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## The Idea of God in Kantian Philosophy

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### Abstract

The issue of existence and justification of the Supreme Being is constantly approached by Immanuel Kant in his entire work. For Kant, the ultimate goal of the nature created by God is man as a moral being: the world was created according to man's moral needs. This is why it is said that, after Kant, teleology leads to a moral theology, one that is not about the possibility of proving rationally God's existence but which is about stating that moral life is possible only if God exists. Under these circumstances, though the "idea of God" is presupposed in most Kantian works, we insist, below, particularly on what is debated when appealing to *practical reason*. In the theoretical philosophy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the idea of God as Unconditioned, as a being that is absolutely necessary, is seen as a transcendental ideal determined through an idea as a prototype of perfection necessary to everything that is contingent and determined in our sensible world: what we can do to conciliate sensible experience with the Absolute Being is to presuppose an extra-phenomenal reality designated as transcendental object: we presuppose its existence but we cannot get to know it. Later, in *Critique of Practical Reason*, God is postulated (together with *soul's immortality*) as a condition of the supreme value of moral life, the *Sovereign Good* (union of virtue with happiness). Since in the sensible world moral conduct does not warrant proportional happiness, the virtuous ones have strong reasons to believe in the reparatory intervention of a superior power: God, as moral ideal and warranty of moral order. "Morality leads, inevitably, to religion, through which it (morality) extends over a moral Lawgiver" claims Kant. Under these conditions, religion, understood as the belief in the existence of a supreme Lawgiver, has, for Kant, an exclusively moral substance. In the last part of the present study we insist on the work *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, we attempt at arguing the possibility of discovering some elements of "philosophical Christology" in Kant's practical philosophy: first, because, for the philosopher of Königsberg, Christian doctrine provides the only concept of *Sovereign Good* that meets the exigencies of practical reason; and second, because we consider significant Kant's debates on *God's Son as impersonated idea of the Good*, the *Perfect Man well-pleasing to God*, *Moral Personality*, noumenal archetype originating in mankind, etc.

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The issue of existence and justification of the Supreme Being is constantly approached by Immanuel Kant in his entire work. For Kant, the ultimate goal of the nature created by God is man as a moral being: the world was created according to man's moral needs. This is why it is said that, after Kant, teleology leads to a moral theology, one that is not about the possibility of proving rationally God's existence but which is about stating that moral life is possible only if God exists. Under these circumstances, though the "idea of God" is presupposed in most Kantian works, we insist, below, particularly on what is debated when appealing to practical reason.

In the theoretical philosophy of the Critique of Pure Reason, the idea of God triggers reason through a few major themes: antinomies of pure reason, the theme of transcendental ideal and then the possibility of thinking transcendental ideas that name the unconditioned, the significance of the transcendental object and the transcendental argument. In the thesis of the fourth antinomy of pure reason, God is seen as a being that is absolutely necessary, unconditioned, thinkable, a being that faces the sensible world, the only world that can be investigated. Advancing in the cognitive process, the unconditioned appears as a transcendental ideal, a case in which "God is, for the individual humans who are imperfect, the ideal or the prototype of perfection with which humans compare themselves in knowledge and action. Though, comparing, we can generally operate a few corrections, human beings are aware of the fact that they will be never able to reach – in knowledge and action – the ideal of perfection represented by the Absolute Being." [Croitoru, 10]. Then, taking into account the so-called "dialectic reasoning of pure reason" in connection with the ultimate principles of reason, i.e. with transcendental ideas (psychological idea, cosmological idea, and theological idea), Kant mentions that reason, in its attempt to cover the entire world, makes connections in accordance with the principle of the systematic unity which makes us act as if everything originated in an Absolute Being acting as supreme and self-sufficient cause. This is what Kant himself says: "Now, although we must say of the transcendental conceptions of reason, 'they are only ideas', we must not, on this account, look upon them as superfluous and nugatory. For although no object can be determined by them, they can be of great utility, unobserved and at the basis of the edifice of the understanding, as the canon for its extended and self-consistent exercise – a canon which, indeed, does not enable it to cognize more in an object than it would cognize by the help of its own conceptions, but which guides it more securely in its cognition. Not to mention that they perhaps render possible a transition from our conceptions of nature and the non-ego to the practical conceptions, and thus produce for even ethical ideas keeping, so to speak, and connection with the speculative cognitions of reason. The explanation of all this must be looked for in the sequel." [Kant: 2010, 227]. It is only that we cannot reach the Absolute Being through experience knowledge alone: what we can do to conciliate sensible experience and God is to presuppose an extra-phenomenal reality designated as transcendental object of which we cannot say what it is in itself. We need to mention that, for Kant, transcendental object has an objective meaning: it is established by consciousness so that the world is not a simple world of representations without objective substratum. Deducing the unconditioned necessary existence from the insufficiency of the contingent existence is called transcendental argument. According to its Kantian significance, the principles of reason and, hence, the idea of God, are true since systematic knowledge of nature is possible, necessarily and univoquely, only if we admit them. "The following is, therefore, the natural course of human reason. It begins by persuading itself of the existence of some necessary being. In this being, it recognizes the characteristics of unconditioned existence. It then seeks the conception of that which is independent of all other things – in other words, in that which contains all reality. But the unlimited all is an absolute unity, and is conceived by the mind as a being one and supreme; and thus reason concludes that the Supreme Being, as the primal basis of all things, possesses an existence which is absolutely necessary." [Kant: 2010, 342].

It is at this level of discussion that intervenes Kant's critique of rational theology, deist theology that turns the transcendental ideal into a real object, particularly through the so-called "ontological argument." For the German philosopher, the ontological argument of God's existence consists in the passage from the concept of perfect being to its existence. Descartes had already said that God, as a perfect being, existed necessarily because the idea of perfect being also contains the attribute of existence. Kant shows that the ontological argument does not go beyond the strictly logical framework. The perfect being can be thought of because it does not involve any contradiction, but the logical possibility is not the real one. The latter involves the agreement with the conditions of being which differ from the conditions of thinking. Second, existence is not a simple predicate, a concept contained within other concepts. Then, Kant considers we can think of a relationship between concept and existence in two ways: analytically and synthetically. In the first one, existence is deduced from the concept as part of an entity, a situation

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