration of the latter wisdom must be carried out totally *a priori*, hence in no way be founded on the experience of what goes on in the world. Now since the concept of God suited to religion must be a concept of him as a moral being (for we have no need of him for natural explanation, hence for speculative purposes); and since this concept can just as little be derived from the mere transcendental concept of an absolutely necessary being - a concept that totally escapes us - as be founded on experience; so it is clear enough that the proof of the existence of such a being can be none other than a moral proof.” (ETP 8: 256n.)

The citations include both an abbreviation of the English title and the corresponding volume and page numbers in the standard “Akademie” edition of Kant's works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer [now de Gruyter], 1902). For references to the first *Critique*, I follow the common practice of giving page numbers from the A (1781) and B (1787) German editions only. I follow the standard English translations of Kant's works. Here is a list of the abbreviations and English translations:

CF — “The conflict of the faculties.” Trans. M. Gregor and R. Anchor. In. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001. Pp.233-327.

CPJ — *Critique of the power of judgment*. Trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002.

CPR — *Critique of pure reason*. Trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.

CPrR — “Critique of practical reason.” Trans. M. Gregor. In. M. Gregor, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 133-172.

ETP — “Concerning the Employment of Teleological Principles in Philosophy,” Trans. G Zöllner. In G. Zöllner, R. Loudon, *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. Pp. 192-218.

G — “Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals.” Trans. M. Gregor. In M. Gregor, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 37-108.

IUH — “Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim.” Trans. A. Wood. In G. Zöllner, R. Loudon, *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. Pp. 107-120.

OCS — “On the common saying: that may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice.” Transl. M. Gregor. In. M. Gregor, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 273-310.

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different sources and different uses. While one is useful to the field of human action, the other has its utility for the field of cognition.

Moreover, it is also noteworthy that the teleology related with practical-*regulative* knowledge is distinct from the teleology related with the practical-*constitutive* knowledge. A practical-constitutive teleology would be the description of human actions insofar as they follow from the moral law, that is, with respect to the immanent purposes of the agent's moral will. This could be approximated to the categorical imperative in its formulation as a kingdom of ends and the theory of moral ends presented in the *Doctrine of Virtue*. In turn the practical-regulative teleology goes beyond the limits of action of a single agent's will and power. For this reason, the end is not an end that is on the reach of an individual agent, but an end that needs to assume a higher point of view of a *Nature* or a *World*, which is organized accordingly with moral ends by the moral and wise author of the world. But this practical-regulative teleology has a different status for reason in its practical use as the practical-constitutive teleology. While the practical reason demands without exception that we consider all rational beings as ends in themselves and establishes moral ends as duties, it cannot demand that the agent alone realizes the progress for human species. That is why the practical-constitutive teleology is part of the answer to the question "What should I do?", while the practical-regulative teleology is part of the answer to the question "What may I hope?" While one refers to duty and is a practical constitutive knowledge, the other refers to hope and has a status as a practical regulative knowledge. Before examine the text itself in order to sustain this thesis, I must also stress that at no place Kant uses this terminology, but I hope to show in my analysis of the *Critique of practical reason* that the concepts are.

1. The concept of highest good as result of a synthetic argumentative movement

According to Kant, in the *CPR* "we see very well that the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed" (*CPR* B 364) This logical principle turns into a principle of pure reason when we assume that "when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e., contained in the object and its connection)." (*CPR* B 364) While the first is analytical, the second principle is synthetic.

OTT – "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" Trans. A. Wood. In A. Wood and G. di Giovanni, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 7-18.

TPP – "Toward Perpetual Peace" Trans. M. Gregor. In M. Gregor, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 311-352.

Rel – "Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason." Trans. G. di Giovanni. In. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001. Pp. 39-216.

In theoretical philosophy the pure use of reason's principle leads to transcendental ideas, which are the expression of an unconditioned for a given series of conditioned or for a given conditioned. When this synthetic *a priori* principle is used to determine the conditioned or the unconditioned then reason is led to error. It is well known that Kant's solution in *first Critique* establishes the synthetic principle as having just a regulative or hypothetical validity. This means that the synthetic principle of pure reason, although it is an *a priori* principle, has merely subjective validity. This subjectivity does not entail psychological contingency but only that it cannot be used to determine objects. However reason can still guide the empirical research of understanding by the way of ideas.²

This same assumption is restated in the first sentence of the *Dialectic* of *CPrR*: "Pure reason always has its dialectic, whether it is considered in its speculative or in its practical use; for it requires the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned, and this can be found only in things in themselves." (*CPrR* 05: 107) But what is the meaning of the concepts of conditioned and unconditioned in the domain of practical reason?

«As pure practical reason it likewise seeks the unconditioned for the practically conditioned (which rests on inclinations and natural needs), not indeed as the determining ground of the will, but even when this is given (in the moral law), it seeks the unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*». (*CPrR* 05: 108)

Several problems arise from this passage. First, there seem to be two practical conditioned. On the one hand, it could be something that "rests on inclinations and natural needs". On the other hand, it could be the "object of practical reason" which Kant has defined in *Analytic* as the concept of "good". But the good has an unconditioned value because it is analytically derived from the concept of moral law, as the concept of effect belongs analytically to the concept of cause.³ Secondly, to pursue the practical unconditioned to the

² According to Kant "The hypothetical use of reason is therefore directed at the systematic unity of understanding's cognition, which, however, is the *touchstone of truth* of its rules. Conversely, systematic unity (as mere idea) is only a *projected* unity, which one must regard not as given in itself, but only as a problem; this unity, however, helps to find a principle of a manifold and particular uses of the understanding, thereby guiding it even in those cases that are not given and making it coherently connected." (*CPR* B 675) Therefore, in the *theoretical use of ideas*, there must be a reciprocal control between reason and understanding. On the one hand, understanding must presuppose that everything in nature has an end, otherwise it could not achieve more than "spelling out appearances according to a synthetic unity in order to be able to read them as an experience" (*CPR* B 370–1) and without achieving the systematic unity needed to qualify as a science. On the other hand, understanding should evaluate and determine what said ends are. Without the control of understanding, reason would simply project ends onto the nature and understanding would be at the mercy of the *dogmatic despotism of reason*, which Kant call perverted reason mistake (*perversa ratio*).

³ According to Kant "*the concept of good and evil must not be determined before the moral law (...) but only (...) after it and by means of it*" (*CPrR* 5: 63). Besides, the concepts of good and evil do not originally refer to objects but are actually forms of the category of causality. It is possible to say that the relationship between the object of pure practical reason and the moral law is *analytical*, i.e. occurs accordingly to the principle of identity (I think that Beck (1960, 135s) would agree with this reading). Kant strongly suggest this reading in the next passage: "if the later [the pure practical law] had first been investigated analytically it would have been found that, instead of the concept of the good as an object determining and making possible the moral

conditioned as something that “rests on inclinations and natural needs” does not seem to make sense either. Otherwise, why should this be a problem for pure practical reason? An unconditioned in this sense seems to be nothing more than an ideal of the imagination.

An attempt to solve this problem could start out by comparing how theoretical reason determines the unconditioned as an absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned.⁴ But we must remember that for theoretical reason

«if a cognition is regarded as conditioned, reason is necessitated to regard the series of conditions *in an ascending line* as completed and given in their totality. But if the very same cognition is at the same time regarded as a condition of other cognitions that constitute *a series of consequences in a descending line*, then reason can be entirely *indifferent* about how far this progression stretches *a parte posteriori*, and whether a totality of these conditions is even possible at all». (CPR B 388f., *emphasis added*)

If this were also the case with practical reason, then the following absurdity would arise: the conditioned would at the same time and under the same conditions be also the unconditioned. It would then be impossible to explain how and why there is a dialectics for practical reason.

In order to resolve this impasse, we need to realize that despite the fact that theoretical reason and practical reason are always the same reason and despite the existence of many systematic agreements and shared elements, there is at the beginning one fundamental difference between both uses, namely, practical reason “does not have to do with objects for the sake of cognizing them but with its own ability to make them real (conformably with cognition of them), that is, with a will that is a causality inasmuch as reason contains its determining ground” (CPrR 05: 89).

law, it is on the contrary the moral law that first determines and makes possible the concept of the good, insofar as it deserves this name absolutely.” (CPrR 5: 64) This means that the moral content of the action originates itself *a priori* from the autonomous will. This has at least four important consequences: 1. The object of pure practical reason can be *a priori* defined and has an independent reality from the empirical experiences (Cf. “the morally good as an object is something supersensible, so that nothing corresponding to it can be found in any sensible intuition” (CPrR 5: 68)) 2. The object of pure practical reason has the same theoretical status as the moral law, i.e., as an *a priori* constitutive practical knowledge; 3. It is a necessary consequence of the duty and keeps the imperativeness of the moral law, i.e., the object of the pure practical reason can be expressed as a duty, as ‘do good’ and from this aspect that Kant can think about duties of virtue in Doctrine of virtue (MM 6: 385ff.); 4. Because the object of the pure practical reason is analytical related with the moral law, it can be expressed in connection with all the formulations of moral law and in analogy with the ‘schemes of the law of nature’: “The rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of the nature of which you were yourself a part, you could indeed regard it as possible through your will. Everyone does, in fact, appraise actions as morally good or evil by this rule.” (CPrR 5: 69)

⁴ Cf. “Now since the unconditioned alone makes possible the totality of conditions, and conversely the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned, a pure concept of reason in general can be explained through the concept of the unconditioned, insofar as it contains a ground of synthesis for what is conditioned” (CPR B 379)

In other words, the category of causality is used by theoretical reason in order to attain knowledge of the given object or to establish the cause of a given effect. In the case of practical reason, the category of causality is used to conceptualize the act of performing the object, i.e. the cause has already been given (the moral law) and what needs to be performed (“founded”) is its effect, its object. The difference consists in “precisely the opposite relation from what could be said of pure reason in its speculative use”, because in the practical domain we “have to do with a will and have to consider reason not in its relation to objects but in relation to this will and its causality” (CPrR 05: 16) This inverse relation in the use of the concept of causality is reflected in the very structure of the second *Critique*, which follows a reverse order inside the *Doctrine of the elements*.⁵

Now, as soon as we realize the difference between theoretical and practical reason we can say that, while the first looks for the unconditioned in the ascending series, the second goes for the unconditioned in the descending series of conditions. Thus the concept of *highest good* represents the unconditioned totality of the objects of practical reason, while the *good* is also the unconditioned, but in a different sense and perspective. While moral law is the unconditioned that underlies the will and the good is the unconditioned linked to it, the highest good, following the reasoning of a descending series, represents all those unconditioned (the good as object of the will) which are now considered (from another point of view) to be conditioned insofar as their *empirical realization* is conditioned.

In this context Kant presents the distinction between ‘supreme good’ (*supremum*) and ‘highest good’ (*consummatum*): “The first is that condition which is itself unconditioned, that is, not subordinate to any other (*originarium*); the second is that whole which is not part of a still greater whole of the same kind (*perfectissimum*).” (CPrR 05: 110) I suggest here that the supreme good is the unconditioned in the perspective of the ascending series (as the cause), while the highest good (as an effect of that cause) is the unconditioned in the direction of the descending series and, therefore, should be understood in the horizon of the realization of morality as a moral system. This is also linked with another characterization of concepts, namely, right after presenting the distinction between highest and supreme good Kant defines the highest good of a possible world as “happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy)” (CPrR 05: 110). However it is noteworthy that from this point on Kant changes the concept of virtue he used in *Analytics* (as a “moral disposition *in conflict*” (CPrR 05: 84)) and begins to consider it as an ideal of virtue.⁶ This change takes place because reason can only think the realization of the highest good as a proportional distribution of happiness on the assumption of a totality, namely of a world where the correspondence between virtue and happiness occurs under a legislation, under a system of laws. Therefore

⁵ See CPrR 5: 89-90. In my point of view, it is because Watkins (2010) did not recognize this difference in the direction of the unconditioned that he could not exactly determine the content of the highest good and even less comprehend which function has this concept for Kant’s philosophy (159ss). Furthermore he also did not distinguish between the concept of good and the highest good (157s).

⁶ See: “(...) what I call the ideal, by which I understand the idea not merely *in concreto* but *in individuo*, i.e., as an individual thing that is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone.” (CPR B 596)

virtue must be understood in the context of the highest good as the ideal of virtue and this change has important implications.

But how to explain this argumentative jump which goes from an intrinsic characteristic of reason to looking for an unconditioned for a given conditioned to the conceptual definition of the highest good as “happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality”? A clue can be found in the following passage:

«Hence, though the highest good may be the whole *object* of a pure practical reason, that is, of a pure will, it is not on that account to be taken as its *determining ground*, and the moral law alone must be viewed as the ground for making the highest good and its *realization or promotion* the object». (CPrR 05: 109, *emphasis added*)

Particularly relevant is the end of the passage, namely, that moral law is the foundation for both for the realization (*bewirken*) and for the promotion (*befördern*) of the highest good. This ambiguity will allow Kant to provide two different but not exclusive types of formulations. For explanatory and systematic reasons, the particle “or” (*oder*) does not represent a definite logical disjunction because both possibilities will continue to be explored until the end of the *Dialectics* in a different but complementary way.

Let me start with the issue of the *promotion* of the highest good. If the *highest good* presupposes a whole in which *good* (established directly by the moral law) is the supreme element, then it can be said that it is a *duty to perform what is good*; hence it should also be a *duty to promote the highest good*. Since promotion does not imply the complete but only the partial realization, then, although the highest good is not fully contained within the domain of moral law, it is in part. Therefore, if I have a duty to perform the good, then it is analytically true that I also have a *duty to promote* the highest good.⁷ In this sense, for example, Kant states:

⁷ The first Kantian scholar who pointed out the necessity to read the concept of the highest good in the horizon of a ‘duty of promotion’ and also to the contradictoriness of a “duty of realization” was Silber (1959, 477ss). In his reading the duty of promotion should be seen as immanent. However, Silber defends the necessity of a transcendent comprehension of the highest good in order to avoid that human beings consider their faculty in a misguided way, i.e., as the concept of highest good as a normative principle and condition of the moral law (483) In order to avoid misinterpretations Silber introduces a distinction between a constitutive obligation (regarded the immanent highest good) and a regulative obligation (regarded to the transcendent highest good) (488s). According to him, without the regulative obligation the human being cannot do a good use of the immanent highest good, i.e., the duty to promote the highest good (492). Beck (1960) has strongly criticized Silber’s reading. According to him, the duty to promote the highest good is either nothing more than the duty to act morally and, in this case, it is just a bad formulation of the moral law, or there is no duty in regarding the highest good. According to Beck, to speak about some regulative duty, as did Silber, is a complete mistake. Thus either there is no duty regarding the highest good or we are renouncing to the concept of autonomy (244s.). I agree with Beck that there is no duty for the highest good that is independent of the categorical imperative, however I disagree that the *need* of the reason for the development of a system of ends, which embraces freedom and nature, is based on an eminently theoretical interest and has no practical implication (against Beck, 1960, 245). As historical information it is noteworthy to point out that this criticisms made by Beck are similar to another formulations made by Döring (Kants Lehre vom höchsten Gut. Eine Richtigstellung. In: *Kant-Studien* 4. 1899/1900. 99ff); de Kroner (*Von Kant*

«What belongs to duty here is only the *striving* to produce and *promote* [*die Bearbeitung zu Hervorbringung und Beförderung*] the highest good in the world, the possibility of which can therefore be postulated (...).» (CPrR 05: 126, *emphasis added*)

«(...) we hope to attain the highest good, which the moral law makes it our duty to take as the object of our *endeavors* [*Bestrebung*]. (...) The moral law commands me to make the highest possible good in a world the final object of all my *conduct* [*Verhalten*].» (CPrR 05: 129, *emphasis added*)

«The command to *promote* the highest good is based objectively (in practical reason); its possibility in general is likewise objectively based (in theoretical reason, which has nothing against it).» (CPrR 05: 145, *emphasis added*)

On the one hand, it should be noted that the relationship between moral law and highest good as an object of *striving*, *endeavor*, *conduct* or *promotion* is objective and direct, but, on the other hand, insufficient to increase the meaning of the moral law, because those analytic formulations have a merely elucidative character. In other words, through the analysis of the normativity included in moral law, Kant only analytically legitimizes the *logical possibility* of highest good, in other words, he states only that, from the point of view of moral law, there is no contradiction in representing the future existence of the highest good.⁸ It is an ambiguity in the concept of possibility that allows Kant to find a solution for the antinomy of practical reason. See the following passage:

«It is, however, evident that if the moral law is already included as supreme condition in the concept of the highest good, the highest good is then not merely *object*: the concept of it and the representation of its existence as possible by our practical reason are at the same time the *determining ground* of the pure will because in that case the moral law, already included and thought in this concept, and no other object, in fact determines the will in accordance with the principle of autonomy.» (CPrR 05: 109-110)

What is “evident” (*Es versteht sich aber von selbst*) is the conceptual and analytic relation between moral law and the concept of its promotion and therefore the logical possibility of the highest good. “The representation of its existence as possible by our practical reason” means the same as the “duty of promotion of the highest good”, which, in turn, is the same as the determination of “the will in accordance with the principle of autonomy”. In other words, if there is a duty to act morally, then the claim that there is a “duty to promote the highest good” is analytically true and this, in turn, means the same as saying that “the representation of its existence as possible by our practical reason” is necessary. However,

bis Hegel. 2. Aufl. Tübingen 1961. 208); e de Cohen (*Kants Begründung der Ethik*. 2. Aufl. Berlin 1910. 344ss) (*apud*. DÜSING, 1971, 29).

⁸ That Kant has this in mind can be assured when in the next section he returns to the distinction between analytic and synthetic: “Two determinations *necessarily* combined in one concept must be connected as ground and consequent, and so connected that this *unity* is considered either as *analytic* (logical connection) or as synthetic (real *connection*), the former in accordance with the law of identity, the latter in accordance with the law of causality.” (CPrR 5: 111)

with the caveat that the concept of “possible” should be understood as following: it is not contradictory to the moral law or the principles of theoretical reason to consider the possibility of the highest good. This conceptual clarification does not imply an inversion of the determining ground of will which would be heteronomy, a consideration that Kant had made immediately before to the above quotation.⁹

It is when dealing with the issue of the *realization* of the highest good that the *synthetic* moment of the argument takes place, which cannot occur simply based on moral law. A synthetic practical connection establishes a relationship according to some law of causality and not according to the law of identity. This means that when we speak of the realization of the highest good, we go beyond the question of the *logical possibility* and engage with the issue of *real possibility*, i.e., we raise questions regarding the circumstances that might cause the highest good, the circumstances that make the highest good real.

Kant’s argument is based on the following assumption: the systematic necessity of reason in its logical use to look after the unconditioned for the given conditioned reconfigures itself in the field of pure practical reason in a practical *need* of reason (*ein praktisches Bedürfnis*) to understand the possibility of connecting virtue with happiness. Kant spells this practical need out in the following passage:

«But it [virtue] is not yet, on that account, the whole and complete good as the object of the faculty of desire of rational finite beings; for this, *happiness* is also required, and that not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself an end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which regards a person in the world generally as an end in itself. For, to *need* [*bedürftig*] happiness, to be also worthy of it, and yet not to participate in it cannot be consistent with the perfect volition of a rational being that would at the same time have all power, even if we think of such a being only for the sake of the experiment». (*CPrR* 05: 110, *emphasis added*).

The logical assumption of reason (“to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding”) turns in the practical field into an idea of a world that would result from “the perfect volition of a rational being that would at the same time have all power”, i.e., of a perfect will both in form as well in force. Conceiving of a complete system for practical reason means considering a world in which the causality of good will is perfectly suitable not only for the realization of good (some moral act) but is also appropriate for the *realization* of the totality of practical objects. In other words, a complete system of

⁹ In this sense I disagree with Düsing (1971, 31ff), for whom the duty to promotion is already an a priori synthetic judgment, i.e., Düsing did not recognize the change of perspective established in the passage from the Analytics to the Dialectics of the practical reason. I disagree also with Henrich (1992, 27), for whom the link between the moral law and highest good (*Endzweck*) is still analytic in the *CPrR* and became synthetic only after the CPJ. In what follows I try to show that this reading is wrong and that already at the *CPrR* the link between these concepts has an aspect that should be interpreted as synthetic, although this synthesis does not have the practical normativity of moral law.

practical reason requires the realization of a moral world, which embraces the satisfaction of the physical needs of sensible beings, which is expressed by the concept of happiness.

The concept of a moral world involves the concept of moral nature, i.e., a nature in which moral law is legislated and where there is an adequate relation between being worthy of happiness (morality) and happiness itself.¹⁰ However, the real possibility of the moral world requires that the individual must act according to the moral law in a *perfect manner* and not just for a few moments and in an imperfect fashion. This leads the reason of finite and sensible beings to postulate the immortality of the soul. The passage from a perfect virtuous life to a condition of fully satisfied physical needs which define the concept of happiness is something that cannot take place accidentally but must presuppose some kind of causality (guided by an evaluation). Therefore, the reason of finite and sensible beings has to postulate the existence of God. Even assuming that individuals are capable of become perfectly virtuous, God could not guarantee happiness to them in this world because this would imply interference by God in the system of nature, which theoretical reason cannot admit. Therefore, from the individual perspective the existence of the highest good can only be expected in an intelligible world. For the human species, however, the possibility of achieving the highest good in this world is not excluded, at least in principle.

In order to avoid misunderstandings it should be noted that the concept of logical possibility could also be understood as *transcendental possibility* because if, on the one hand, it is based on the principle of identity, on the other, moral law, whence that possibility is analytically derived, has already been established *a priori* and has a practical content (as an *a priori* synthetic-practical proposition). In turn, what is called *real possibility* could also be understood as a *practical possibility* in so far as it also takes into account what needs to exist in order that our actions might be complemented in their effects.¹¹

¹⁰ Regarding the relation between the moral law with happiness see: “Certainly, our well-being and woe count for a very great deal in the appraisal of our practical reason and, as far as our nature as sensible beings is concerned, all that counts is our happiness if this is appraised, as reason especially requires, not in terms of transitory feeling but of the influence this contingency has on our whole existence and our satisfaction with it; but happiness is not the only thing that counts. The human being is a being with needs [*bedürftiges Wesen*], insofar as he belongs to the sensible world, and to this extent his reason certainly has a commission from the side of his sensibility which it cannot refuse, to attend to its interest and to form practical maxims with a view to happiness in this life and, where possible, in a future life as well.” (CPrR 5: 61) See also *MM* 6: 388.

¹¹ Kant seems to confirm the use of this terminology in the following passages: “Since it is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can only be found in an *endless progress* toward that complete conformity, and in accordance with principles of pure practical reason it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object [*reale Object*] of our will. (...) Hence the highest good is practically possible only on the presupposition of the immortality of the soul (...)” (CPrR 5: 122); “that those concepts [freedom, immortality of the soul and god], otherwise problematic (merely thinkable) for it, are now declared assertorically to be concepts to which real objects [*wirklich Objecte*] belong, because practical reason unavoidably requires [*unvermeidlich bedarf*] the existence of them for the possibility of its object, the highest

One has to recognize this oscillation in the concepts of possibility in order to make sense of the following passage from the context of the formulation of the antinomy of pure practical reason:

«Now, since the promotion of the highest good, which contains this connection in its concept, is an a priori necessary object of our will and inseparably bound up with the moral law, the impossibility of the first must also prove the falsity of the second. If, therefore, the highest good is impossible in accordance with practical rules, then the moral law, which commands us to promote it, must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false». (*CPrR* 05: 114)

About it we can make the following considerations:

1. This passage is written in the context of the presentation of the antimony of practical reason and it therefore presents this formulation as a problem to be reinterpreted and dissolved in the course of the *Dialectic*;
2. The solution of antinomy has to show precisely that the promotion of the highest good is not impossible under practical rules (in the sense of logical possibility). However, if it were impossible in the logical sense to represent the *promotion* of the highest good, then it would indeed make moral law unrealistic, because this would deny validity to the moral law itself. On the other hand, if this passage referred to the *realization* of the highest good as a condition for moral law, i.e., the *real possibility* of the highest good as a condition for the enforcement of the moral law, then, indeed, it would be putting practical reason in an *insoluble antinomy* because this would deny the autonomy of the will established in *Analytics*. The solution to the antinomy of practical reason might be drawn exactly because the conceptual ambiguity which is present in the sentence “impossible in accordance with practical rules”, namely the distinction between “*logical possibility*” and “*real possibility*” or between “*duty to promote*” and “*a need for realization*”.¹²

good, which is absolutely necessary practically, and theoretical reason is thereby justified in assuming them.” (*CPrR* 5: 134).

¹² This is also pointed out by Guyer (2000, 355ff) and Willaschek (2010, 192). In this sense that I interpret the section *Critical resolution of the antinomy of practical reason*, where we read at the end: “the *highest good* the whole object of pure practical reason, which must necessarily represent it as possible since it commands us to contribute everything possible to its production.” (*CPrR* 5: 119) Now Kant can only be saying in this passage that the moral law ensures the logical possibility of the highest good, or that the moral law denies the impossibility of representing the highest good. But once this is granted (something that follows analytically from the moral law), then practical reason still needs to find elements that guarantee the real possibility or the realization of the highest good. It is in search of this legitimacy that Kant follows his text: “But since the possibility of such a connection of the conditioned with its condition belongs wholly to the supersensible relation of things and cannot be given in accordance with the laws of the sensible world, although the practical results of this idea - namely actions that aim at realizing the highest good - belong to the sensible world, we shall try to set forth the grounds of that possibility, first with respect to what is *immediately* within our power and then, secondly, in that which is not in our power but which reason presents to us, as the supplement to our inability, for the possibility of the highest good” (*CPrR* 5: 119). If this were not different concepts of possibility, it would not be necessary to continue the investigation.

3. The core of the problem lies in the passage between [1] the level of the *duty* to *promotion* to [2] the level of the *need* for *realization*. This synthetic step is taken based on the concept of *need*. The following passage confirms this reading:

«Now, [1] it was a duty for us to promote the highest good; hence there is in us not merely the warrant [2] but also the necessity, as a need [*Bedürfnis*] connected with duty, to presuppose the possibility of this highest good, which, since it is possible only under the condition of the existence of God, connects the presupposition of the existence of God inseparably with duty; that is, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God. It is well to note here that this moral necessity *is subjective*, that is, a need, and not *objective*, that is, itself a duty; for, there can be no duty to assume the existence of anything (since this concerns only the theoretical use of reason). Moreover, it is not to be understood by this that it is necessary to assume the existence of God *as a ground of all obligation in general* (for this rests, as has been sufficiently shown, solely on the autonomy of reason itself). What belongs to duty here is only the striving to produce and promote the highest good in the world, the possibility of which can therefore be postulated, while our reason finds this thinkable only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence». (CPrR 05:125-6, see also 05: 142-3)

The synthetic passage of the moral law to the concept of the highest good does not take place directly by way of the moral law itself, which would be an analytical argumentative move that would have the same theoretical status of law (there would be then a specific duty towards the realization of the highest good), but rests upon a *need of practical reason*.

2. The highest good as object of practical regulative knowledge

But what is exactly this *need* that the pure practical reason has? *First* of all, the need of practical reason regarding the real possibility of the highest good should not be interpreted either as an objective necessity derived from the autonomy of the will and established by the moral law, nor as a purely psychological and/or anthropological need (as defended by Beck (1960, 275)). The need of practical reason rests upon a logical function of reason, which transforms itself into the practical use of reason in a subjective necessity of reason, therefore in a subjectively necessary maxim of reason that leads practical reflection in the search for the totality of the practical conditions for a given practical conditioned. *Secondly*, this definition refers to a characteristic of every rational finite being in having a need for happiness, but not according to an individual selfish desire, i.e., “not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself an end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which regards a person in the world generally as an end in itself.” (CPrR, 228f / 05: 110) It is possible to say that this need is derived from some fundamental aspiration for justice that every rational and good will must have: “an impartial rational spectator can take no delight in seeing the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced with no feature of a pure and good will, so that a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy” (G 04: 393)

Therefore, although the question of the *realization* of the highest good is not an issue that arises immediately and directly from the moral law, it is not grounded in some psychological and anthropological need, but in a *subjective necessary requirement of pure practical reason*. It is on this basis that practical reason has the right to assume for itself theoretical propositions called postulates, which allow it to offer a satisfactory answer to questions that arise naturally from its own activity.

Now, if the question regarding the realization of the highest good is a question that arises inherently out of the activity of reason, then reason must offer an answer to it, because

«all the concepts, indeed all the questions that pure reason lays before us, lie not in experience but themselves in turn only in reason, and they must therefore be able to be solved and their validity or nullity must be able to be comprehended. We are, also, not justified in repudiating these problems under the excuse of our incapacity, as if their solution really lay in the nature of things, and in rejecting further investigation, since reason has given birth to these ideas from its own womb alone, and is therefore liable to give account of either their validity or their dialectical illusion». (*CPR* B791; see also B 505)

The response from theoretical reason could be the absolute negation of the real possibility of the highest good, but that would be an attitude of dogmatic skepticism (see *CPR* B 795) because pure practical reason can offer an answer, which, although it does not rest on objective principles but on a subjective principle. On the one hand, this answer has the virtue of not exceeding the limits established by the *critique* and, on the other hand, it rests on a principle of pure reason. The argument has the following logic:

«If someone cannot prove that a thing is, he can try to prove that it is not. If (as often happens) he cannot succeed in either, he can still ask whether he has any *interest* in assuming one or the other (as an hypothesis), either from a theoretical or from a practical point of view. An assumption is adopted from a theoretical point of view in order merely to explain a certain phenomenon (such as, for astronomers, the retrograde motion and stationary state of the planets). An assumption is adopted from a practical point of view in order to achieve a certain end, which may be either a *pragmatic* (merely technical end) or a *moral* end, that is, an end such that the maxim of adopting it is itself a duty». (*MM* 06:354)

This argumentative strategy underlies the whole *Dialectic* of *CPrR*, namely, it shows that there is a *duty* to *promote* the highest good and linked to this duty is the emergence of a practical interest on the side of practical reason for assuming the real possibility of the highest good, therefore a *need* for realization. The following passage shows this argumentative logic:

«If, however, one recalls from the preceding explanation what is required to be assumed in the concept of the highest good, *one will become aware that the assumption of this possibility cannot be commanded, and that no practical disposition requires one to grant*

it but that speculative reason must concede it without being asked, since no one can want to maintain that a worthiness of rational beings in the world to be happy in conformity with the moral law combined with a possession of this happiness proportioned to it is impossible in itself. Now, with respect to the first element of the highest good, namely that which concerns morality, the moral law gives merely a command, and to doubt that possibility of that component would be tantamount to calling in question the moral law itself. But as for what concerns the second part of that object, namely happiness in thorough conformity with that worthiness, there is no need of a command to grant its possibility in general, since theoretical reason has nothing to say against it; but the way in which we are to think such a harmony of the laws of nature with those of freedom has in it something with respect to which we have a choice, since theoretical reason decides nothing with apodictic certainty about it, and with respect to this there can be a moral interest which turns the scale». (CPrR 05: 144f., emphasis added)

The interest in the realization of the highest good could be interpreted as a *theoretical interest* of reason in securing a system of philosophy and uniqueness of pure reason. However, I think it makes more sense to interpret this fundamental interest linked to the realization of the highest good *as a practical interest of reason* and this means that practical reason has also a fundamental interest in ensuring and promoting the “unity of reason” and in establishing a coherent and articulated relationship between freedom and nature. Therefore it is not just a *wish* or a possible representation, but a *choice that is founded in the will* that such a world should exist:

«Assume a human being who honors the moral law, and who allows himself to think (as he can hardly avoid doing) what sort of world he would *create*, were this in his power, under the guidance of practical reason - a world within which, moreover, he would place himself as a member. Now, *not only would he choose a world precisely as the moral idea of the highest good requires, if the choice were entrusted to him alone, but he would also will the very existence of [such] a world*, since the moral law *wills* that the highest good possible through us be actualized, (...). He would thus feel himself compelled by reason to acknowledge this judgment with complete impartiality, as if rendered by somebody else yet at the same time his own, and in this way the human being evinces the need, effected in him by morality, of adding to the thought of his duties a final end as well, as their consequence». (Rel 06: 05f., emphasis added)

The interest *associated with duty* is not a conditional interest as in the case of the theoretical interest of reason (If x, then y).¹³ For, being associated with moral duty, this

¹³ See: “But one can regard the need of reason as twofold: *first* in its *theoretical*, second in its *practical* use. The first need I have just mentioned; but one sees very well that it is only conditioned, i.e. we must assume the existence of God *if we want to judge* about the first causes of everything contingent, chiefly in the order of ends which is actually present in the world. Far more important is the need of reason in its practical use, because it is unconditioned, and we are necessitated to presuppose the existence of God not only if we *want to judge*, but because we *have to judge*. For the pure practical use of reason consists in the precepts of moral laws. They all lead, however, to the idea of the *highest good* possible in the world insofar as it is possible only through *freedom: morality*; from the other side, these precepts lead to what depends not merely on human freedom but also on *nature*, which is the greatest *happiness*, insofar as it is apportioned according to

interest has more theoretical strength to legitimize the reality of the highest good and counterbalance reservations posed by theoretical reason.¹⁴ It is a *subjective*, but *not a contingent need* that sustains the concept of the highest good. Based on practical interest, reason cannot represent to itself the link between freedom and nature through a mechanism of nature. Practical reason needs to think of nature and freedom occurring in a teleological system, whose ends are made possible through the idea of a wise and *moral* author of the world.¹⁵ Therefore, the practical interest of pure practical reason grounds the unity of reason in Kant's philosophy and also establishes a practical teleological thinking about the world and the relation between freedom and nature.

The issue of the realization (real possibility) of the highest good can also be presented in a different formulation: "under what conditions in performing his duty, one can represent the realization of a moral world?" As the realization of the highest good is something that goes beyond the field of action understood in a strict sense - since an appropriate response must presuppose conditions that surpass the field of individual action leading to the postulates of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God - this issue can be translated into a "more intuitive" concept, namely the concept of *hope* [*Hoffnung*]. In this sense, the logical principle "to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions" turns into the practical use of reason in a need for a representation of the real possibility of the highest good, which, in

the first. Now reason *needs* to assume, for the sake of such a *dependent* highest good, a supreme intelligence as the highest *independent* good; not, of course, to derive from this assumption the binding authority of moral precepts or the incentives to observe them (for they would have no moral worth if their motive were derived from anything but the law alone, which is of itself apodictically certain), but rather only in order to give objective reality to the concept of the highest good, i.e. to prevent it, along with morality, from being taken merely as a mere ideal, as it would be if that whose idea inseparably accompanies morality' should not exist anywhere." (OTT 08: 139)

¹⁴ See: "Whether speculative reason, which knows nothing about all that which practical reason offers for its acceptance, must accept these propositions and, although they are transcendent for it, try to unite them, as a foreign possession handed over to it, with its own concepts, or whether it is justified in obstinately following its own separate interest and, in accordance with the canon of Epicurus, rejecting as empty subtle reasoning everything that cannot accredit its objective reality by manifest examples to be shown in experience, however much it might be interwoven with the interest of the practical (pure) use of reason and in itself not contradict the theoretical, merely because it actually infringes upon the interest of speculative reason to the extent that it removes the bounds which the latter has set itself and hands it over to every nonsense or delusion of imagination?" (CPrR 05: 120) "(...) empiricism offers advantages to the speculative interests of reason, which are very attractive and far surpass any that the dogmatic teacher of the ideas of reason might promise. For with empiricism the understanding is at every time on its own proper ground, namely the field solely of possible experiences, whose laws it traces, and by means of which it can endlessly extend its secure and comprehensible cognition." (CPR B 496)

¹⁵ See: "Now a *subjective* condition of reason enters into this, the only way in which it is theoretically possible for it to think the exact harmony of the realm of nature with the realm of morals as the condition of the possibility of the highest good, and at the same time the only way that is conducive to morality (which is subject to an *objective* law of reason). Now, since the promotion of the highest good, and therefore the supposition of its possibility, is *objectively* necessary (though only as a consequence of practical reason), while at the same time the manner, the way in which we would think it as possible rests with our choice, in which a free interest of pure practical reason decides for the assumption of a wise author of the world, it follows that the principle that determines our judgment about it, though it is *subjective* as a need, is yet, as the means of promoting what is *objectively* (practically) necessary, the ground of a maxim of assent for moral purposes, that is, a *pure practical rational belief*." (CPrR 05: 145f)

turn, can be translated into the famous Kantian formulation: “What may I hope?” or “If I do what I should, what may I then hope?” (*CPR* B 833) For this reason Kant extensively uses formulations with the concept of hope in the *Dialectic* of the second *Critique*.¹⁶

In order to understand more clearly the underlying meaning of the question “What may I hope?” and its relation to what is called here a *practical regulative knowledge*, three fundamental aspects of the concept of hope are presented:

First aspect: The subjective practical character of hope. In the third question of pure reason, Kant uses neither the verb “can” [*können*], nor the verb “should” [*sollen*], but instead the verb “may” (*dürfen*). An answer to a question with the verb “can” (*was kann ich hoffen?*) would be an answer that belongs to the field of possible experience and could become possible knowledge. In this case, it would be an empirical question with an equally empirical answer, because that question then refers to all hopes that in fact an individual may have, e.g., becoming rich or finding the love of his life. In this case, all representations of a desired future could be legitimate answers even if highly unlikely, since they were not in contradiction to the laws of nature, otherwise they would be empty desires, such as breaking the laws of gravity and flying without any equipment. On the other hand, a question formulated with the verb “should” [*was soll ich hoffen?*] would be meaningless because it is possible to say what one has to do, but not impose a hope upon anyone: “a belief that is commanded is an absurdity.” (*CPrR* 05: 144)

The verb “may” [*dürfen*] implies a practical condition in the sense that “If I do what I should”, then I have the right to hope. Therefore the individual attains the right to believe only insofar as she/he acts morally. In other words, only the individual who strives to fulfill the moral law can hope that his action will contribute to the realization of the highest good. Hope is conditioned by an individual choice in relation to a moral action and this conditionality brings a kind of subjectivity that does not occur with the other two questions (“What can I know? And what should I do?”). This “subjectivity” is emphasized by Kant when he uses the first person of the speech: “No, the conviction is not *logical* but *moral* certainty, and, since it depends on subjective grounds (of moral disposition) I must not

¹⁶ See “*Holiness* of morals is prescribed to them as a rule even in this life, while the well-being proportioned to it, namely *beatitude*, is represented as attainable only in an eternity; for, the *former* must always be the archetype of their conduct in every state, and progress toward it is already possible and necessary in this life, whereas the *latter*, under the name of happiness, cannot be attained at all in this world (so far as our own capacity is concerned) and is therefore made solely an *object of hope*. (...) Here again, then, everything remains disinterested and grounded only on duty, and there is no need to base it on incentives of fear and *hope*, which if they became principles would destroy the whole moral worth of actions. The moral law commands me to make the highest possible good in a world the final object of all my conduct. But I cannot *hope* to produce this except by the harmony of my will with that of a holy and beneficent author of the world; and although in the concept of the highest good, as that of a whole in which the greatest happiness is represented as connected in the most exact proportion with the greatest degree of moral perfection (possible in creatures), *my own happiness* is included, this is nevertheless not the determining ground of the will that is directed to promote the highest good; it is instead the moral law (which, on the contrary, limits by strict conditions my unbounded craving for happiness) (*CPrR* 05: 129f)”

even say ‘*It is morally certain that there is a God*’ etc., but rather ‘*I am morally certain*’ etc.” (CPR B 857)¹⁷

Second aspect: The apriority of hope. In order that something be considered as a *priori* knowledge, it must satisfy two criteria: it must be universal and it must be necessary. The *universality* of hope relates to its origin. The questions presented in the second section of the *Canon of pure reason* are neither derived from an anthropological analysis of reason, nor are they the result of a generalization made from selfish interests. For Kant, “All interest of my reason (the speculative as well as the practical is united” is addressed to those three questions. Reason should be understood here as *pure reason*. The distinguishing feature of this practical universality is the character of a *disinterested interest*, i.e., it is an interest of practical reason that is restricted neither to the individual itself, nor to any people nor even to the human species, but it is an interest that embraces the totality of moral beings. On the other hand, the necessity is related to the “*unalterability*’ of hope:

«A need of reason to be used in a way which satisfies it *theoretically* would be nothing other than a pure *rational hypothesis*, i.e. an opinion sufficient to hold something true on subjective grounds simply because one can never expect to find grounds other than these on which to *explain certain given effects*, and because reason needs a ground of explanation. By contrast, *rational faith*, which rests on a need of reason's use with a *practical* intent, could be called a *postulate* of reason - not as if it were an insight which did justice to all the logical demands for certainty, but because this holding true (if only the person is morally good) is not inferior* in degree to knowing, even though it is completely different from it in kind. (**To the firmness of belief belongs the consciousness of its unalterability*. Now I can be wholly certain that no one can ever refute the proposition *There is a God*; for where will he get this insight? Thus it is not the same with rational faith as with historical belief (...))» (OTT 8:141, *emphasis added*).

Third aspect: Hope as a theory belonging to practical philosophy. The answer to the third question of reason is “simultaneously practical and theoretical, so that the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, in its highest form, the speculative question.” (CPR B 833) This means that the answer must refer to what “*is*” or “*could be*”, but under the guiding principle of “*duty*”. So, this is a theoretical question arising from a practical point of view or from the practical use of reason. Therefore, this response is not a

¹⁷ See also “*For my own part, I nevertheless put my trust in theory, which proceeds from the principle of right, as to what relations among human beings and states ought to be, and which commends to earthly gods the maxim always so to behave in their conflicts that such a universal state of nations will thereby be ushered in, and so to assume that it is possible (in praxis) and that it can be; but at the same time I put my trust (in subsidium) in the nature of things, which constrains one to go where one does not want to go (fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt)*. In the latter, account is also taken of human nature, in which respect for right and duty is still alive, so that I cannot and will not take it to be so immersed in evil that morally practical reason should not, after many unsuccessful attempts, finally triumph over evil and present human nature as lovable after all. Thus on the cosmopolitan level, too, it can be maintained: What on rational grounds holds for theory also holds for practice.” (OCS 08: 313)

theory based on a theoretical interest of reason and a theory about objects of experience, but a theory about a possible world insofar as we fulfill our duty. In other words, the question of hope embraces theoretical assumptions grounded in a practical need of reason regarding the realization of the highest good.

The third question is not formulated with the verb “to wait for” / “to expect” [*erwarten*], but with the verb “to hope” [*hoffen*]. This is of great relevance, because in the case of “to wait for” / “to expect” [*erwarten*], the question would require a theoretical answer regarding the future and will hold something to be true, which may be tested and would possess at least the theoretical status of *opinion*. This test could be carried out in two ways, on the one hand, by reaching the future state of affairs in question and then confirming its reality or, on the other hand, by evaluating the analysis of empirical data and empirical laws from which one can predict the future, as happens with eclipses. In other words, to *expect* or to *wait for* something means to make a theoretical statement about some future events which are temporally determined and subject to the laws of experience and possible knowledge. Hope, on the other hand, appears as a holding to be true that can neither be confirmed nor theoretically refuted:

«All believing is a holding true which is subjectively sufficient, but *consciously* regarded as objectively insufficient; thus it is contrasted with *knowing*. On the other hand, when something is held true on objective though consciously insufficient grounds, and hence is merely *opinion*, this *opinion* can gradually be supplemented by the same kind of grounds and finally become a *knowing*. By contrast, if the grounds of holding true are of a kind that cannot be objectively valid at all, then the belief can never become a knowing through any use of reason». (OTT 8: 141)

When Kant deals with the theme of hope regarding the point of view of the human species, these aspects become clearer:

«I do not need to prove this presupposition; it is up to its adversary to prove [his] case. (...) It does not matter how many doubts may be raised against *my hopes* from history, which, if they were proved, could move me to desist from a task so apparently futile (...) Empirical arguments against the success of these resolutions, which are taken on *hope*, accomplish nothing here. For, that what has not succeeded up to now will therefore never succeed does not even justify abandoning a pragmatic or technical purpose example, that of flights with aerostatic balloons), still less a moral purpose that, if only it is not demonstratively impossible to effect it, becomes a duty». (OCS 08:309-10, *emphasis added*)

And even if we reach a future that resembles the state of the highest political good such as a state of peace among nations, we will never have a theoretical certainty that the state of war will not return, namely that we have reached the state of perpetual peace, because we are dealing with beings that act freely and therefore no one can guarantee that no *punctum*

flexus cotttrarii will occur.¹⁸ Therefore, on the one hand, according to Kant hope is a certainty that cannot be refuted either by *a priori* arguments or by empirical ones. Moreover, hope is based on a duty to *promote* the highest good, which, in the case of the philosophy of history, is the “duty of every member of the series of generations - to which I (as a human being in general) belong (...) - so to influence posterity that it becomes always better” (OCS 08: 309). For the same reason Kant asserts in *Towards Perpetual Peace* that “nature guarantees perpetual peace through the mechanism of human inclinations itself, with an assurance that is admittedly not adequate for *predicting* its future (theoretically) but that is still enough for practical purposes and makes it a duty to work toward this (not merely chimerical) end.” (TPP/ 08: 368) Or as Kant states in *The conflict of faculties* when he asks about the possibility of a “divinatory historical narrative of things in imminent future time” and he answers that only “if the diviner himself makes and contrives the events which he announces in advance” (CF 7: 79-80), i.e., when will and freedom enter in the picture in order to achieve their ends.

If belief is a “holding to be true” that cannot be proven or ordered, then hope cannot be considered a constitutive knowledge neither for the practical nor for the theoretical use of reason. Moreover, the idea of the highest good cannot be used to find new empirical knowledge as happens with reason regarding the theoretical regulative use of ideas. In other words, the idea of the highest good has a nature that does not allow it to belong to the field of the theoretical use of reason. It is not a “*focus himaginarius*” that serves to obtain for the concepts of understanding “the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension” (CPR B 672). The idea of the highest good cannot be used to increase the theoretical knowledge of the world. Thus, even if the answer to the third question is a theory, it is actually a theory sustained and legitimized for the field of practical philosophy and whose usefulness *firstly* is to answer a natural and intrinsic question of reason which needed to be answered; and *secondly* is to protect practical reason from possible disputes with contrasting and concurrent moral views of the world which pretend also be answers to that question. In order to protect itself from other moral views of the world, practical reason builds and sustains its own moral view of the world. For this reason the narrative of an idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim seeks empirical experiences that may be interpreted as small evidences or signs of progress, that is, practical reason *needs* to build for itself a theory of the world that ensures a moral hope and makes the realization of the

¹⁸ See: “Even if we felt that the human race, considered as a whole, was to be conceived as progressing and proceeding forward for however long a time, still no one can guarantee that now, this very moment, with regard to the physical disposition of our species, the epoch of its decline would not be liable to occur; and inversely, if it is moving backwards, and in an accelerated fall into baseness, a person may not despair even then of encountering a juncture (*punctum flexus cotttrarii*) where the moral predisposition in our race would be able to turn anew toward the better. For we are dealing with beings that act freely, to whom, it is true, what they *ought* to do may be *dictated* in advance, but of whom it may not be *predicted* what they will do: we are dealing with beings who, from the feeling of self-inflicted evil, when things disintegrate altogether, know how to adopt a strengthened motive for making them even better than they were before that state.” (CF 07: 83)

highest good “theoretically palpable”.¹⁹ Then the answer to the question of *hope* is a theory that is sufficient for the scope of practical philosophy, but not enough to become part of theoretical philosophy.

3. Final remark: belief and hope as practical-regulative knowledge

Based on the three characteristics presented above, namely *the subjective practical character of hope, the apriority of hope, and hope as a theory belonging to practical philosophy*, it is possible to say that hope and practical belief constitute a kind of *practical regulative knowledge*. In other words, both hope and practical belief are a kind of “taking something to be true” [*Fürwahrhalten*] that is regulative and practical. The difference between hope and practical belief is that “hope” is used more when Kant is talking from the moral agent’s point of view and “practical belief” is used eminently when he analyses the logical and epistemological character of hope. However, at least once Kant makes use of the terminology of a “practical regulative knowledge” proposed here:

«In general, if, instead of [extending it to] the *constitutive* principles of the cognition of supersensible objects into which we cannot in fact have any insight, *we restricted our judgment to the regulative principles, which content themselves with only their practical use, human wisdom would be better off in a great many respects*, and there would be no breeding of would-be knowledge of something of which we fundamentally know nothing - groundless though indeed for a while glittering sophistry that it is, at the end unmasked as a detriment to morality». (*Rel 06: 71n., emphasis added*)

But then we can raise the question: why did not Kant use this terminology more extensively in his work? One potential answer may be his concern for introducing artificial words into philosophy, especially when the history of natural languages offers an appropriate concept, in this case “hope” and “belief”. This linguistic zeal is exactly what makes him adopt, for example, the concept of “idea” in the first *Critique* (Cf. *CPR B 368-9*) But then we can pose another question: why should we use the concept of a practical-regulative knowledge in Kantian studies if he did not? From the perspective of a systematic study of Kant's work, this concept can be of great value: *firstly*, because it clearly expresses the three main notes of the concept, namely, the apriority, the subjectivity and the practical aspect; *secondly*, because it presents even more clearly how transcendental philosophy is articulated in a system in which the same reason and the same structure have two different domains and uses.

¹⁹ This practical need of reason to find points of support on experience for strengthening its hope can be seen, for example, in the following passages: “Nevertheless, in regard to the most distant epochs that our species is to encounter, *it belongs to human nature not to be indifferent* about them, if only they can be expected with certainty. This can happen all the less especially in our case, where it seems that we could, through our own rational contrivance, bring about faster such a joyful point in time for our posterity. For the sake of that, *even the faint traces of its approach will be very important for us.*” (*IUH 08: 27*); “Thus it can be considered an *expression not unbefitting the moral wishes and hopes of people* (once aware of their inability) to expect the circumstances required for these from *providence*, which will provide an outcome for the end of *humanity* as a whole species, to reach its *final destination* by the free use of its powers as far as they extend (...)”. (*OCS 08: 312*)

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