

## A DEDUCTION OF KANT'S CONCEPT OF THE HIGHEST GOOD

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper attempts a deduction of Kant's concept of the highest good: that is, it attempts to prove, in accordance with Dieter Henrich's interpretation of the notion of deduction, that the highest good is an end that is also a duty. It does this by appealing to features of practical reason that make up the legitimating facts that serve as the premises that any deduction must possess. According to Kant, the highest good consists of happiness, virtue, and relations of proportionality and causation between happiness and virtue, such that happiness is proportional to and caused by virtue. I argue, by drawing on accepted Kantian notions, that Kant had compelling reasons for concluding that the highest good is in fact an end that is also a duty. If correct, then this argument provides the deduction promised in my title.

### I. THE NEED FOR A DEDUCTION OF THE CONCEPT OF THE HIGHEST GOOD



In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant asserts that the highest good is “the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law” (*CPrR*, 5:122).<sup>1</sup> That this is true is no more obvious than the assertion that the pure concepts of the understanding necessarily apply to the objects of experience. To make good on this latter claim, the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains extended efforts, in the form of the transcendental deductions of the categories, to demonstrate that these concepts may be employed in an a priori fashion with reference to all possible experience. Furthermore, Kant placed such importance on deducing the categories that he replaced the deduction of the first (A) edition with an entirely new deduction in the second (B) edition. So, clearly,

Kant's earnestness about the need for a transcendental deduction of the categories is fully acted upon. With regard to the highest good, Kant explicitly calls for a deduction that is transcendental in nature: "the deduction of this concept must be transcendental" (*CPrR*, 5:113).<sup>2</sup> Such a demand is to be expected, given the epistemic status and systematic importance that Kant attributes to the concept of the highest good. Yet the deduction that is actually offered in the second *Critique* is likely to disappoint his readers, since it is meager in comparison with the elaborate deductions of the first *Critique*. Kant merely attempts a solution to the antinomy of practical reason that arises from the peculiar features of the concept of the highest good.

According to Kant, the highest good attainable by human beings consists of happiness and virtue related to each other in some appropriate fashion. An analytical relation, he says, is out of the question. Happiness is the satisfaction of our ends, whereas virtue is one way of ordering the maxims that set our ends. Since the satisfaction of our ends and the method by means of which our ends are ordered are two distinct things, Kant concludes that happiness and virtue are "two specifically quite different elements of the highest good" (*CPrR*, 5:112). If the two cannot be related analytically, then they must be combined in the concept of the highest good in a synthetic fashion; and this, he says, is possible only as a relation of ground to consequence, i.e., as a form of causation (*CPrR*, 5:111, 113).

Since only two relata are involved, the possible formulations of their causal relation are two in number, but because neither possibility seems satisfactory, Kant is faced with a dilemma. That is, either happiness is the ground of virtue (in the sense that the desire for happiness is the motive for adopting a virtuous disposition that strives to act exclusively on maxims formulated in accordance with the demands of morality) or virtue is the ground of happiness (in the sense that acting in accordance with a virtuous disposition is the efficient cause of happiness). The former option is impossible, says Kant, and has been proven to be so in the preceding Analytic of the second *Critique*: if the will is determined by considerations of happiness, then its maxims, regardless of their conformity to the demands of morality, cannot be considered virtuous. The latter option also seems impossible, since a virtuous disposition set in the larger context of nature does not necessarily cause actions that produce happiness (*CPrR*, 5:113–114). Given that the only two options seem to be impossible, Kant is confronted with an antinomy requiring resolution.

The solution to this antinomy, which constitutes the only deduction of the highest good explicitly mentioned in Kant's writings, is a metaphysical one: virtue can be the ground of happiness if and only if the world of human action is more than the merely sensible one of the natural sciences. If it is also an intelligible realm in which God mediates between virtue and happiness, then it is possible for virtue to cause happiness. The necessity of pursuing the highest good, whose realization is impossible if the antinomy cannot be solved, obliges us to a belief in God's existence as the condition of the possibility of the

belief that virtue causes happiness. This belief is the first of Kant's postulates of practical reason; the second is a belief in immortality of the soul as the condition of the possibility of virtue.

But why does Kant formulate the antinomy of practical reason in the first place? Even though the highest good is presented as a synthetic a priori consequence of the moral law, it is not simply obvious that it is in fact an end that is also a duty. There is, however, no need to discuss the conditions of the possibility of a seemingly impossible end, unless reasons are given for thinking that it is an end that we are obligated to pursue, and thus that it is one that *must* be possible. At best, the deduction found in the solution to the antinomy tells us what we must postulate *if* we are obligated to pursue the highest good; but that we are in fact obligated to pursue it remains an open question.

Kant's failure to deduce our duty to pursue the highest good is a significant lacuna in his ethics, because the concept of the highest good is the foundation of the moral theology offered in the second *Critique* as the practical substitute for the traditional natural theology that Kant claims to have refuted in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*. Without this deduction, Kant's ethics is necessarily incomplete, and the omission of a deduction helps to explain why the concept of the highest good and the associated postulates of practical reason have never elicited much support from his readers.

In this essay, I construct a deduction of the concept of the highest good that offers a series of arguments for accepting that the highest good is an end that is also a duty. Since Dieter Henrich has greatly clarified Kant's notion of deduction, I follow his interpretation in this essay.<sup>3</sup> According to Henrich, the chief features of a deduction are as follows. First, "A deduction should be brief, solid but not subtle, and perspicuous."<sup>4</sup> That is, it must be free of excessive theorizing that might distract us from the attempt at legitimating a heretofore unsubstantiated claim to a priori knowledge. Second, our right to the proposition in question is explained by tracing it back to some legitimating, original fact. The rightfulness of the proposition is thus said to arise from the legitimacy of the fact from which it descends.<sup>5</sup> Third, "Most of the facts the deductions rely upon are basic operations of our reason."<sup>6</sup> Fourth, the need for a deduction arises from a skeptical challenge to the claim that we are in legitimate possession of the proposition in question.<sup>7</sup> Finally, "The very notion of a deduction is compatible with any kind of argumentation suitable for reaching the goal—namely, the justification of our claims to a priori knowledge."<sup>8</sup> This means, among other things, that the arguments need not be restricted to those that can be formulated in terms of syllogistic proofs.

Thus, given Henrich's account of Kant's deductive program, our right to employ the concept of the highest good must ultimately rest on fundamental features of practical reason. The most obvious of these is the moral law, especially as it appears in imperfectly rational beings such as ourselves in the form of the categorical imperative. I shall also make use of the concept of happiness as the satisfaction of the totality of our ends and the concept of rational agents

as beings that set ends for themselves.<sup>9</sup> These three features of practical reason are readily located in Kant's texts. Consequently, nothing in what follows should surprise anyone committed to a Kantian style of moral reasoning.

Kant routinely states that the concept of the highest good consists of four parts: (1) the happiness of ourselves and others; (2) the virtue of ourselves and others; (3) a relation of proportionality between happiness and virtue, such that those who are happy are so in direct proportion to their virtue; and (4) a causal relation between happiness and virtue, such that virtue causes happiness. The structure of the concept lends itself to three separate discussions, each of which will receive its own section in what follows. Sections 2 and 3 frequently (but not exclusively) employ the first formulation of the categorical imperative, i.e., the formula of universal law, to show that happiness and virtue are ends that are also duties.<sup>10</sup> In section 4, the relations between virtue and happiness will be shown to arise from various considerations about the having and setting of ends in the context of fulfilling the demands that morality places on us. The arguments of sections 2–4 should provide compelling grounds for a deduction of the concept of the highest good that abides by Henrich's conditions.

## II. HAPPINESS AS AN END THAT IS ALSO A DUTY

Kant never worked out a definitive concept of happiness. He did, however, tend to formulate the concept in two distinct ways. In the first formulation (usually, though not exclusively, found in the early Critical writings), Kant defines happiness as the satisfaction of all of our inclinations.<sup>11</sup> In the second formulation (usually, though not exclusively, found in the later Critical writings), Kant defines happiness as the satisfaction of the sum of all of our ends.<sup>12</sup> Of the two, he seems to have settled on the latter, but he employs the former at times because our inclinations provide us in some fashion with many, though not all, of our ends. The latter, however, is preferable to the former because Kant recognizes that not all of our ends are set for us by our inclinations. This recognition is a product of Kant's claim that pure practical reason can guide action independently of our inclinations, and so some of our ends are set for us by reason itself. Moreover, in any case, whether the end in question is a product of inclination or reason, our deepest motive for action should be grounded in rational agency, and so it makes sense for Kant to think of happiness, insofar as it is rationally conceived of and pursued by beings such as ourselves, as the satisfaction of the sum total of the ends that we have set for ourselves.

However Kant may define happiness is not as important for our immediate purposes as his claim that the happiness of ourselves and others is an end that is also a duty. Justifying this assertion is the first step in providing a deduction of the highest good. As an end, happiness is an object that we choose to realize, but it is one that can be realized only through a multitude of actions. Thus happiness as a duty is not a demand to do anything in particular—unlike, say, a duty to keep a promise, which demands that we do exactly what

we promised. Therefore, we must do those things that will lead to happiness, whatever they may be.

As early as the *Groundwork*, Kant says that we have a duty to promote the happiness of others (*G*, 4:441), but the clearest argument for this claim is found in his discussion of the duty of beneficence in *The Doctrine of Virtue*. Since happiness is the satisfaction of all our ends, a duty to realize the happiness of others is a duty to help them satisfy their ends, i.e., to take their ends as our own. In short, we have a duty to act beneficently:

Benevolence is pleasure in the happiness (well-being) of others; beneficence, however, is the maxim of making the happiness of others one's end, and the duty to it is the subject's being necessitated by reason to adopt this maxim as a universal law. (*MM*, 6:452)

To be beneficent, that is, to be helpful in promoting, according to one's ability, the happiness of others in need, without hoping for something in exchange, is everyone's duty.

For every person who finds himself in need wishes to be helped by other people. But if he lets his maxim of being unwilling to provide assistance in turn to others when they are in need become known, that is, makes it a universal permissive law, then, when he himself is in need, everyone would likewise refuse him assistance, or at least would be authorized to refuse it. (*MM*, 6:453)

The duty of beneficence is sometimes understood as if it were derived from an appeal to self-interest: that is, I resolve to act beneficently because I realize that someday I might need the help of those whom I am now helping.<sup>13</sup> While I would like to receive help when I need it, this is not the proper moral reason for my acting beneficently. A maxim of hard-heartedness or indifference towards those in need fails to be universalizable because it would apply to me as well, and since I consider my happiness a legitimate end, I cannot consistently will a maxim whose universalization (in the form of refusing to promote the happiness of all in need) would undermine my ability to attain my ends and thus to be happy.<sup>14</sup>

Kant's point is not that we seek to avoid maxims the universalization of which somehow damages our ability to pursue our self-interest (although they may in fact do so). Instead, his point is that our inability to universalize a maxim of hard-heartedness stems from our refusal to count as a reason for ourselves what we might be tempted to consider a reason for others. With regard to the aforementioned maxim of hard-heartedness, I refuse to acknowledge that the indifference of others is a reason to deny me aid when I need it. But since what counts as a reason for me also counts as a reason for them (in relevantly similar circumstances), I cannot rightly deny them aid when they are in need, despite any inclination that I might have to do so. This form of argument is an instance of what is now known as the contradiction in the will test.<sup>15</sup> We shall see that Kant's claims can frequently be reconstructed in accordance

with this particular test. But we will also see other ways of reconstructing his claims about the various duties involved with the concept of the highest good.

If the above derivation of the duty of beneficence still seems unsatisfactory, we can argue more directly. That is, we have a duty of beneficence because we have a duty to promote and preserve rational agency in general. Failure to act beneficently, when we are able to help someone else in need, is a refusal to recognize the value of the humanity in others. A universalized refusal to assist others is to deny them the status of rational agents that we grant to ourselves. Such a denial is inconsistent with the moral demands that we place on them to assist us in our need, because to make any moral demand on them in the first place is to raise them in our estimation to the level of rational agents, who, simply by virtue of their rationality, are deserving of beneficent treatment.

That Kant believes that we have a duty to help others is obvious, but do we also have a duty to promote our own individual happiness? This duty is said to be a component of the concept of the highest good, in spite of the fact that Kant explicitly *denies* that we can possibly have such a duty:

For *one's own happiness* is an end that all people have (by virtue of the impulses of their nature), but this end can never be regarded as a duty without self-contradiction. What everyone already unavoidably wants of his own accord does not belong under the concept of *duty*; for duty is *necessitation* to an end adopted unwillingly. Thus it is self-contradictory to say: one is *obliged* to promote one's own happiness with all one's powers. (*MM*, 6:386)

To have a duty to do something implies that it is possible for us not to perform those actions that would lead us to realize the end embodied in that duty. But, as Kant says in the above quotation, since we naturally have a desire for happiness, we could never have a duty to promote it.<sup>16</sup> What Kant is saying is clear; nevertheless, we must discount it.

This departure from Kant's text is necessary because he claims that the highest good demands that we act so that a perfect proportion of happiness and virtue be realized in this world. But this claim is never qualified in such a fashion that we are to exclude from the concept of the highest good our own happiness as an end that is also a duty. He merely says that the highest good, i.e., that perfect proportion of happiness and virtue such that the latter causes the former, is an end that is also a duty. In the "Theory and Practice" essay Kant speaks of "universal happiness" as one of the components of the highest good, thereby implying that our own happiness is an end that is also a duty.<sup>17</sup>

Further confirmation of the claim that our own happiness is a duty comes from a passage in the *Groundwork*:

To secure one's own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly), for the lack of satisfaction with one's state, in a crowd of many cares and in the midst of unsatisfied needs, could easily become a great *temptation to the transgression of duty*. (*G*, 4:399)<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty introduced by the word “indirectly” requires some attention, for it is not obvious what an indirect duty, as opposed to a direct one, could be. The proper clarification appears in *The Doctrine of Virtue*:

Misfortunes, pain, and need are great temptations to the transgression of one's duty. Affluence, strength, health, and well-being in general, which stand in opposition to those influences, can thus also, as it seems, be regarded as ends which at the same time are a duty: that is, to promote *one's own* happiness. . . . Seeking affluence for its own sake is not directly a duty, but indirectly it can perhaps be one: that is, one of warding off poverty as a great temptation to vice. But then not my happiness, but rather my morality, the preserving of its integrity, is my end and at the same time my duty. (*MM*, 6:388)

The tendency of the two preceding quotations is clear: for Kant, promoting our own happiness is an indirect duty, because pursuing our own happiness is a necessary means for promoting our ability to do our duty.<sup>19</sup>

These considerations about our own happiness can be summarized as follows. We have ends that we intend to realize through our actions. Among these are our duties. If we are unhappy, we will either be tempted not to fulfill our obligations or be unable to fulfill them, especially those that would not contribute to our happiness. Since we must will the necessary means to our ends, we must will our own happiness. Not to will our own happiness would be to frustrate our ability to fulfill our obligations. That is, we cannot simultaneously will both not to pursue our happiness and to fulfill our duties, for being able to do our duty assumes that on the whole we are happy. (There can, of course, be moments when happiness and duty come into conflict, thereby requiring that we sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter. Kant's point is that we must adopt a general policy of pursuing our own happiness as long as such a policy aids us in doing our duty.) Since happiness is a necessary means to performing our duties, it is an indirect duty, i.e., a duty whose fulfillment is required for the performance of other duties. The means to our obligatory ends are themselves obligatory (as long as there is no equivalent substitute, a point that Kant seems to be assuming in the case of our own happiness), and thus we are obligated to pursue our own happiness.

### III. VIRTUE AS AN END THAT IS ALSO A DUTY

In the second *Critique*, in the context of a discussion of a holy will—that is, a will incapable in principle of adopting any maxims in conflict with the moral law—Kant characterizes virtue as follows:

This holiness of will is nevertheless a practical idea which must necessarily serve as a *model* which all finite, rational creatures can only approach infinitely, and which the pure moral law (which itself for this reason is called holy) constantly and rightly holds before their eyes;

the utmost that finite, practical reason can accomplish is to be sure of the unending progress of its maxims and of the constancy of finite, rational beings in their continual progress, i.e., virtue, which itself in turn, as a naturally acquired capacity, can never be completed. (*CPrR*, 5:32–33)<sup>20</sup>

In short, virtue is progress towards the ability always to do our duty from a sense of duty alone. In *The Doctrine of Virtue* Kant makes clear why virtue is acquired gradually, rather than immediately:

One can also no doubt say: man is obligated to acquire virtue (as moral strength). For although the capacity (*facultas*) of overcoming all opposing sensible impulses can and must be simply *presupposed* on account of his freedom, yet this capacity as *strength* (*robur*) is something which must be acquired, which is done by exalting the moral *motive* (the representation of the law) through contemplation (*contemplatione*) of the dignity of the pure rational law in us, but also at the same time through *practice* (*exercitio*). (*MM*, 6:397)

That we *can* act from the sense of duty alone does not entail that we in fact *do* so. We must acquire the requisite moral knowledge and the ability to resist our impulses before the sense of duty alone can motivate us. We must also develop our willingness to act morally; that is, we must increase our receptivity to the demands of morality.

Before turning to the derivation of this duty, certain questions requiring answers come to mind. Can we have a duty to act from a particular motive? Clearly, we have duties, but ought we to do them from a sense of duty? Why should the motive for performing our duties be of any concern as long as we do our duty? Kant's derivation of the duty to pursue our moral perfection answers these questions.

In *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant repeatedly claims that our own moral perfection is an end that is also a duty. Unfortunately, he gives no clear argument for this claim, but there are signs in the text that an argument in support of his claim can be reconstructed in accordance with the contradiction in the will test. When dealing with our natural perfection, which Kant also claims is an end that is also a duty, he clearly uses this test: because we must pursue ends both moral and non-moral, we must develop the natural abilities that are the means to these ends. Thus our natural perfection is an end that is also a duty (*MM*, 6:391-392).<sup>21</sup>

Since Kant derives the duty of natural perfection by means of the contradiction in the will test, one would expect that he would derive the duty of moral perfection in the same way. Fortunately, he hints at how to do this:

*Virtue* is the strength of man's maxims in fulfilling his duty.—All strength is recognized only through obstacles which it can overcome; in the case of virtue, however, these are natural inclinations which can come in conflict with man's moral intention; and since it is man himself who lays

these obstacles in the way of his maxims, virtue is not merely a self-constraint (for then one natural inclination could endeavor to subdue another), but also a constraint in accordance with a principle of inner freedom, and consequently is a constraint through the mere representation of his duty in accordance with its formal law. (*MM*, 6:394)

This passage can be expanded into an argument based on the contradiction in the will test in the following fashion. As moral beings we have ends that are obligatory, and for which we must will the means necessary to fulfill them. We can pursue these ends by means that are either motivated by our inclinations or by respect for the law. But our inclinations can conflict with our moral intentions, and thus can prevent us from doing our duty. If, however, we developed our capacity for virtuous action, so that respect for the law became our overriding motive, then we could never be led astray by our inclinations, and thus could never fail to be moved to act from respect for the law.

Rational agency demands not only that we will the means to our ends, but also that we will the most effective of these means; if we do otherwise, then we fail to take the demands of rationality as seriously as we could. Given that our inclinations are often at odds with doing our duty, it would be wise to be moved by the thought of morality when pursuing our duties. The most effective means for doing our duty would not be to extirpate our inclinations altogether—this is impossible for sensible beings such as ourselves—but rather to do whatever reason proposes as the proper way to fulfill the inclinations of ourselves and others in a lawful fashion, all the while, perhaps, feeling the influence of our inclinations without recognizing that such influence alone is a sufficient reason to act as we do. That is, we are to act from the moral motive alone, and to do so requires that we become virtuous. If we will not to pursue our virtue, then we will not to develop the most effective means for doing our duty, which would be to will that we sometimes not do our duty (since our inclinations often lead us astray). But since we must always do our duty, we must pursue our virtue. Not to do so would be irrational.

Moreover, cultivating our own virtue as an end in itself (and thus not for the instrumental reasons outlined in the previous paragraph) is an expression of a genuine recognition of the demands of morality. If we never gave any thought to our own virtue, that is, our disposition to act morally, it would be difficult to say in what manner we acknowledged that we had duties in the first place, for pursuing virtue is one way in which we signal our commitment to the moral law. Thus, once again, our moral perfection is an end that is also a duty.

Can we also show that the virtue of others is an end that is also a duty? As was the case with our own happiness, Kant explicitly *denies* that we are obligated to pursue the virtue of others:

It is . . . a contradiction to make another's *perfection* my end and to consider myself obligated to promote it. For the *perfection* of another human being, as a person, consists in just this: that he *himself* is able to

set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty, and it is self-contradictory to require (to make it my duty) that I should do something which no one but he himself can do. (*MM*, 6:386)

While the point of this passage is clear—Kant wants to prove that the virtue of others is not one of our duties—what is not clear is how it fulfills his intention. Kant is relying on a claim made earlier in *The Doctrine of Virtue* to the effect that an end is an object of free choice (*MM*, 6:381, 384–385). From this, he has inferred that I cannot force someone to adopt an end that is supposed to be an object of free choice: if I force him, then the choice is hardly free. At best I can constrain (or perhaps encourage) him to perform those actions that are the means to this end, whether or not he actually adopts it as his own.

Kant's doubts, however, are unnecessary, for we can demonstrate that we have a duty to promote the virtue of others, that is, to make their virtue our end. This claim is similar to the earlier one to the effect that, despite what Kant explicitly says in *The Doctrine of Virtue*, we have a duty to promote our own happiness. We must challenge him once again in this fashion for two reasons. First, like the earlier claim about our own happiness, Kant always says that virtue in general, and thus not only our own, is a component of the highest good. He never says that the highest good is an end that is also a duty requiring of an individual that he pursue both the happiness of others (regardless of their virtue) and his own happiness in proportion to his own virtue. Rather, the concept of the highest good requires that we pursue a world in which the happiness of ourselves and others is in proportion to the virtue of ourselves and others, thereby suggesting that the virtue of others is an end that is also a duty. For once the happiness of others becomes our end, we typically ask whether or not they are worthy of being happy. But since we are obligated to promote their happiness, we must strive to make them worthy of it; otherwise, our actions would provide them with something that they do not deserve. Therefore, we are not only to make ourselves worthy of our own happiness, but we are also to have a hand in making others worthy of theirs. Second, in the Methodology of both the second *Critique* and *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant discusses how to instruct others in ethics, which suggests that the virtue of others can be an end of our own. So, in spite of Kant's explicit denial, his own pronouncements are consistent with the claim that the virtue of others can be an end that is also a duty. The argument for this claim is similar to the ones given earlier: that is, it too relies on the contradiction in the will test. But before turning to this argument, we should first address Kant's claim that the virtue of others cannot be one of our ends.

In the passage quoted two paragraphs above, Kant says that it is self-contradictory to demand of me what only others can do for themselves. This is true enough, but what exactly am I being asked to do in promoting the virtue of others? Certainly, I cannot adopt their ends for them. This is impossible: an end is an object of free choice, and thus must be adopted by the others themselves.

If adopting their ends for them were what would be involved in pursuing the virtue of others, then this would be an impossible demand to make of me, and thus I could never have a duty to pursue the virtue of others. Is there anything that I can do with respect to the virtue of others?

Allen Wood nicely formulates the correct answer to this question: "Now if what I were being expected to do involved adopting his end for him, Kant's argument would be valid, for this only he could do. But this is not what is in question. Rather, what we must decide is whether I can in any way promote his power (*Kraft*) to adopt his ends in accordance with duty."<sup>22</sup> And I *can* promote their ability to act in accordance with the thought of duty by means of the moral education described in the Methodology of the second *Critique* and *The Doctrine of Virtue*. Although others must adopt virtue as an end on their own, I can promote their ability to act morally.

We can derive a duty to promote the virtue of others in the following fashion. As rational agents, we pursue various ends. In order to realize some of them, we require either that we not be interfered with or that we be aided when our own efforts fall short of their intended ends. The most effective way to ensure that we are treated in these two ways is to work for the virtue of others. If others are helped to develop their virtue, then they will be more able to act from the motive of duty alone, and thus will be more likely to do their duty than they otherwise would. For if they were to leave their virtue entirely undeveloped, then they would be motivated by inclination alone. If other rational agents are subject to inclination alone, then they can be easily swayed from their obligations, including the demands to help others and to treat them as ends in themselves, and thus could pursue ends directly in conflict with our own. But since our own happiness and our various duties are unavoidable—that is, we can never rightly give them up for other ends—we must will the means to them. Therefore, in order to make it possible for us to pursue our own ends, we must will the virtue of others, so that our actions and theirs come into the least amount of conflict. Not to will their virtue is not to will the most effective means for realizing our ends.

Furthermore, a sincere commitment to fulfilling the demands of morality takes the form of a commitment to making morality itself the motive of our actions, although we recognize all the while that we can only imperfectly live up to the latter commitment. Never to be motivated by the thought of duty would be an implicit repudiation of any commitment to acting morally, since we would never be moved to incorporate the thought of duty into our maxims. If we never attempted to incorporate the thought of duty into our maxims, how we could then be said to recognize the demands of morality would be entirely mysterious. That is to say, to acknowledge the demands of morality is also to acknowledge a duty regarding virtue, and not just for instrumental reasons, but rather as an expression of full-fledged and genuine concern for morality. Insofar as I resolve to be moral, I have a duty to develop my own virtue (as we saw earlier in this section). Moreover, insofar as I am concerned

that morality should hold sway over us as much as possible (and I must have this concern, given my recognition that morality makes claims on all of us), I must also recognize that others should develop their own virtue. Thus, out of respect for morality, I must make the virtue of others my end, in order to give expression to my concern that the demands of morality be as widely fulfilled as possible.

To make the virtue of others my end is to do what I can to enable them to act virtuously. Kant thinks that we can do this through moral education. He says, for example, that we can tell others stories of honest men and women asked to slander innocent but powerless people, but who refuse to do so in spite of the consequences of their refusal, even if it means their own death (*CPrR*, 5:155–156). This will generate respect for the law as the overriding motive of action in our listeners, who will have learned that it is possible to act contrary to self-interest and in conformity with the demands of morality (*MM*, 6:479–480). We can also directly instruct people in moral philosophy. In the moral catechism of *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant provides the example of a teacher who takes a precocious student through the basics of Kantian moral theory, eliciting from him in Socratic fashion, responses about happiness, virtue, and duty (*MM*, 6:480–482). And, in *On Pedagogy*, Kant explains how to advance the moral education of children who lie: rather than punish them, we should treat them with contempt, for contempt produces shame. Punishment, he argues, will make children act from self-interest, not from a sense of duty (*On Pedagogy*, 9:480–481).

But perhaps the most important feature of moral education, one that Kant does not explicitly stress but which implicitly grounds much of what he writes on the subject, is that people must be taught that they may not exempt themselves from their moral obligations. They must learn that neither self-interested inclinations nor the actions of others who do not fulfill their obligations furnish anyone with license for avoiding or ignoring the demands of morality. Once this knowledge becomes second nature through the process of moral education, people will be much more likely to act from the sense of duty alone, for nothing else will be able to sway them from their duty. They will then truly live up to the demand that they universalize the maxims of their actions, and we will have contributed to their doing so.

#### IV. THE TWO RELATIONS BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND VIRTUE

Kant consistently portrays the concept of the highest good as a synthesis of the concepts of happiness and virtue. The connection between the two is thus not an analytic one.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, that the relations of proportionality and causation are to hold between happiness and virtue—such that our happiness is in strict proportion to and caused by our virtue—cannot be discovered by dissecting the component concepts of the concept of the highest good. Furthermore,

given the a priori status of the concept of the highest good, it is reasonable to assume that Kant intends for the relations between happiness and virtue to be known a priori as well. This fact naturally leads the reader to expect some sort of argument that would justify including these two relations in the concept of the highest good, yet Kant says very little about this issue, once again leaving undisclosed something of vital importance to the doctrine of the highest good. Fortunately, however, in several places, and especially in the *Nachlaß*, Kant offers useful hints about how happiness and virtue might be related. On their basis we can reconstruct an a priori justification for his view that happiness and virtue are related synthetically in the concept of the highest good.

Consider the relation of proportionality. That happiness must be in proportion to virtue could possibly be a consequence of a more general principle of moral desert to the effect that we are deserving of some good solely to the extent that we are virtuous. Nowhere in his published writings does Kant mention such a principle. Perhaps he accepts such a principle because he considers it a part of the ordinary moral consciousness described in the first section of the *Groundwork*. In the opening paragraph of that section, Kant asserts that a rational and impartial spectator takes no delight in the happiness of someone who lacks a good will (*G*, 4:393). One way of understanding this claim is that such a spectator is pained at seeing someone who lacks virtue yet possesses undeserved happiness, and furthermore that such disapproval is the consequence of an implicit commitment to a principle of moral desert.

Kant typically reconstructs notions found in our ordinary moral consciousness into more philosophically adequate ones. The concept of a good will that acts for the sake of duty alone is ultimately transformed into the concept of a will that is capable of acting on a purely formal principle of universal lawfulness, i.e., the categorical imperative (*G*, 4:399–402). No similar sort of reconstruction is offered for the disapproval that the rational and impartial spectator feels at the sight of undeserved happiness. Perhaps Kant thinks that a principle of moral desert is adequate in itself—axiomatic, as it were—and thus requires no reconstruction of the sort employed in the case of the good will. This would explain why he happily uses such a principle without ever trying to justify it.

That Kant, on at least one occasion, seems to have looked at the principle of moral desert in this fashion can be seen in R5477 (most likely from 1776–1778). Here Kant discusses the afterlife in a fashion that presages his later discussions of moral theology: that is, we must assume the existence of another world in order to avoid the *absurdum practicum* of having a duty to strive for virtue (here called *Wohlverhalten*, i.e., “good conduct”), a moral achievement that we can never fully attain in this lifetime. Kant implies that the relation of proportionality (a phrase that he does not explicitly use, but that accurately describes what he says) is *ein Grundsatz der Vernunft*, thereby suggesting that it possesses the status of an underived first principle: “It is a principle of reason that we should not demand to be happy where we are not deserving of it” (18:194). While it is not necessarily the case for Kant that a

principle of reason is an axiom requiring and capable of no further demonstration, this reflexion lends some credence, however minimal, to the claim that he subscribes to a principle of moral desert that accounts for the relation of proportionality in the concept of the highest good.

But are these considerations sufficient to justify including the relation of proportionality in the concept of the highest good? In spite of all that has been said in its favor, including the sheer intuitive obviousness and appeal of the notion of desert, it seems too convenient for Kant to help himself to such a principle. Yet Kant certainly seems to have subscribed to such a principle, as can be reasonably surmised from his frequently characterizing virtue as *worthiness* to be happy. Nonetheless, weightier reasons than the ones offered so far would lessen the discomfort that we feel in attributing such a thing to Kant. Can the relation of happiness to virtue be understood in such a way that we need not appeal to an independent moral principle like that of desert?

In various places in the *Nachlaß* Kant discusses the relationship between happiness and virtue in terms that make it sound as if the two were related analytically. If this were the case, then it would be easy to understand the demand for proportionality between them: where we had one, we would necessarily have the other; and so, of course, the proper proportion between them would hold. But Kant actually has a more complicated relation between happiness and virtue in mind. For example, R6892 (dated 1776–1778) states that if the laws of morality were universally observed, then everyone would be happy to the highest degree (19:195); and in R7196 (most likely from 1780–1789) Kant writes, “Virtue would make us happy if it were universally practiced . . .” (19:270). Statements of this sort culminate in the claim in R7202 (dated 1780–1789) that happiness is “well-ordered freedom” (19:276).

What Kant means by these remarks is debatable, but one reading is especially helpful for our purposes. To be happy, as we have seen, is to attain the totality of our ends, but doing so is always problematic. Various obstacles arise and prevent us from attaining our full measure of happiness. Perhaps the chief obstacle is the one that we pose for ourselves through our failure to order our ends in accordance with the demands of morality, i.e., through our failure to be virtuous. The rational ordering of ends found in the virtuous person provides the best possibility for attaining happiness (or at least as much happiness as one can reasonably expect in the empirical world with all of its perils). The virtuous person will not be at odds with herself, i.e., will not pursue conflicting ends, and thus will be in a better position to maximize the number of ends that she can successfully attain. She will possess well-ordered freedom by being virtuous, and thus her happiness will be more complete and enduring than that of the less virtuous around her.

If her virtue were practiced universally, then everyone else would be in a similar position, and the collective pursuit of happiness in the context of universal virtue would increase individual happiness all the more. That is, even fewer obstacles could arise to thwart our efforts to attain our ends, and thus

our happiness would increase. In other words, happiness would increase in proportion to the practice of virtue. This is not to equate happiness and virtue—that is, the connection between the two is not analytic—for happiness is the attainment of the totality of our ends, while virtue is just one way among many of ordering those ends. Instead, the practice of virtue would bring about the most favorable causal circumstances for the attainment of happiness. As Kant says in R7199 (most likely from 1780–1789), “Morality consists of the laws of the production of true happiness out of freedom in general” (19:273). That is, freedom under laws of our own rationally reflective choosing, i.e., choice conditioned by virtue, offers the best opportunity for the production of happiness, since in these circumstances we pursue our ends in such a fashion that we are more likely to become happy than we would in the absence of the self-imposed ordering afforded by a virtuous disposition.

Yet even the most impeccable among us stumble in the effort to be virtuous; our best attempts often go awry through no fault of our own; nature proves itself indifferent to our ends, moral or otherwise; and the virtuous often go unrewarded. But this is to be expected in the imperfect world that we inhabit. A world perfectly responsive to the demands of morality is at best an Idea of reason, and so we can never expect to live in one in this lifetime. Thus, says Kant in the first *Critique*, we are obligated to assume its future existence in order not to frustrate our hope of acquiring the virtue demanded of us and to make possible the circumstances in which happiness is perfectly proportioned to virtue (A808–813/B836–841). That is, we are obligated to postulate the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

The postulates are irrelevant, however, if Kant cannot first show that we are obligated to pursue the moral world that requires them for its possibility. In what follows it needs to be shown why Kant has reason to believe that happiness and virtue are connected in the concept of the highest good by means of the two relations under discussion in this section. So far I have only shown that Kant might subscribe to a principle of moral desert, and that, given the appropriate empirical circumstances, virtue can be an effective means, perhaps even the most effective one, to the production of happiness. More is required to complete the deduction of the highest good.

The key concept for finishing the deduction is that of rational agents as beings that set ends for themselves. Since we are beings capable of setting ends for ourselves, we adopt and pursue ends of our own making. Furthermore, since, according to Kant, we possess pure practical reason, we find that our ends can be given to us by reason itself (in the sense that respect for the law functions as our deepest, most pressing motive to action), and thus are not the mere products of our inclinations. And insofar as we acknowledge that morality makes legitimate demands on us, we make doing our duty in general our overarching end.

Rational agency demands that we will the most effective means to our ends in general, and doing our duty is no exception to this rule. But in this case, the most effective means turn out to be the dual pursuit of virtue and

happiness. If we sincerely intend to fulfill our duties, then we must both cultivate our capacity to do our duty and remove any obstacles to fulfilling our obligations. We enlarge our ability to fulfill our obligations by developing a virtuous disposition that is increasingly less responsive to the morally distracting blandishments of inclination and more attentive to the demands of morality. Temptations to omit our duties are thereby reduced, and the demands of morality are more easily satisfied. This is even more the case if we pursue happiness, for doing so (as we saw in section 2) removes many obstacles to doing our duty and makes it easier for us to be virtuous.

As the extent of our virtue increases, however, our ends are increasingly adopted and sorted out in accordance with the demands of morality. We thus decrease our chances of running afoul of ourselves and others, thereby producing the optimal circumstances for the maximal attainment of our ends. But this is to produce the optimal conditions for attaining happiness, since Kant understands happiness as the satisfaction of the totality of our ends. In other words, happiness tends to come into existence in proportion to the extent of virtue.

The virtue and happiness in question here are not limited to some particular individual, but rather become everyone's possession. Sincerely adopting the duty to promote our own and other people's virtue is to enable not only ourselves, but others to attain happiness as well. Universally pursuing virtue in accordance with the demands of morality is thus to arrange the world in the most favorable way for the production of happiness. In such circumstances virtue may be said to cause happiness. But virtue does not directly cause happiness in the way that, say, a hammer causes pain by striking someone's thumb. Instead, it causes happiness in an indirect and unintended fashion: after all, the world, as it were, must mediate between adopting our ends and attaining them. By sincerely making virtue our end we unwittingly produce happiness, without necessarily having made the latter our consciously adopted end. An invisible hand, so to speak, guides us towards happiness as we pursue virtue.

In an ideal world, virtue causes happiness directly, because in such a world there are no obstacles to the performance of our duties; in the empirical world of nature inhabited by beings such as ourselves, however, there is no guarantee that virtue will cause happiness. The intelligible world is such that rational ends are attained simply for being rational ends. Rationality rules in this realm, and so rationality succeeds as a matter of course.<sup>24</sup> In the sensible world, as we know, this is not the case; yet the duty to pursue the highest good remains for creatures such as ourselves who inhabit both the intelligible and sensible worlds. That is, what happens with law-like regularity in the intelligible world is a duty for us in the sensible world. (This is why Kant is forced to adopt the postulates of practical reason as the conditions of the possibility of the complete realization of the highest good.) But even in the absence of ideal conditions, virtue still contributes to the production of happiness because it brings about the most favorable circumstances for human happiness, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs.

## V. CONCLUSION

We know, of course, that our efforts to attain the highest good are circumscribed by the limitations placed on us by the world around us. Thus, says Kant, we must have recourse to the postulates of practical reason to ensure that the conditions for the possibility of the highest good are realized. Whether or not the postulates are necessary for the realization of the highest good, however, does not change the fact that the highest good is an end that is also a duty. To acknowledge the demands of morality is also to acknowledge that we must develop the most effective means to the end of doing our duty, which turns out to be—with regard to rational beings such as ourselves who inhabit the empirical world—the dual pursuit of virtue and happiness. Such pursuit has as a consequence that happiness is proportioned to, and caused by, virtue.

My arguments in this paper make no claim to exhaustiveness, but I hope that they have shown that there are compelling reasons within Kant's writings for accepting his claim that the highest good is an end that is also a duty. Another factor in my favor is that I have adhered to Henrich's characterization of the program of a deduction, for the deduction attempted in this paper fulfills the five conditions mentioned in section 1. The chief of these is that the resources employed in the deduction have their origin in some legitimating fact in reason itself.

In the case of the highest good, that legitimating fact is the possession of pure practical reason and several of its attendant features, including the first formulation of the categorical imperative, the concept of happiness as the satisfaction of the totality of our ends, and the concept of rational beings as end-setters. The success or failure of the deduction attempted in this essay is to be judged on whether or not the resources used in sections 2–4 are sufficient for proving that the concept of the highest good is an end that is also a duty. We have reason to believe that they are, for Kant would not have claimed that the concept of the highest good is an end that is also a duty if he had not also believed that he had the necessary means for deducing the concept.

## ENDNOTES

I would like to thank Tim Gould, Paul Guyer, Rahul Kumar, and Fred Rauscher for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also indebted to the anonymous referees for many useful comments.

1. References to Kant's works are typically made by means of the volume and page numbers of the German *Akademie* edition, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Deutschen [formerly Königlichen Preussischen] Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter [and predecessors], 1900–). References to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, are located by means of the A/B pagination of the first two editions. All translations are my own.

I use the following abbreviations:

<i>CJ</i>	<i>Critique of Judgment</i>
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
<i>CPrR</i>	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone</i>

2. For the synthetic a priori status of the concept of the highest good, see *CPrR*, 5:4, 113, 134.
3. For Henrich's views, see "Die Deduktion des Sittengesetzes: Über die Gründe der Dunkelheit des letzten Abschnittes von Kants *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*," in *Denken im Schatten des Nihilismus*, ed. Alexander Schwan (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 55–112; "Kant's Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First Critique," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, ed. Eckart Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 29–46.
4. "Kant's Notion of a Deduction," 34.
5. *Ibid.*, 35.
6. *Ibid.*, 37.
7. *Ibid.*, 38.
8. *Ibid.*, 39.
9. Kant typically thinks that the concept of rational agency includes the concept of setting ends for oneself. (See, e.g., the remarks on the will and rational nature at *G*, 4:427–429.) Sometimes, however, he seems to restrict the setting of ends to *free* rational agents, suggesting that there can be rational agents that are neither free nor capable of setting ends for themselves. (See, e.g., *Religion*, 6:26n.) In this paper I restrict my attention to rational agents who, in virtue of their rational agency, are implicitly understood to be free and capable of setting ends. These are the beings for whom the highest good could be an end that is also a duty.
10. My interpretation of the first formulation relies on the following commentators: Julius Ebbinghaus, "Interpretation and Misinterpretation of the Categorical Imperative," in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., Robert Paul Wolff (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), 211–227; Onora O'Neill (formerly Nell), *Acting on Principle: An Essay on Kantian Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 82–93; John Rawls, "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, 82–90.
11. See, e.g., *G*, 4:399.
12. See, e.g., *CJ*, 5:431; "On the Proverb: That May Be True in Theory, but Is of No Use in Practice," 8:283.
13. For example, chapter 1 of Mills *Utilitarianism* claims that all of Kant's derivations of duties depend upon self-interest. Ebbinghaus argues convincingly against this type of reading in "Interpretation and Misinterpretation of the Categorical Imperative," 220–226.
14. Such an argument is suggested by remarks at *G*, 4:441; *CPrR*, 5:34–35.
15. For its source in Kant, see *G*, 4:423–424. For commentary, see n. 10.

16. Kant even says that it is “absurd” to say that we *ought* to have our own happiness as an end (*Religion*, 6:6).

17. “On the Proverb: That May Be True in Theory, but Is of No Use in Practice,” 8:279.

18. For a similar expression of this idea, see *CPrR*, 5:93.

19. An anonymous reader for this journal questions my departure from Kant’s text, suggesting that we have a duty to pursue the totality represented in the concept of the highest good even if it includes our own happiness understood merely as a natural end (and thus not as a duty). I offer two considerations in defense of my claims: first, my modification of Kant’s claims is consistent with his explicit pronouncements about the highest good; second, if our own happiness is not treated as an end that is also a duty, then we are almost certain to subordinate our happiness to the happiness of others in our efforts to pursue the highest good, which would raise the various problems mentioned in Kant’s discussion of happiness as an indirect duty. By making our happiness an explicitly acknowledged duty we avoid this subordination, thereby giving our own happiness its due consideration; furthermore, we pursue the happiness that we are most likely to achieve, namely, our own, and thus we act in a manner that is most likely to contribute to bringing about the highest good.

20. Cf. *MM*, 6:409.

21. For the same sort of argument, see *G*, 4:422–423.

22. Allen Wood, *Kant’s Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 75. My discussion of the virtue of others is indebted to Wood’s views, especially 71–78.

23. See, e.g., *CPrR*, 5:111–113.

24. This is how we might interpret some of Kant’s remarks at A809–810/B837–838.

