



University of Tabriz-Iran  
*Philosophical Investigations*  
Vol. 11/ No. 21/ Fall & Winter 2017

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**The Relationship between Two Secular and Theological Interpretations of the Concept of Highest Good in Kant: With respect to the criticism of Andrews Reath's paper "Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant"\***

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**Abstract**

*Discussing two common critiques on theological interpretations of the concept of the highest good in Kant's moral philosophy in his paper, Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant, Reath has invited readers to have a secular interpretation of this concept and pointed out its advantages. In the present paper, we will attempt to provide the main principles of Reath's claims and demonstrate why Kant has stated both of these interpretations in all of his critical works—a subject that has confused Reath. For this purpose, we will indicate that in both of the above interpretations, Kant has offered the concept of the highest good in a historical context, in which the intellectual idea of the highest good as a desired ultimate totality makes the intellect to grow in history and cultivate the talents of human kind through numerous conflicts embedded in nature.*

**Keywords:** history, nature, highest good, happiness, virtue, conflict.

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\* Received date: 2017/03/21

Accepted date: 2017/11/28

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### **Introduction**

In his paper, *Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant*, Andrews Reath has analyzed the concept of *the* highest good in Kant's moral and political philosophy. As he has pointed out, "one measure of the importance of the highest good to Kant is that he takes it up in almost all of his major works" (Reath, p. 595). However, the relation between the constituents of this concept and the totality of Kant's moral philosophy, and what he has stated about culture and politics in his latest works is a controversial question among the scholars and commentators of Kant's moral philosophy—a subject to which Reath's paper has been dedicated.

Reath seeks to describe the foundations and reasons of proposing two secular (political) and theological interpretations. Moreover, he shows the incompatibility of theological interpretations of the concept of the highest good with regard to the whole claims of this philosopher in the framework of moral philosophy and its difficulties. As was claimed by Reath, these difficulties were addressed by Kant in his latest works. Furthermore, Reath has passed such difficulties through providing a secular narrative of this concept.

According to Reath, two issues in Kant's point of view caused the commentators and followers of theological narrative of the concept of the highest good to encounter some problems: firstly, Kant has introduced the highest good as the ultimate goal of the moral law as well as a path along which the moral behavior should be promoted, a purpose through which the highest good has been imagined as a world in which the happiness—as a function of virtue—is mainly connected with virtue. Secondly, this connection is necessary. Thus, the highest good can only be achieved in another world and with the help of God. For him, according to the first issue, the highest good has been introduced along the moral good and the goals corresponding to moral free behaviors or the moral freedom. Therefore, on the one hand, the highest good is primarily oriented to virtue in spite of enjoying the two components of happiness and virtue. Indeed, this does not mean that these two components are independent of each other and exist in proportion to each other at the later stage. On the other hand, based on the second issue, not only was a limited role assigned to the human subject concerning the achievement of happiness, but also God has acted instead of human being in order to regulate and connect happiness and virtue, and regulate everything in anticipation (ibid, p.608-609). Therefore, the realization of the highest good in theological interpretation necessitates "heteronomy" that contradicts the principles of Kant's moral philosophy. Also, the principle of the realization of the highest good only in another world is contradictory to the growth of the moral behavior in this world as well as the observation of its social and tangible results.

Due to both of the above-mentioned reasons, Reath supported his claims utilizing the criticism of some of Kant's exponents including White who claimed that the real duty of moving toward the highest good should be set aside as it is detrimental to the moral law and is in contrast to Kant's view.

For White Beck, the highest good is not of practical importance “because there is nothing that an individual can do to promote such an end beyond acting from the Moral law. The supposed duty to promote the Highest Good adds nothing to the duties that we already have, and thus is not a real duty” (Reath, p. 609 & Beck, commentary, pp. 224-5).

For Reath, in contrast to the proponents ignoring the problems of the theory of the highest good and in line with exponents and critics of Kant’s moral philosophy, the entire theological interpretation should be dismissed in order to save Kant’s morality from the above-mentioned results and consequences. therefore, on the one hand, it should be indicated that: 1) It is not necessary to interpret the highest good as a theological concept; 2) According to the first point, the proportionality of the happiness and virtue is not necessary for this theory. On the other hand, it should be shown that 3) We can speak of the highest good as an end that is achieved by the human subject; and finally, 4) According to the third point, the agent of the combination of virtue and happiness is human being and not God (ibid, p.594). Based on all of these four points, Reath claims that in contrast to the theological interpretation of this concept, its secular interpretation is the only natural result of Moral law, and consequently it can be introduced as Kant's original viewpoint.

In order to explain the consistency of Kant's universal view on the highest good in all of his works, it is necessary to explain the human practical effort for achieving freedom and rationality in the domain of will and contrivance of nature after a brief introduction to Reath’s reductionist claim. In our view, it is only in the light of this explanation that the concept of "future" obtains its position in Kant's whole practical and teleological philosophy. Consequently, based on the concept of future, we can clarify the relation between human agency in improving his individual and social conditions in this world and the realization of the highest good in another world.

#### **Reviewing Reath’s views**

In Reath’s opinion, the common denominator of all of Kant’s interpretations and claims on the highest good is realizing “the complete moral world” in which the events happen in accordance with the moral laws and the moral behaviors are successful in obtaining their ends. In the second chapter of “analytics” section of *Critique of Practical Reason*, with introduction of «good» as “the object of pure practical reason”, viz “the effect that is possible through freedom” (CPrR 57/59), Kant has introduced the highest good along the moral good. Here, the object of pure practical reason results from the moral use of freedom and it is a moral good, because such an object (end) has been willed in accordance with the categorical imperative and it is an object of the individual’s moral intention.

In addition to the above case, in "dialectic" section of second *critique*, the concept of highest good has also been proposed clearly on the basis of the concept of good. Indeed, the highest good has been expounded in the first presentation as "*the unconditioned totality of the object of pure reason*"

and as Reath says “the unconditioned totality of the moral law”. This unconditional totality has been explained as follows: “Where the good, as object of pure practical reason, refers to an end that could result from the moral use of freedom, the unconditioned object, or Highest Good, would be just that – the *highest* good that could result from the moral use of freedom” (Reath, p.597). In other words, this unconditioned totality is a complete collection of the ends obtained from the moral behavior. Thus, this systematic unity that has been introduced as the highest good results from reason's further activity on moral behavior ends and in this sense, the highest good is the extension of moral good and the tendency of moral behavior to the ends.

For Reath, what Kant has expressed so far, is a general description or theoretical definition of the highest good, but he has not offered a definition in proportion to our reasonable behavior maxims, namely in framework of a practical definition. Therefore, so far, he has not spoken of the content of the highest good, namely the virtue and happiness and their necessary connection. He states that, firstly, Kant in a two-stage method has introduced the concept of the highest good theoretically and solely through reflecting on the content of the first idea, i.e. the content of the unconditioned idea of the moral law; then, he has expounded it practically and concretely based on happiness and virtue and their accompaniment. As Reath has stated, these two stages are in line with what Kant has expressed formerly about the highest good in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. The highest good has been described there as "moral world" - i.e. an ideal of a world in which all individuals act based on the moral law and the happiness of all individuals is obtained as the result of the virtue of all those persons who enjoy the system of moral principles – and a world whose content is based on the combination of happiness and virtue (ibid, p.599).

Based on this structure, Reath maintains that the highest good also like other foundations of moral theory should be considered as a human product:

*“What I have tried to establish so far is that attention to how the Highest Good is introduced in the second Critique (and elsewhere) shows that it is an end to be constructed out of the Moral law. This implies, first, that it should initially be conceived as a state of affairs that could result from human agency. Here we should consider my earlier point about Kant's concept of the good. If the good refers to possible human ends, the same condition should apply to the Highest Good as well. Second, the procedure by which Kant defines the Highest Good indicates that a description of its content should be derived from the content of the Moral law, and should involve some ordering of the ends that figure in Kant's conception of moral conduct. Thus, a conception of the Highest Good whose content cannot be traced to the Moral law is not a proper description of the Highest Good”* (ibid, p.599).

For Reath, what has made the theological interpretation of the concept of the highest good – mainly in the first and second critiques – an improper and false description of this concept is the "role of God" and "life after

death". The highest good, according to these two components, is a state of affair that is realized only in another world and thanks to the activity of God. According to this conception, the moral author of the world, i.e. one who regulates the laws of history in certain manner, makes possible the realization of highest good in other world, namely after death (ibid, p.601). Very this claim negates our ability to realize the highest good in this world and consequently realize the moral ends. In other words, in accordance with the theological interpretation, "moral law generates a duty to promote the Highest Good. But as far as we can see, events in this world do not support the possibility of its second component, and we have no reason to expect that happiness will ever exist in proportion to virtue (Cf. *KpV* 129f/124). But, as it remains rational for us to act on this duty, we postulate the existence of God, who establishes a necessary connection between virtue and the proportionate amount of happiness, thus guaranteeing the possibility of the second component in another world. In short, our inability to imagine the Highest Good occurring in this world leads us to posit its possibility in another world. The theological conception supports this possibility by assuming the existence of another world in which a system for distributing happiness in proportion to virtue is already in place. All individuals who develop a good will (in this life) will eventually enjoy happiness as well, as a result of the laws of that world. It will be in this world that the Highest Good is realized, and primarily through the activity of God" (Reath, p.607).

Based on the unacceptable conclusion of this interpretation, that is, "the heteronomy, as a result of the negation of the fundamental principles of Kant's moral philosophy, and on the basis of Kant's other statements that confirm the secular interpretation of the concept of the highest good, Reath has regarded Kant's claims in this respect vague and lacking frankness. He has stated the ambiguity that as he said is seen in his latest works as follows:

*"In fact there are indications of both versions in nearly every text in which this subject is taken up. Even in the later works which emphasize the secular version, the theological version is mentioned at certain points, even if obliquely. In addition, the earlier discussions contain elements that require a secular interpretation. Kant does not seem to have gotten completely clear about, or to have fully resolved, the ambiguities in his thought. If he was aware of these two strains, he must have thought that they converged. But this does not appear to be so"* (ibid, p.607).

After referring to the existing conflicts in the theological interpretations of the concept of the highest good, Reath's innovative thesis in this paper is that in a secular interpretation of Kant's moral theory we can offer the proportion of happiness and virtue as the condition of realization of the highest good. According to him:

*"One could construct the idea of a historical state of affairs in which social institutions were arranged to promote happiness in proportion to virtue. Its practicality aside, if this state of affairs were ever realized, the individuals of a particular era would enjoy happiness in proportion to virtue due to the arrangement of existing social*

*institutions. This system of institutions might serve as a social ideal which individuals in the present sought to promote as the final end of moral conduct” (Ibid).*

In this phrase, Reath refers to the state of affair of the concrete that is different from the state of affair of theological interpretation - as a situation in which all individuals participate together and in a completely rational way and of course thanks to God. He believes that the state of affair of theological interpretation implies another world; whereas the state of affair of secular interpretation implies the participation of individuals in the particular historical period and does not involve all humans in the form of civil participations; an ideal that according to Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* is possible in this world and through freedom (CJ 118/450). In *Religion within the Limits of a Pure Reason* as an inevitable result, the maxims that have been laid down with the formal condition of laying down the moral duties have been described (Rel, 4/5).

Based on this differentiation, Reath has released the principle of the proportion of virtue and happiness from the theological interpretation of the concept of the highest good and provided a different interpretation of it. He argued that as opposed to the theological interpretation, which determines the individual's happiness based on the level of his/her virtue and ethical characteristic and thus explains the proportion of two foundations of highest good, secular interpretation mainly speaks of the independence of ends of these two moral and natural interests as well as the harmony of these two interest rather than the essential connection between virtue and happiness:

*“On Kant's moral view, human beings are moved by two kinds of interests, moral and natural, which can be combined into a single scheme by giving priority to the moral. The result is a scheme of conduct in which people pursue two kinds of ends. The first will be ends required or prescribed by the Moral law, including the individual's own moral perfection; and the second will be their own happiness, limited by considerations of duty. This is a scheme of moral conduct in that it is shaped by an ordering that comes from the Moral law and is regulated at the highest level by moral principles. But natural interests and ends will have a role in such a scheme when properly subordinated to moral considerations” (Reath, p.605-606).*

According to the above-mentioned expressions, Reath has considered the harmony of happiness and virtue and consequently the realization of the highest good in the form of civil institutions. He also viewed social participations in the form of the harmony of ends of two kinds of moral behavior. In his view, if in selecting the ends oriented to happiness – that are independent from the ends oriented to virtue – we consider virtue and in other words, if we consider the moral virtue, then there would be no conflict between happiness and virtue and these two can achieve their desired ends without conflict (ibid, p.612). In this case, the highest good is the idea of "unconditioned object of moral law"-in other words, the totality or a complete collection of ends that can be embodied in moral behavior. As Reath indicates, Kant has described the collection of these ends realizable in

this world under the phrases such as "the Kingdom of God on Earth", "Reasonable Church" and "Ethical Commonwealth" (ibid, p.606).

A considerable point in Reath's interpretation is that Kant has gradually shifted his position from the theological interpretation towards a secular one in his explanation of the concept of the highest good:

*"The Ethical Commonwealth seems to represent a significant development in Kant's thought, which, when taken with other texts, suggests that he is moving towards the adoption of a secular conception"* (ibid, pp.606-607).

Indeed, Reath has pointed out that the understanding of Kant's movement towards a secular interpretation is not so simple, because he referred to the theological interpretations even in his last writings. He has considered this as a witness to the lack of Kant's seriousness in resolving the ambiguities of his thought or maybe his unawareness of this conflict (*ibid*).

Unlike Reath, we believe that until the end of his life Kant was faithful to the theological interpretation of the highest good and always regulated the secular interpretation of this concept in proportion to it. To demonstrate to what sense the secular interpretation of the highest good implicates a theological conception, and vice versa, we do not need to give up the theological concept to maintain the secular concept of the highest good. Thus, let us propose this discussion in context of the evolution of the human kind, the contrivance of nature, and the mission of education.

#### **Contrivance of nature and the growth of reason in history**

For Kant, "nature" or "Providence"(TP, 8:361-8:362) achieves its most superior end that is "the sovereignty of reason on the world and its domination on nature" through the human. It is noteworthy that the unity of the ultimate end of nature and the human ultimate end, i.e. the highest good, the freedom, or pure rationality as both a natural affair and a cultural one, is achieved only in the last step of evolutionary path of humankind and nature. Before that, humans lived in the context of conflicts either individually or in a group. These conflicts emerge not only in the disagreements among theoretical ideas, but also in the contrast between intellect and nature, namely culture and nature so that each of them seeks to become the agent and dominates others. This conflict, however, is the very contrivance of nature, because nature is greatly cultivated through these conflicts during the history of human cultivation. In other words, the conflict existing in the human being that is called by Kant as "asocial socialization" provides the possibility of the cultivation of human talents as well as the realization of God's providence in actualizing a law-governed community, which enjoys the unity.

"The means which Nature employs to bring about the development of all the tendencies she has laid in Man is the antagonism of these tendencies in the social state- no farther, however, than to that point at which this antagonism becomes the cause of social arrangements founded in law. By antagonism of this kind I mean the unsocial sociality of man,—that is, a tendency to enter the social state, combined with a perpetual resistance to

that tendency which is continually threatening to dissolve it... all the admirable tendencies in man's nature would remain forever undeveloped, [if did not exist nature]. Man, for his own sake as an individual, wishes for concord; but Nature knows better what is good for Man as a species; and she ordains discord. He would live in ease and passive content: but Nature wills that he shall precipitate himself out of this luxury of indolence into labors and hardships, in order that he may devise remedies against them, and thus raise himself above them by an intellectual conquest, not sink below them by an unambitious evasion" (*IDEA*, fp.4).

For Kant, the conflict between intellect and the things such as emotion, passions, desires and pleasures appears at a superior level in the form of a conflict between virtue and happiness. In this framework, the conflict between this two will be preserved as the contrivance of nature in achieving its ends and goals, as long as it does not reach the end of the path, that is, the ultimate end (the ultimate reason). In other words, it is only at the end of the path that conflicts reach the unity, and the conflict between virtue and happiness turns into their unity. With regard to the degree of intellectual growth of societies and the progress of intellect, such unity is an intellectual idea whose achievement is conceivable only for humankind, and not for individuals:

*"In Man, as the sole rational creature upon earth, those tendencies which have the use of his reason for their object are destined to obtain their perfect development in the species only, and not in the individual" (IDEA, fp.2).*

Kant associates such a philosophical awareness of the contrivance of nature and the ultimate end, which should be achieved by humankind in order to regulate his current movement, with the nature and mission of the Education and especially with the mission of universities.

### **The mission of education and university**

The nature can flourish its talents through human beings in order to gradually approach its desired ultimate end so that it needs humankind. Moreover, each human generation needs the experiences of the previous generations and their accumulation in order to approach the ideal, freedom, rationality, and the highest good and take steps ahead of the previous generations (*IDEA*, fp.3). Therefore, based on a posteriori approach that benefits from the experiences of the previous generations, but is oriented to the moral ultimate end and is in line with the general end of nature to which *a priori* program is assigned, the educational system tries to portray the future perspective of humankind through the teaching of the skill and citizenship. In agreement with such a perspective, the moral training is explained as the third component of the mission of university. In line with the above-mentioned triple missions, the Education introduces the status of «work» as the mechanism of conscious utilization of conflicts that the nature puts in human existence for achieving more perfection through work (*IDEA*, fp. 9). Indeed, according to Kant, only in this way, the educational system can be tailored to the natural transition from the animal predisposition to

technical and pragmatic one and eventually to the moral situation, and is settled in the path of rational excellence (AN277/143&ED, ch.1, n.3).

Kant also asks for the superiority of the faculty of philosophy over two faculties of theology and medicine so that the soul of philosophy, which is modern enlightening criticism, governs the totality of university. He believes that it is only through this superiority that university as the master-mind of country, nation, and society can make students and employees as well as society, government, and companions of religion think of their mission for entering the new era of human rationality, freedom, and development. According to Kant, determining the historical position of nations and their duties for moving in their obligatory path is an important subject that can lead the faculty of philosophy to superiority, only when the determined position and mission is recognized by government (CF, p. 43-45).

Thus, with respect to the ultimate end or the morality and discipline culture, and the achievement of the idea of unity and pure practical rationality, the Ministry of Education seeks to straighten the twisted wood of humankind. To realize this point, which is only conceivable for humankind and has no clear end, continuous experiences of previous and current generations, the initiatives of scientists of our time in enjoying the previous experiences and establishing society and constitution based on subjectivism, a level of national and regional security and peace is required:

*“Out of wood so crooked and perverse as that which man is made of, nothing absolutely straight can ever be wrought. An approximation to this idea is therefore all which Nature enjoins us. That it is also the last of all problems to which the human species addresses itself is clear from this,—that it presupposes just notions of the nature of a good constitution, great experience, and above all a will favorably disposed to the adoption of such a constitution: three elements that can hardly, and not until after many fruitless trials, be expected to concur” (IDEA, fp. 6).*

All these requirements are the formal conditions that under "the culture of skill" allow us to move towards a culture of discipline and the idea of the highest good.

#### **The culture of skill and the culture of discipline**

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant has explained this departure from the natural and primary state to the cultural, civilized and moral one as the differentiation of happiness (the desired natural state) from the culture and the explanation of the achievement of "culture of discipline" through "the culture of skill" (kant,CJ, 83/ 408&Allison, Kant's theory of taste, pp.210-11). In this book, human is introduced as the end of the world from two perspectives; based on the first perspective, the individuals' fortune, whether physical or social, make them deserve the title of prosperous or happy. According to the second perspective, nature itself provides the necessary context for human growth through embedding the multiple talents, defining various conflicts inside and outside the individual, or bringing other creatures at human's services. The human can utilize the alignment of nature

with his natural and rational desires in line with the growth of his rational and developmental talents. And he can manifest this attitude and informed utilization of the alignment of nature with his ultimate desires in “culture of skill” or the formation of civil institutions.

For Kant, the culture of skill is the formal condition of superior stage of culture, namely the culture of discipline or the freedom, practical rationality and the highest good. The culture of skill is the formal condition for the realization of the culture of discipline, because the culture of discipline or the idea of the highest good whose realization requires the total cultivation of rational and moral talents cannot be presented without the culture of skill, i.e. the concrete and objective conditions and without the preparation of the social precepts.

“The formal condition under which alone nature can attain its final aim is that constitution in the relations of human beings with one another in which the abuse of reciprocally conflicting freedom is opposed by lawful power in a whole, which is called civil society; *a* for only in this can the greatest development of the natural predispositions occur” (CJ,5:432).

Through these two categories, namely the culture of skill and the culture of discipline, Kant has expounded human rational capabilities for taking advantage of conflicts and other equipment and mechanisms that nature has placed at the disposal of the humankind so that he achieves growth and development and consequently makes the nature achieve its original demand and end.

In Kant's view, in the form of the culture of skill and the civil participations will be provided the possibility of alignment of two components of happiness and virtue is provided in this world through the formation of "civil society" and "perpetual peace" focusing on cosmopolitanism that is essential to the survival of such a society:

*“For this, however, even if humans were clever enough to discover it and wise enough to subject themselves willingly to its coercion, a cosmopolitan whole, i.e., a system of all states that are at risk of detrimentally affecting each other, is required. In its absence, and given the obstacles that ambition, love of power, and greed, especially on the part of those who are in power, oppose to even the possibility of such a design, war (partly of the kind in which states split apart and divide themselves into smaller ones, partly of the kind in which smaller ones unite with each other and strive to form a larger whole) is inevitable”* (CJ, 5:432).

So the highest good in the sense of the culture of discipline and as an intellectual idea is possible only through the culture of skill and the formation of civil society. Therefore, even though the ultimate destination of the evolution of humankind, and not of individuals or groups, is the culture of discipline through which the conflicts existing in the human, nature, and society come to an end, the "idea of unity" is realized, the humankind achieves the holiness, and absolute and unconditioned freedom, and each conflict, including the conflict between happiness and virtue is ended, but a level of this desirability addressing the unity in this world is possible for

individuals, nations, and states only through the participation in the public system and civil society, namely through the culture of skill as a formal condition of realization of the culture of discipline, and in other words, it is possible by passing from the pragmatic predisposition. Accordingly, in very pragmatic predisposition the human beings are civilized through the culture, namely science and art, foster their social capacities such as good manners and good relations, and prepare the civil structures containing the rationality oriented to "moral altruism", which enjoys a level of unity and social socialization (AN, 277).

In all of these historical and intellectual progresses- of course, compared to what the humanity should traverse, it is a short juncture - a social socialization or the opposition between the reason and the desires represents some more advanced civil dimensions; these appearances indicate a moderation and reconciliation between two aforementioned opposed aspects.

**The idea of the highest good as a principle of guiding the history**

On the one hand, the ultimate reconciliation of virtue (reason) and happiness (desire), and the end of the conflict is achieved only at the level of the moral predisposition, the culture of discipline, and the highest good as an intellectual idea and consequently as an ideal for humankind (LE,ch.2); an ideal whose realization requires historically passing many passive periods and the development of rationality oriented to the future (ibid,ch.10, n. 4); on the other hand, the realization of this ideal as a supra-sensible and a reasonable idea is conceivable only for the humankind, although we do not know when and how this is realized or whether it will happen historically at all due to its reasonability. Therefore, Kant has extended the lack of time sufficiency to another world postulate and a God, who is guarantor of its realization in the world. In fact, the intellectual idea of highest good is an idea that is posed by the reason as a guiding principle. Consequently, depending on the inherent tendency and thirst of reason, we should not believe in a specific extension or historical and concrete objectivity for it. Kant believes that the movement toward the Holiness as a reasonable idea and desired idea is the virtue, without being assured of the achievement of the ultimate situation:

*“This holiness of will is nonetheless a practical idea that must necessarily serve as an archetype, which to approach ad infinitum is alone incumbent upon all finite rational beings; and the pure moral law, which is itself called holy because of this, constantly and rightly holds this idea before their eyes. Being sure of this progression ad infinitum of one's maxims and sure of their immutability in [this] constant advance, i.e., virtue, is the highest [result] that finite practical reason can bring about. Virtue itself, in turn, at least as a naturally acquired power, can never be complete, because the assurance in such a case never becomes apodeictic certainty and, as persuasion, is very dangerous” (CPrR, 33).*

Thus, the achievement of the ultimate end of development of humankind is imagined at the end of the path and this made humankind move throughout the history. This historical movement toward development, freedom, and pure rationality is the providence and the contrivance of nature. In this sense, it is God who makes the full realization of the humankind as the highest good, freedom, and ultimate happiness as a logical idea in another world possible. Also, this is God who provides the requirements for passing from the animal predisposition to moral one through the canal of two technical and pragmatic predispositions for humans and by humans through granting various talents, conflicts, and service system among creatures (*REL*, 60& *AN*, 277). Therefore, apart from this point that whether the rational idea of the highest good is absolutely realized for the human or not, this idea and its final causality has stimulated the passion of its establishment as holiness, pure rationality, and freedom, and has provided causes to cultivate the societies and develop the cultures and civilizations.

Thus, the theological interpretation of the highest good or the intellectual idea of the highest good imagines a condition in which the conflicts come to an end and the idea of the unity is achieved, but this rational imagination as the ultimate cause organizes the conflict between happiness and virtue, culture and nature, and the dialectical contradiction existing in human asocial socialization for the purpose of more unity, because these conflicts installed by nature or God's Providence lead the humankind to form stronger civil institutions and wider social participations, develop field of citizenship, strengthen the regional and global peace foundations, and achieve an overall and global civil law. These conflicts also cause us to promote our existential situation and transfer from the natural and primary state to cultural one in which more opportunities for the alignment between virtue and happiness in this world is tangible (the secular concept of the highest good).

“[Thus] to this second requisite for culture a purposive effort at an education to make us receptive to higher ends than nature itself can afford” (*CJ*, 5:433).

### **Accompanying the theological concept and secular concept of the highest good**

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant has defined the highest good as a most superior good that “is practical for us, i.e., to be made actual through our will” (*CPrR*, 113). This definition and the other expressions of Kant indicating that we are obligated to follow up the highest good, or that if it is not possible to realize the highest good, the theory of ethics will be meaningless, and etc., shows a path and a destination to which the individuals and humankind should pay attention and use the inner capabilities, alignments, and outer supports to reach it. In other words, we should regulate our life with the aim of achieving the idea of the highest good; even though achieving this destination that is merely a rational idea, is not possible for an individual and a nation in this world. However, adjusting the path of life and general movement of societies toward "the future" and

the mere rationality can result markedly in the formation of modern societies, social participations, national and international civil institutions, and the relative realization of peace in general and worldly happiness. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant has expressed this theme as follows:

*“the possibility of such a linkage of the conditioned with its condition belongs entirely to the suprasensible relation of things and cannot be given at all according to the laws of the world of sense, although the practical consequence of this idea, viz., the actions that aim at making the highest good actual, do belong to the world of sense”.*(CPrR, 119).

Kant's emphasis that achieving the ultimate end of man and nature in the indefinite future and after repeated unsuccessful efforts and ongoing work for flourishing up the talents and capabilities of humankind will relatively be realized contains a fine point that can sufficiently respond Reath's criticism based on the non-affinity of theological conception of the highest good with the secular and social conceptions of this concept. In Kant's opinion, the highest good as the final point in the history of evolution of human intellect and talents and also as the ultimate end of nature is a rational idea; as an ideal and a pattern and as a Holy end, it attracts the attention of mankind to itself and through the final causality attracts mankind towards itself. This ideal end that is in one respect the human perfected practical reason and in another respect is the divinity, has been presented in the total history – from the beginning till now and even in the future – and causes us to promote cultures and civilizations. Beside this important role, the God Himself has procured the possibility of the growth for humankind in the form of the Holy providence through nature. He has made nature purposeful and given it an awareness for serving humans and providing the elementariness. Therefore, God both as an efficient cause in designing the purposeful nature and as a final cause in the form of highest good that is a total rationality, causes the evolutionary movement of the humankind throughout history.

In this sense, what the human being has offered in the form of cultures and civilizations throughout history, is based thoroughly on the conscious use of the capabilities and the possibility that nature and God's providence have offered in the form of capabilities, possibilities, and conflicts so that he can use them on his benefit and with the formation of comprehensive civil institutions make the realization of the culture of skill and living coupled with the moral virtues in a society of peace and security possible and benefit from strife and war and sectional peace in favor of growth of reason and stable peace as the highest political good (*IDEA*, fp. 4 & *TP*, 8:348-349). In other words, this is God Himself as a practical reason that with designing purposeful nature has created both the conflict between virtue and happiness in this world, and the necessary solution for enjoying such conflict and getting rid of it through their cooperation and alignment in the civil society and commonwealth society. All these valuable human measurements in history have been taken place with the aim of achieving a conflict-free

society and the unity between reason and desire or the unity between virtue and happiness; a motivation always in work.

### **Conclusion**

Nature wants to spread the human wisdom. Hence, in addition to creating conflicts in human existence, it has taken into his service purposefully the external world so that the ideal of humanity can flourish consciously through the above-mentioned conflicts and accompaniment of nature, and human can be objectively and rationally free and complete. Although Kant has considered the realization and clearness of this ideal as intellectual and supersensible, this ultimate idea – that is at the same time the ultimate purpose of nature and the human being – serves to evolve nature and the formation of civil society and the republic system. It also paves the way to the human progress and perfection through the conflicts existing in the human being. In this totality, the conflict between happiness and virtue in human existence is not an unnatural and unnecessary conflict, but a completely fundamental basis for moving towards pure rationality and full freedom or the intelligible idea of the highest good.

In this framework, as long as the individuals, the nations and states do activity in this world, they are permanently in conflict; but exactly the same conflict helps humankind come near the final ideal and the unity free from conflicts step by step. Therefore, this is the humankind that moves toward the idea of unity and the highest good free from conflict. Thus, in the process of the gradual and evolutionary growth of the reason during history, people and the nations in the best conditions under the culture of skill realize the civil institutions in which individuals organize the conflicts in a secular and subjective way for reaching more unity, decrease the friction between virtue and happiness, and provide a tangible level of the highest good in the tangible world.

So, contrary to Reath, we can claim that theological interpretation of the concept of highest good – in which the separation of human practical reason and divine practical reason comes to an end, and the idea of freedom is realized alongside the other intelligible ideas and is actualized with their help – is the ultimate cause of the culture of skill and the secular interpretation of the highest good concept. Therefore, secular and theological interpretations of the highest good are complementary and cannot be proposed independent of one another. On the one hand, the intellectual idea of the highest good in the theological interpretation or the culture of discipline has a positive and ultimate presence throughout history, and plays a role similar to the concrete condition of the culture of skill. On the other hand, the secular and realizable concept of the highest good in the tangible world that is presented in the culture of skill as is the formal condition for the realization of the intellectual idea of the highest good. Therefore, without human civil and cultural activities or the social and political highest good in the secular interpretation, the achievement of the ultimate end is not conceivable. In other words, the intellectual idea of the highest good can be realized through subjective activities. Kant consciously emphasized the agency of human in progressing

the process of rationality. So, considering the interdependence of these two conceptions of the highest good, their explanations are not separate from each other; Kant himself has proposed these two interpretations together in all of his critical works, which also confused Reath.

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