

WHERE GOD IS: KANT'S IDEA OF GOD IN HIS DEVELOPING METAPHYSICAL THOUGHT

Julius M. Galarosa, MMHC
Mater Dei College, Philippines

Immanuel Kant has indeed initiated a new era in philosophy with his new ideas on epistemology and ethics with his works Critique of Pure Reason and Critique of Practical Reason. However, prior to these works, Kant underwent certain development in his philosophical thinking—initially as a rationalist, then eventually maturing to the philosopher that he is known for. In line with this development of Kant's philosophical thought, the researcher's particular interest is in his ideas on God and metaphysics. By reviewing Kant's philosophical works especially in the Universal Natural History and the Theory of the Heavens [1755], A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition [1755], and The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God [1763], we find out that his initial idea of God reflects his rationalist convictions as thought by his mentors from the Leibniz-Wolffian school. However, his critical project that attempted to put metaphysics on solid ground resulted in more doubt of its certainty. This affected especially his ideas of God, freedom, and immortality, which he believes can no longer be supported with the transcendent metaphysics he used to adhere to. This led Kant to concede that in the realm of pure reason, the idea of God cannot be satisfactorily justified. He eventually found a new ground where the idea of God can stand in his investigations on practical reason and morality.

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INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant [1724–1804] is considered one of the greatest minds the Enlightenment has ever produced. His brilliance brought about a new paradigm in modern philosophical thought. This was evidenced in his creation of a unique philosophy by reconciling the prevailing rationalist and empiricist thought of his time. Though he was a rationalist in the early stages of his philosophical career, he found

that the ideas of the empiricists, especially of Hume, have their merits and therefore cannot be easily dismissed.

After writing the *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781], many thought that his work was anti-metaphysical. Palmquist (2000, 3) remarks that shortly after the publication of the first Critique, Mendelssohn labeled Kant the all-destroyer. Moreover, he (2000, 3) adds that for some critics, Kant was thought to be an arch-destroyer of the realm of thought and is ultimately disinterested in metaphysics. However, even if such a label is quite understandable, it glosses over the fact that Kant did contribute something to the development of metaphysics. He did not come to destroy metaphysics and leave it in ruins as, perhaps, Hume would do. What Kant actually did was to find the right place for metaphysics. Moreover, if one considers the multitude of works done by Kant after publishing the Critique of Pure Reason, one understands that he was interested in rebuilding the foundations of metaphysics—to find a ground where it could actually stand.

Indeed, if one wants to summarize the content of Kant's philosophy, one can say that his motive was to solve the problem of metaphysics, especially those questions that involved much debate during his time—the questions on God, freedom, and immorality. As he began his philosophical career as a rationalist and a metaphysician, there is no doubt that Kant has studied God several times under the Leibniz-Wolffian school. Therefore, one could say that the topic about God is something already close to him. Though he was not a religious person, even if his parents were, he finds that the idea of God and His existence is necessary for the ordering of the universe.

Somehow, Kant's long life has contributed much to the richness of his philosophical thought. It is interesting to note that his brilliance was shown in many ways. He has excelled in philosophy and was also knowledgeable in the natural sciences, especially in the Newtonian physics of his time. When he was still on the side of the rationalists, his ideas were convincing and thought-provoking. When he decided to undergo the Critical Project, it influenced a new wave of thought that even resounds to this present time. Overall, Kant was a dynamic philosopher, and it is interesting to view his overall philosophical journey.

The impetus of this paper is to outline Kant's philosophical journey in terms of his evolving ideas on metaphysics that inevitably carry his idea of God. The researcher is interested in how the development of his metaphysical views affected his idea of God in the process. A summary review of Kant's metaphysical ideas on God using many of his works related to the subject will lead to an understanding that Kant has two understandings of God. The first is his pre-critical understanding, which is an understanding during his early philosophical career. The second is his critical understanding, which results from his critiques on pure reason, practical reason, and judgment.

GOD IN KANT'S PRE-CRITICAL METAPHYSICS

To understand God in Kant's pre-critical metaphysics, one needs to understand Kant's preoccupation before his publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 that heralded his new philosophy. Schooled and eventually taught in the rationalist

tradition, Kant was exposed mainly to the ideas of Leibniz and Wolff but was also little by little fascinated by the works of Sir Isaac Newton. Although a rationalist, he was gradually diverging from the original ideas of his predecessors. The metaphysics of the young Kant is characterized by his use of empirical observations and data to support his rationalist-metaphysical investigations. Kant's main preoccupation was to unite metaphysics and Newtonian physics into a "coherent philosophy of nature" that became the primary motive of his written works before 1766. According to Martin Schönfeld (2000, 3),

Kant attempted to integrate Physics in a comprehensive and speculative framework that explained the macroscopic features of the universe as well as its microstructure, that accounted for its past as well as for its present, that permitted the co-presence of rational freedom and deterministic lawfulness, and that illuminated the relation of God to the world.

Alongside this interest in integrating metaphysics and science, another major interest for the young Kant was God. In the preface to their translation of *Kant's Theoretical Philosophy*, Walford and Meerbote (1992, xxxviii) note that one of Kant's earliest philosophical preoccupations was the theme of God. And in connection with said theme, three religious issues also caught Kant's interest. These are the compatibility of scientific explanation with religious faith, the compatibility of natural disasters with the perfection of the world, and the correct method of proving the existence of God.

Given this understanding, we shall see that God's involvement in Kant's pre-critical metaphysics is in connection with this preoccupation. How does God fit in the overall world picture—especially that scientific understanding and even certain human experiences, particularly of natural disasters, seem to challenge God's nature and existence?

The young Kant's interest towards God produced three works prior to the publication of the first *Critique* – *The Critique of Pure Reason*; these are *Universal Natural History and the Theory of the Heavens* [1755], *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition* [1755], and *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* [1763]. In the *Universal Natural History*, Kant argues that the universe is adequate as it is, an echo of the Leibniz-Wolffian doctrine of pre-established harmony. God is seen as a principle that ensures the harmony of the universe and contends against those who view the order of the universe as mere chance. He sees laws are necessary, and God is the source of such. He (2008, 14-15) writes.

In my theory, by contrast, I find matter bound to certain necessary laws... Freely left subject to these laws, it must necessarily bring forth beautiful combinations... Since it also finds itself subject to the loftiest purpose, it must of necessity be set in such harmonious relationships

through a First Cause that rules over it. There is a God for just this reason, that nature even in a chaotic state, can develop only in an orderly and rule-governed manner.

The *Universal Natural History* presupposed God as the warrant of teleology who ensures nature's purpose of self-perfection and the unfolding of this purpose through natural laws. Kant's *God in the Universal Natural History*, in the scheme of things, is the Divine Architect that created the universe in a precise and perfect manner. Any perceived absurdities in nature are just manifestations of humans' lack of knowledge and understanding of God's dynamics in the universe.

Another work that discusses God is the treatise *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*. The work has more philosophical undertones compared to the *Universal Natural History*. It is more of a critique of existing metaphysical theories and a proposition of new principles. Among its notable contents were Kant's position that the principle of identity holds primacy over the principle of contradiction, the reformulation of Wolff's principle of sufficient ground and re-coined it as determining ground and its introduction of the principle of succession and principle of co-existence. Though not as radical and revolutionary as the first *Critique*, this particular work already gives a hint of Kant's brilliance as an individual thinker, given his progressive metaphysical views. For Kant (2008, 14-15), following his metaphysical propositions in *New Elucidation*, God is the systematic unity of that reality which is the material of all possible, non-contradictory notions. God is the all-embracing essence, the ultimate ground which all consequents follow.

Such a notion of God is encapsulated in his statement found in the *New Elucidation*. According to him (1993, 16):

It is plain from this, therefore, that if you deny the existence of God, you instantly abolish not only the entire existence of things but even their inner possibility itself... Of all beings, God is the only one in which existence is prior to, or, if you prefer, identical with possibility. And as soon as you deny the existence of God, every concept of possibility vanishes.

However, the above-mentioned works are not really extensive in terms of discussing God as a metaphysical concept. This distinction is found only in the "Only Possible Argument" (1992, 107-110) as the real extensive pre-critical work of Kant on God. From here, we can deduce that it is the culmination of Kant's pre-critical project of establishing unity between rationalist metaphysics and Newtonian physics. The work consists of three parts. The first part focuses on the construction of an ontological argument *a priori*, the second on the cosmological argument *a posteriori*, which is essentially an argument from design, and the third and last part makes a general appraisal of these two proofs. The "Only Possible Argument" (1992, 107-110) is the combination of the above-mentioned works—he echoes his arguments of God's existence ontologically in reference with his earlier position in the *New Elucidation*, and as for the cosmological argument, he refers to the *Universal Natural History* as

the main source of his argumentations. Schönfeld (2000, 190) notes that what is found in the “Only Possible Argument” are more expanded arguments from design that is found in the *Universal Natural History* and a more fleshed out ontological argument that was found in the *New Elucidation*.

Furthermore, in the first part of the “Only Possible Argument,” Schönfeld (2000, 195) explains that Kant reiterates his previous position that was highlighted in the *New Elucidation* that “God is the ground of all things and that God’s existence is derivable from the notion of possibility.” Kant’s notion of possibility is his own unique formulation of the ontological argument. He rejects the Cartesian formulation that presents the idea of existence as property or predicate. In the statement, “God exists,” existence is viewed as a property along with the premise that all properties are attached to this divine concept. What Kant did was to ground his ontological argument, the notion of necessary existence, from the analysis of possibility. Something is possible only if it is thinkable; something is thinkable only if data is present to the mind, and data can be present to the mind only if the complete set of thinkable data already exists. Therefore, something is possible only if something exists. Because the negation of possibility is impossible, what is presupposed as existing must exist necessarily.

In the “Only Possible Argument” (1992, 107-110), Kant asserts that the ontological argument based on possibility is superior to the cosmological argument of God’s existence. Though both arguments possess strengths, Kant (1992, 200) describes the cosmological argument as accessible “to sound common sense, the vividness of impression, beauty and persuasiveness in relation to man’s moral motives” and the ontological argument as possessing “logical exactitude and completeness” he thought that the latter argument possesses the logical rigor to present a clear and convincing demonstration of God’s existence. Thus, one might say the two arguments are necessarily one because the cosmological argument only proceeds from the ontological argument of possibility. Thus, Kant (1992, 201) concludes his work with the following words.

There is only one God, and there is only one argument that enables us to apprehend His existence and to apprehend it with the perception of the necessity, which absolutely destroys everything which opposes it... The inner possibility, the essence of things, is that of which the cancellation eliminates all that can be thought. In this, therefore, consists the distinctive characteristic mark of the existence of the essence of all beings.

PRELUDE TO THE CRITICAL PERIOD: DREAMS OF THE SPIRIT SEER

Before the publication of Kant’s first critique, there is already a hint that Kant is gradually becoming unconvinced with his pre-critical project. It seems to him that upon further reflection and study, metaphysics seems to leave more questions than answers. This is clearly presented in his work called “Dreams of a Spirit Seer” (1992,

301-304), wherein he seems to find it more and more convincing that the metaphysics he is advocating are erroneous. In the said work, he even tried to redefine it as a discipline to determine the limits of reason. In his exposition of the two advantages of metaphysics, he has conceded that in critically analyzing it, he has to conclude that what is left for metaphysics is to transform itself into a limiting concept. From Kant (1992, 354), we quote:

The first is this: it can solve the problems thrown up by the enquiring mind when it uses reason to spy after the more hidden properties of things... on this occasion... satisfaction has escaped our grasp. The second advantage of metaphysics is more consonant with the nature of human understanding. It consists both in knowing whether the task has been determined by reference to what one can know, and in knowing what relation the question has to the empirical concepts, upon which all our judgments must at all times be based. To that extent, metaphysics is a science of the limits of human reason.

With “Dreams,” we have a glimpse of what Kant intends to do with metaphysics later on with his Critical Project. This work also signifies the end of his attempt at unifying science and metaphysics, and therefore he has to start over again. He begins to rethink the whole metaphysical system that he adhered to, which is fleshed out in his Critique of Pure Reason.

GOD IN KANT’S CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

The Critical project of Kant is an attempt to save metaphysics in its current disgraceful state. From the preface of the second edition of the critique of pure reason, Kant (2010, 16) expressed the necessity for metaphysics to become as stable as the sciences—in which logic, mathematics, and physics (natural science) were able to achieve.

To situate God in Kant’s critical project, we must first find out the fate of metaphysics in Kant’s critique of pure reason. In order to answer the challenges that beset metaphysics, Kant established the grounds on what reason can know. In his discussions on the *Transcendental Aesthetic* (2010, 43-63), he established the pure a priori intuitions of sensibility, that is, space and time. In the chapter on *Transcendental Logic*, (2010, 64-115), he then established pure conceptions of understanding or categories as a priori forms of understanding. For Kant, a knowledge that is universal and necessary requires both sensible experience and the faculty of understanding. As his (2010, 16) famous dictum says, “Thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” Insufficient knowledge is brought about if only one of the two necessary elements—sensibility and understanding are present. If knowledge means to draw something from experience, how does transcendental metaphysics (as opposed to natural) fare? The metaphysical ideas of God, freedom, and immortality are judged to be insufficient knowledge based on these grounds.

Indeed, the Transcendental Analytic has set the boundaries of pure reason or the 'land of truth.' This has set the necessary conditions on which thoughts can have objects and judgments can be capable of truths. The Analytic has pointed out that conditions of possible experience are necessary and sufficient for knowledge. One's knowledge is limited by one's experience; thus, transcendent metaphysics claim for knowledge is without grounds. Furthermore, what we can know is only phenomena (things that appear to us) and never the noumena (things-in-themselves). Kant (2010, 185) made the following statement as a result of his investigations.

Transcendental analytic has accordingly this important result, to wit, that the understanding is competent effect nothing a priori, except the anticipation of the form of a possible experience in general, and that, as that which is not phenomenon cannot be an object of experience, it can never overstep the limits of sensibility, within which alone objects are presented to us.

Furthermore, to firmly establish his claim, his chapter on Transcendental Dialectic uses the findings of the Analytic to critique the claims of transcendent metaphysics. It is of our special interest what Kant has to say about God in this particular part of the Critique. The criticism that the metaphysical enterprise received necessitates that one of its topics, God, must also be criticized.

As we have seen earlier, God is understood by the 'pre-critical' Kant primarily as the absolutely necessary being on the grounds of his ontological argument of possibility and that the universe's movements and laws ultimately flow from Him, which constitutes the cosmological argument of His existence. In the Transcendental Dialectic, using the tools that he established in the Transcendental Analytic, he will argue that the metaphysical arguments on one's certainty for God's existence and knowledge of His attributes are flawed.

TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION

Having established that presumptions of knowledge beyond the sensible are brought about by a flawed logical deduction, Kant applied this specific method on the supposed knowledge one has on God. One's conception of God as an infinite being absolutely independent from the empirical world is faulty since one inevitably draws knowledge from sensible experiences. Kant argues that the ideas and attributes that one places on God are brought about by reason's appropriation of such idea supplied by the understanding.

In the New Elucidation, Kant's pre-critical argumentation of God's existence is deemed necessary because this being called God is the source of "all possibles" that the universe had. To deny his existence is to deny everything else. However, in the Critique, his conclusions are stopped short. The primordial ground of all things is not to be confused with God, but only of the highest being. Gardner (1999, 154) explains

that the core concept of God is founded on the conclusion that there must be an individual that is the source of all possibility, an ideal of pure reason. This idea of the totality of possibility is also the idea of something that contains all reality within itself ('omnitudo realitatus') and has the highest degree of reality ('ens realissimum'), the idea of the highest being. However, the idea of the highest being cannot be equated to God. Nonetheless, it can be said that the concept of God is produced from it.

The confusion happens because transcendent metaphysics hastily concludes that the 'highest being' is also an 'absolutely necessary being' by creating a logical statement that if the highest being exists, it exists necessarily. The union of these two ideas and its apparent logical conclusion that leads to one's knowledge of God's existence is flawed. The idea of the highest being is now subject to the transcendental illusion. When the 'highest being' becomes 'absolutely necessary,' it assumes real existence. Now, this hypostatized entity can now be connected with the God of religious belief—primarily as the author of creation. For Kant, the God of transcendent metaphysics is not a given notion of the intellect but a composite of several concepts such as the highest being, absolutely necessary being, and the author of nature.

Kant now established that the transcendent metaphysics' argument of the existence of God—the ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological argument are products of transcendental illusion, a product of hasty and not well thought of logical conclusions. He will then prove that these arguments are insufficient and found wanting. One recalls how he labored to support these claims to God's existence in The Only Possible Argument; however, in the Critique, given his new epistemological convictions, he is now determined to discredit these rationalist arguments one by one. In terms of the idea of God, Kant is able to test metaphysics as a science of the limits of human reason early on in his investigations of the fourth antinomy of pure reason, which argues for and against the existence of a necessary being.

THE FOURTH ANTINOMY OF PURE REASON: AN OVERVIEW

In the Transcendental Dialectic, a term coined by Kant to critique the transcendental illusions, he presents the antinomies, which presents arguments for and against concepts such as causality, substance, freedom, and the necessary being. In the fourth antinomy, Kant presents arguments for and against the existence of the necessary being. In essence, the thesis of the fourth antinomy derives from the cosmological argument that Kant is very familiar with.

However, a more mature Kant also formulated a way to counter this argument. He found several loopholes in the cosmological argument as found in the antithesis. For instance, he (2010, 278) mentions, "the existence of an aggregate cannot be necessary if no single part of it possesses necessary existence" and "the cause cannot be out of the world." The above-mentioned points present the problems of the relationship of a necessary being to a contingent world. Furthermore, his remarks (2010, 280-281) found more elucidation in the exposition on the antinomy.

We must show that the regress in the series of causes (in the world of sense) cannot conclude with an empirically unconditioned condition and

that the cosmological argument from the contingency of the cosmical state—a contingency alleged to arise from change—does not justify us in accepting a first cause, that is, a prime originator of the cosmical series.

Thus, Kant, with his realization that what can only be known is the world of phenomena, has found in the construction of his antithesis a valid counter-argument for the cosmological position. Although it does not ultimately deny the existence of a necessary being, it does present the error of reason undergoing transcendental illusion. Furthermore, it justifies his position that aside from the notions of God, the soul, and freedom, are ideas that are beyond the land of truth. These notions are not fictions, but one must accede that in the realm of pure reason, one cannot have certitude.

GOD AS THE IDEAL OF PURE REASON AND THE DISMANTLING OF THE ARGUMENTS OF EXISTENCE

Kant will then pick up where he left off from the last antinomy (which argues the existence of

argument. The statement, 'God exists' is not an analytic judgment because the term "exists" actually does add something to the idea of God and cannot be considered as a tautology as the statement 'triangles have three sides' possess. It presents more problems when one says 'God exists' as a synthetic judgment, then it is not anymore an ontological argument. The ontological argument falls apart because it cannot establish itself as a valid means to attain knowledge of God.

God) and discusses the nature of God as the ideal of pure reason. Let us look at what Kant (2010, 333) calls this ideal.

the Ideal, by which term I understand the idea, not in concreto, but in individuo—as an individual thing, determinable or determined by the idea alone... What I have termed an ideal was in Plato's philosophy an idea of the divine mind—an individual object present to its pure intuition, the most perfect of every kind of possible beings, and the archetype of all phenomenal existences.

Kant understood the Ideal of pure reason as a conclusion of reason. This conclusion states that there is a Being who is the most real thing (*ens realissimum*) conceivable. This Being, as a personified object, is the subject of all predicates and the sum total of all reality. It exists as the highest and most complete condition of the possibility of all objects, their original cause, and their continual support.

However, even if the above-mentioned definition seems logically sound, Kant recognizes that there is no material or phenomenal counterpart for God and the concepts attached to its being. It is correct to say that it is possible to think of God as the Supreme Being. It is possible to think of God as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. But these attributes and ideas go beyond sensory experience. Anybody can talk about such perfections and yet are unable to experience such. Is there any way

to validate these attributes empirically? Moreover, are these qualities attributed to God constitute as valid knowledge, as these ideas are thinkable but not cognizable?

As mentioned before, Kant argued that such conception of God as the ideal of pure reason is also a product of a transcendental illusion. Knowledge necessitates phenomenon, and lack of phenomenon will make the presence of error in reason very likely. Moreover, for Kant, this is what exactly happened with one's idea of God. By going over the bounds of the limits of reason and possible experience, erroneous assumptions were made. Kant pointed out these erroneous assumptions and is pushing forward the proposition that part of the limitations of reason is the knowledge of God. Thus, given this understanding, Kant then proceeds to dismantle the arguments that he used to defend and adhere to--the ontological, cosmological, and physico-theological arguments for the existence of God.

Ontological Argument

In terms of the ontological argument, the existence of God is proven thru perfection. Those who adhere to it think that God exists because a conception of a perfect being necessitates existence as one of the attributes of this perfection. If God does not exist, then he is not God. In the language of Kant, the proposition "God exists" is an analytic judgment. Thus, existence is contained in the idea of God.

Kant criticizes this argument convincingly by pointing out that existence is not a real predicate. Existence is only a predicate in the sense of a logical predicate. The ontological argument demands that existence as a predicate is established firmly as a necessary attribute of God. However, there is a problem here; what does existence really mean? This is what Kant objects to. There seems to be a mistaken definition of existence. The word 'exists' for Kant functions as an object in relation to its concept. It means that the statement 'God exists' only tells us that 'God' is related to another concept that is 'existence.' If 'exists' merely functions as a relation and not as an attribute, then one can still hold that God is a perfect being yet does not exist and not enter into a contradiction. Thus, existence is not a perfection.

Furthermore, Kant also uses the analytic and synthetic judgments to criticize the

Cosmological Argument

In the cosmological argument, the argument of existence is directed towards created things. Previously we have presented the fourth antinomy as the problem of the existence of a necessary being as a cause in the world. Is the cosmological argument a repeat of the fourth antinomy? Kant argues that there is a distinct difference between the two. The fourth antinomy concerns a necessary being within the world, while the cosmological argument is concerned with the proof of a necessary being distinct from the world.

Kant argues that the cosmological argument does direct us to the proof of the existence of God even if there is an establishment that there is such a thing as a necessary being. Kant reasons that it is possible that a limited or derived being can assume the role of an absolutely necessary being. This role does necessitate the

participation of the highest being (the conception of God). To make the cosmological argument credible, one must attempt to integrate the concepts of the highest being and necessary being, wherein the highest being can be deduced from the absolutely necessary being. One must then establish that the highest being is the only thing that can be absolutely necessary. To ascertain this, we must go back to the ontological argument that Kant already discredited.

Physico-theological argument

In the physico-theological argument, an argument from design presents the argument thru experience *a posteriori*. This argument points out that to prove God's existence, one must only look at the order and purpose of the created world that directs us to the reality called God. However, Kant also saw problems with this argument. First, the argument is inadequate in such a way that our experience cannot really present to us the reality of God and that one cannot bridge the gap between creation, as conditioned realities, and God, which is supposedly an unconditioned reality. Kant, using this argument, can only conceive of an architect rather than a creator. Again, the insufficiency can be remedied by resorting to the cosmological argument. Yet Kant already pointed out that this argument is found wanting, and one resorts to the ontological argument, which Kant refuted first.

In this way, the rationalist proof for the existence of God is effectively destroyed by Kant. However, this does not mean that Kant denies that God exists. He is only pointing out the reality that human reason has its limitations. Pure reason has always been falling short in proving with certainty the existence of God. Transcendent metaphysics falls into the error by making assumptions that are not adequately analyzed and subjected to a rigid critique. From here, Kant effectively 'destroyed' transcendent metaphysics along with it is their revered rational proofs of the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality.

If what can be really known is in the level of phenomena and such ideas are beyond experience, it warrants that, rationally speaking, we cannot establish constitutive knowledge with these concepts. The role of these ideas, therefore, is regulative.

In contrast with the constitutive, which are necessarily realized or instantiated in experience, regulative ideas mean that these ideas cannot be realized or instantiated in experience at all. However, even if this is the case, the idea of God can still function lawfully as a guidepost to empirical inquiries into the objects that are given in experience. For Kant, God can be considered a heuristic concept, a mental shortcut that will help us cope with our rational limitations. As he (2010, 384-385) declares in his *Critique of Pure Reason*,

In this way, the idea is properly a heuristic, and not an ostensive, conception; it does not give us any information respecting the constitution of an object; it merely indicates how, under the guidance of the idea, we

ought to investigate the constitution and the relations of objects in the world of experience.

The idea of God, as relegated to a regulative idea, along with freedom and immortality, was reduced from an absolutely necessary being to a necessary hypothesis. Inadvertently, God became one of the concepts that effectively remind us that there are borders and limitations of what can be known and not known.

FROM SPECULATIVE REASON TO PRACTICAL REASON

Where does Kant go after the *Critique*? If Kant did not affirm nor deny God's existence in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, how does he move on in developing the idea of God? Indeed, this displacement of God in metaphysics, by disproving the validity of transcendent metaphysics, has left the idea of God in an unstable state, as if Kant is espousing agnosticism on the subject matter. Kuehn (1985, 165) notes that if God, as a term, clearly has no such counterparts in experience, then one must find these counterparts somewhere else in order for the term to be meaningful. And indeed, after Kant found out that transcendent metaphysics has committed errors by using the criterion he established in the first critique, he will attempt to place metaphysics and its revered ideas of God, freedom, and immortality elsewhere.

Rohlf (2020) explains that for Kant, even if the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality are indeed transcendental illusions, he sees a positive and practical use for these. He then re-appropriates the Leibniz-Wolffian transcendent metaphysics as a practical science which he called the metaphysics of morals. Kant pushed forth the idea that one must study the ideas that belonged to transcendent metaphysics--God, world-whole, and the soul in a different way. It must be studied not in the methodology that is used in speculative knowledge but by subjecting it to an investigation appropriate to practical reason. In doing so, one can justify the belief in God, freedom, and immortality in terms of morality.

Furthermore, Rohlf (2020) takes note that Kant's shift from speculative transcendent metaphysics to a practical metaphysics of morals began with the recognition that while science and determinism apply to appearances, there is room for freedom in the realm of the things in themselves where the self or the soul is created. While it is true that freedom is unknowable theoretically because things in themselves are unknowable, there are especially strong moral grounds to accede that there is such a thing as human freedom. Furthermore, this freedom acts as the keystone supporting other morally grounded beliefs (like God and immortality).

In the preface on the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [1785], Kant (2002, 4) defined metaphysics as a branch of philosophy that deals with definite objects of understanding. Interestingly, he speaks of the idea of two-fold metaphysics, a metaphysics of nature, and a metaphysics of morals. The former is considered a foundation in the examination of physics, and in terms of the latter, Kant considers this as a foundation prior to the examination of practical anthropology. Kant considers the metaphysics of morals as indispensable as it explores the source of the a priori practical principles that lie in our reason and, secondly, a guide and supreme norm for making

correct moral judgments prevent morality from suffering all kinds of corruption. Thus, for Kant, a metaphysics of morals is necessary before one can speak of moral philosophy. Kant (2002, 7-8) explains what he intends to do in establishing this groundwork.

The present groundwork is, however, nothing more than the search for and establishment of the supreme principle of morality, which already constitutes an enterprise whole in its aim and to be separated from every other moral investigation.

This metaphysics of morals is the foundation of his second Critique, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, which pushed forth a moral argument of the existence of God. The argument for God's existence is not speculative anymore but based on practical reasoning.

In essence, the moral argument tells us that there is a relationship between leading a virtuous life and one's desire for happiness. The highest good, for Kant, is the proper object of practical (moral) reason. All efforts of man in this life are for the reason of attaining this good. However, it seems that it is not possible to achieve the highest good in this life. In effect, it opens up the idea that the highest good is not achieved in this life but in the next. If this is so, then our practical reason tells us that there is a God and that our souls are immortal. God then, even if relegated as a regulative idea in the realm of pure reason, practical reason dictates that we must believe that He exists. Kant explains this as the existence of God as a postulate of practical reason. He (2000, 58) explains it as follows.

In the foregoing analysis, the moral law led to a practical problem which is prescribed by pure reason alone, without the aid of any sensible motives, namely, that of the necessary completeness of the first and principal element of the summum bonum, viz., morality; and, as this can be perfectly solved only in eternity, to the postulate of immortality. The same law must also lead us to affirm the possibility of the second element of the summum bonum, viz., happiness proportioned to that morality, and this on grounds as disinterested as before, and solely from impartial reason; that is, it must lead to the supposition of the existence of a cause adequate to this effect; in other words, it must postulate the existence of God, as the necessary condition of the possibility of the summum bonum (an object of the will which is necessarily connected with the moral legislation of pure reason)."

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, drawing itself from the moral argument, Kant (2000, 320) presents God not merely as the God of the philosophers, an impersonal Divine Being, but as a governor and moral legislator of the cosmos akin to the Judaeo-Christian God.

But we may well say that given the constitution of our faculty of reason, we could not even make comprehensible the kind of purposiveness related to the moral law and its object that exists in this final end without an author and ruler of the world who is at the same time a moral legislator.

However, we are to note that the Critique of the Power of Judgment is not a work that intends to discuss God. Kant made the passage in relation to his “moral argument.” At least, with the development of the argument found in ‘Judgment,’ Kant does propose a possibility of a God that is in touch with human affairs thru His governing work.

Subsequently, in his later work, *The Metaphysics of Morals* [1797], though its primary concern is on re-establishing the metaphysical idea of freedom in the realm of practical reason, there are glimpses that the idea of God can be accommodated, as we have seen in the exposition in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, as the *summum bonum* or the highest good.

Kant successfully transplanted the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality into the realm of morality. He might have “destroyed” transcendent metaphysics, but perhaps the above-mentioned topics are important to him that he has to place their certainty in a different ground—and that ground is found in morality. Thus, the development of Kantian metaphysics, alongside the idea of God, is essentially a journey from the speculative to practical. God, for Kant, although it is an idea that we cannot really know with absolute certainty for it lacks a corresponding object in experience, is something worthy of belief as all our free actions are directed towards Him. God is not anymore a mere subject of speculation but a goal of our actions. With this in mind, what are the possible implications of Kant’s findings in our contemporary world?

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

First, for believers in God, it encourages one to translate one’s belief into action. God is more than just an object of speculation. God is someone to be seen as an end and goal. As a goal, people are enjoined to live ethical and moral lives. And so the words, “I believe in God” is never enough; one must show that one believes by actively living an upright life.

I have this particular observation. When controversial issues with regard to religion arise because of a particular doctrine, strong reactions are limited to the members of that particular belief. An unbeliever and non-member of that religion could not care less. However, when the issue is about crimes committed by professed leaders of that religion like child abuse, rape, embezzlement of funds, the world is up in arms, the world reacts, the world is quick to condemn. The reason perhaps is that doctrine is a language only understood by practicing adherents of a religion. But the universal issues like protection of children and minors, transparency and accountability, honesty and integrity are issues understood by all, whether one is religious or not. My point is that when one thinks about it, moral language resounds more than speculative language. Kant’s shift in terms of one’s idea of God from speculative to practical is a

reminder that the world sees and appreciates people of religion doing what their religion teaches.

Secondly, it opens up also dialogue and cooperation among different faith traditions. God as a subject of inquiry is always valuable to one's own faith tradition, but one must accept that with regard to other people's faith tradition, one may have a different perspective on it. But as evidenced many times over, even if people believe differently, they can work together to make the world a better place. Living in a pluralistic society with various beliefs and convictions entails the reality that there will be disagreement with people on so many points. Instead of arguing on the speculative, it is more fruitful to dialogue and to communicate on the practical. This means that finding common ground with people is a more productive means of pushing one's own convictions than simply debating with someone who does not share common beliefs and ideals. It is not about changing the other's mind but working together with others on the good that you can agree upon.

Lastly, Kant's idea of God espouses a position that is open to different religious traditions and thus an avenue for religious tolerance. By saying that rationally, God cannot be affirmed with the certainty of science, but morally God is the ultimate end, it opens the possibility of the multiplicity of expressions of that belief. As much as there are many ways to do good, there are also many ways that one can draw oneself closer to God. No one can say to the other, "you are wrong," but perhaps one might say, "you tread a different path." Nonetheless, living a morally upright life leads to a singular end, God as the highest good.

CONCLUSION

Kant's idea of God has indeed evolved along with his metaphysical thought. At first, he thought of God as an object of scientific inquiry and speculation, which he then eventually realized to be erroneous. However, contrary to what others may think, God was not removed but instead was properly placed in the Kantian metaphysical system. For Kant, God is more of a goal where all our free actions should be directed towards to so that humans can achieve the highest good. Kant did not destroy transcendent metaphysics; he transplanted it in a ground where it could flourish. In effect, he opened up a path for a new metaphysics where the idea of God can be properly studied. He may be on to something when he placed God in the realm of practical reasoning; as if reminding us that God may not be known with certainty in transcendence, in the realm beyond the stars, but the moral law within tells us that God exists and must be the purpose and end of all our actions.

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