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PLAN OF THESIS.

Kant's Doctrine of the Summum Bonum.

- Introduction.
1. His place in the Development of Ethical Thought.
 2. The Starting-point of his System.
 3. Relation of the Two Critiques.

Preliminary Remarks:-

1. Kantian Theory of Knowledge.
2. Connection of the Analytic and Dialectic of Practical Reason.

I. Kant's Doctrine Stated:-

1. Function of Reason.
2. Highest Good:
 - (1) Term "Highest" explained.
 - (2) Highest Good is union of virtue and happiness.
 - (3) Postulates of Practical Reason.
 - (4) Need of Faith.
3. Summary of Kant's Theory.

II. Comparison of this with other conceptions of the Highest Good:-

1. Greek.
2. Stoic.
3. Epicurean.
4. Butler's.
5. Evolutional.

III. Certain Defects of Kant's Theory:-

1. The Postulates.
2. His view of Faith.
3. His view of Law.
4. Separation of Virtue and Happiness.
5. Individualism.

Concluding note:- A true view of the Highest Good.

KANT'S DOCTRINE OF THE SUMMUM BONUM.

To Immanuel Kant belongs the honor of discovering to the philosophic world a new, more thorough, and more correct method of inquiry into the origin, nature, and condition of knowledge. Sensationalism under Locke and Hume had ascribed to matter the place of supreme importance, whilst idealism, under Descartes and Wolff, had virtually done the same thing with mind, or the ego. Both systems proceeded from the dogmatic standpoint, and both led their advocates into scepticism. The one school, denying the innateness of ideas, maintained that our knowledge of things is exclusively given in, and received from experience, and is therefore a posteriori; the other, equally dogmatic, asserted that our ideas do not come into the mind from without, but are produced by the mind itself, and that therefore our knowledge is a priori. But Kant, whilst he agreed with both in some measure - with the empiricists in that he regarded knowledge as beginning with experience, and with the rationalists in that he held some knowledge was acquired by the mind absolutely independent of all experience - whilst he did thus unite the two currents of philosophic thought, he set out upon his inquiry from an entirely different standpoint. He perceived that the cause of the failure of the previous philosophies to satisfy the demands of reason, lay in the fact that they were built up on the supposition that all our knowledge must adapt itself to objects. But how would it do, he asks, to reverse the order? Thales, Galileo, Copernicus and others, had wrought a complete revolution in the scientific world, by allowing reason to put into nature that which it obtains from nature. Why not try the same method in the investigation of knowledge? Then instead of the mind and its objects being viewed as existing independently, it will be found that there is an essential and indissoluble connection between them.

Sense and understanding will be seen to be inseparably woven the one into the other. Both must operate in order to the production of knowledge.

Now the older schools had constantly inquired into the nature of knowledge, but they had never raised the question, - How is knowledge possible? Kant, however, makes this the starting point of his system of philosophy. In answer to this question he has given us his great work "The Critique of Pure Reason", dividing it in accordance with the three prevalent psychological divisions, knowing, willing, and feeling. In the first of these, "The Critique of Pure, or Speculative Reason", he solves the problem of the possibility of a priori, synthetic judgments; in the second division, "The Critique of Practical Reason", he expounds, analytically and dialectically, his ethical theory, or doctrine of the Highest Good; and in the third division, "The Critique of Judgment", he discusses the nature and value of aesthetics, and final causes.

The subject of this thesis requires us to confine our attention chiefly to the second part of the exposition of his ethical theory, namely: the Dialectic of Practical Reason; but in passing to a statement of his doctrine, we shall briefly outline the relation subsisting between the "Critique of Pure," and that of "Practical Reason."

"The Critique of Pure Reason" gives an exposition of the transcendental element of sense-perception, but in "The Critique of Practical Reason" the transcendental idea does not appear, because moral principles, though a priori, are relative to empirical conceptions, for example: pleasure, pain, desire, and the like. So that, while the aim of pure reason is, to show how it is possible for reason to have a priori knowledge of objects, the aim of practical reason is to demonstrate how the will is determined to action in an a priori manner. The two Critiques, therefore have a widely different end in view. The one enquires how the soul is

able to know; the other, how it is able to will.

Kant's method of conducting the enquiry is very similar in both Critiques. Both have their Analytic and Dialectic. In the analytic of pure reason, a priori knowledge is proven by means of the pure perceptions of space and time, while in the analytic of practical reason, the investigation is made by reference to principles, the question being whether empirical principles are the only ones that determine the will, or whether there may be a higher regulative force given in, and by reason itself. Again, by a series of arguments, Kant, in the dialectic of pure reason, examines the possibility of the extension of our knowledge beyond experience; and, by a similar method, in the dialectic of practical reason he enquires into the nature of the relation subsisting between the two essential elements in the Highest Good, namely: virtue and happiness.

The results of the two critiques differ. Pure reason had shown that we cannot have knowledge of things-in-themselves, but only of appearances, that is to say, of things as they appear to us under the forms of time and space. It had also shown that, whilst an unconditioned cause of the known conditioned must exist, yet a knowledge of that unconditioned is beyond the reach of reason. Thus Kant was led into a scepticism almost as gross as that of Hume; a scepticism from which, however, he escapes by showing in the second Critique, that certain ideas which for pure reason are "transcendent" become for practical reason, "immanent"; so that whilst the former could obtain no positive knowledge of objects beyond the limits of experience, the latter, through the moral law furnishes reason with adequate proof of a supersensible world, of freedom, God, and immortality; and also of the possibility of a Highest Good, and the obligation to attain to it. Nevertheless theoretical reason gains no increase of actual knowledge from the result of practical reason. It is only assured of the

certainty of that which it had merely conceived possible, namely: the objective reality of the supersensible world, freedom, immortality and God. Thus, in the practical critique we have an inner relation between reason and will, instead of an outer relation between reason and objects as in the transcendental critique. What the "Critique of Pure Reason" had denied the "Critique of Practical Reason" affirmed. The former is the negative, the latter is the positive side of Kant's position. The sum total of the "Critique of Pure Reason" is that "it is impossible to reconcile knowledge with thought, or to bring experience into conformity with the ideal demand of reason." This leaves room for the "Critique of Practical Reason" which establishes the fact of the moral law, and discerns the reality of freedom and the moral order of the world. Whilst the "Critique of Pure Reason" teaches that the thing-in-itself underlies our theoretical reason, the "Critique of Practical Reason" that this thing-in-itself is Will. In Kuno Fischer's language: "The will is that thing-in-itself which underlies the constitution of our faculties of knowledge which is the cause of our intellectual development, and makes this subserve the moral."

It will become evident, in the discussion of our theme, that Kant's doctrine of the Highest Good presupposes a theory of knowledge such as he ~~advanced~~ advanced, and that his doctrine bears a distinct relation to the conclusions of the analytic of practical reason. Therefore we shall give, in two preliminary remarks, first, a short account of his theory of knowledge, and second, a brief outline of the conclusions of the analytic of the practical reason.

All knowledge consists in the framing of judgments, which may be either analytic or synthetic. An analytic judgment is merely "explicative", since no new thought is added; a synthetic judgment is "ampliative", a new predicate being added. Synthetic judgments may be

either a posteriori, or a priori. To prove the former is not difficult, but it is difficult to prove how synthetic judgments a priori can be possible. It is the function of pure, or theoretical reason to furnish that proof, and it carries out that function by showing that all knowledge is the product of sense and understanding. Through the senses we obtain perceptions of objects, from the understanding we get the conceptions of ideas. In other words, sense supplies the raw material for the understanding to work on. Knowledge thus arises from the combined operation of sense and understanding. From one without the other we can receive no knowledge. Only as we make our conceptions sensuous, and bring our perceptions under conceptions do we increase our knowledge.

The conditions under which sense perceptions are possible, are space and time, two original forms of intuition, prior to and independent of all experience, so that while knowledge may begin with experience it does not originate in experience. Thus knowledge and experience are not co-extensive, as they appear to be, for instance, in Locke's theory. These two a priori intuitions, space and time, are perceptions, not conceptions; they are purely our ideas, and are presupposed in all experience. From this it will be readily seen that we can know only things as they appear to us under the forms of space and time; we can have no knowledge of what "things-in-themselves" are. We can know only phenomena, we cannot know the noumena.

It is the function of the understanding to form judgments, but in order to do so it must employ certain general concepts or categories. A little reflection will lead us to see that there can be only four kinds of judgments. We can judge of the quantity, the quality, the relation, and modality of objects. Under these four general concepts there are twelve categories, which the understanding employs in the formation of judgments. We cannot think without the aid of these categories; nor can

we know an object unless we have perceptions which correspond to the categories. Hence experience is possible only when perceptions are brought into right relation ^{with} conceptions of the understanding by the aid of the categories. The understanding has the power in itself to bring into its forms or conceptions, the necessary matter, or perceptions; and for knowledge it must do so, for as perceptions without conceptions are blind, so also are conceptions without perceptions empty. We might be able to think objects, but could never know them until the understanding had received into its concepts the necessary sense-perceptions of the objects. Much less could we have a priori knowledge without the pure conception of the understanding, by which all experience is made possible.

But now a dilemma arises, for on the one hand conceptions belong to the understanding, (which has no connection with the sense-world) and on the other hand, perceptions belong to sensation. Since it is necessary that these be brought together, to make experience possible, how is this union to be effected? Kant replies, by the imagination, for this faculty, or power of the soul, is dependent both upon understanding and ^asensibility; on the former, for "the unity of its intellectual synthesis", and on the latter, for the "complexity of apprehension." By means of the synthetic unity of apperception, or the unity of self-consciousness, these are held in time, so that we come to recognize them in conceptions. There are thus three distinct steps in the acquisition of the knowledge of objects. First apprehension in perception, second, reproduction in imagination, and third recognition in conception. It must be borne in mind that the mere category or form of the understanding cannot of itself alone furnish knowledge, there must be combined with it the sense-perception; for in this lies the distinction of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds; and in this fact, also, is found the limit of pure reason, because it is evident that we can have

no knowledge of a supersensible world. We might be able to conceive, but could never know of its existence. Likewise we may think a Supreme Being exists, but, as we can have no sense-perception of Him, we cannot know that He does exist. It is this clear cut distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal, which makes possible such a theory of the summum bonum as Kant holds, as we shall have occasion, at a later stage, to point out.

As the understanding has its categories, so the reason has its ideas. These are not constitutive as the categories are, but regulative. It is the aim of these regulative ideas of reason to find a higher condition for that which is conditioned, and so to make more and more complete the knowledge supplied by the sensibility and understanding. Reason endeavors to get beyond the limits of experience to the Absolute, and in doing so, wrongly treats these regulative ideas as though they were constitutive, with the result that it is landed into various contradictions, a fault with which the older rational psychology, cosmology and theology were chargeable.

Kant's theory of knowledge, therefore, may be summed as follows: All knowledge is a synthesis of the units of sense-perception, which are received under the forms of space and time, into the pure concepts or categories of the understanding, the connection being made possible by the fact of the unity of the self-consciousness. Our knowledge is purely relative. We are capable of positively knowing things only as they appear to us under the forms of space and time; we can have no knowledge of "things-in-themselves". Reason cannot go beyond experience, and if it attempts to do so it inevitably falls into contradictions. This means that theoretical reason cannot prove such ideas as those of freedom, immortality and God. It may think them, conceive them possible, but that is all. It remains for practical reason to furnish the proof.

The object of the second remark preliminary to the discussion of

our subject, is to exhibit the connection of the Dialectic with the Analytic of the Practical Reason. This will be done best by stating the conclusions reached in the latter.

First then it should be noted that the starting point of the practical reason must be principles, or fundamental conceptions, and these must be such as have power to determine the will. They are not material, such as pleasure, but are of the nature of universal law. The supreme and universal law of practical reason may be stated thus: "Act so that the maxims of your will may be in perfect harmony with a universal system of laws." Individual maxims can be regarded as universal laws only when they determine the will by their form and not by their content; in other words, when that which they allow might safely become a universal maxim. To illustrate: Suppose I make it my maxim to win the highest position of fame possible to man, but find the way barred by a certain person; and suppose that one day the opportunity is afforded me of taking that person's life, and so stepping into the desired place. Now if - keeping before me my particular maxim- I seize that opportunity, I shall be acting in a way that I should not wish to be universally tolerated, for, I myself, might be standing in the light of another person, and therefore be slaughtered. Since then I should not wish it to be universally carried out, I ought not so to act, but should subordinate my individual maxim to a higher law, or maxim that might be universally observed.

This supreme law is not derived from experience, but from reason itself, which makes us conscious of a law to which all our maxims must conform, and so produces the idea of a super-sensible system of nature to which we give objective reality.

Some laws are only hypothetically binding. For example, the empirical law that an individual should seek his own happiness, which only

determines the will under certain conditions, but a supreme law must be able to determine it unconditionally. Such a law is the "determinate law of causality in an intelligible world", which is the moral law; for it is independent of all subjective differences, and holds good in the case of all beings, whether finite or infinite, who possess will. In finite beings, however, this law takes the form of a categorical imperative, since - although they possess pure will - they cannot have a will incapable of wishing maxims contrary to the moral law; in other words, they cannot have a holy will such as that possessed by the Infinite Being. For finite rational beings, then, the moral law comes as a categorical imperative.

This implies that the moral law is uninfluenced by the solicitations of sense, because a law which is capable of determining the will must be free from all sensuous impressions. Otherwise, it would ^{be} empirical, and hence would only come as a hypothetical imperative.

This is equivalent to asserting the autonomy of the will; for if the will is not determined solely by its own law, but is partially determined by other motives which have their source in the sensibilities, then moral obligation would cease. That is to say, heteronomy of will destroys the principles of obligation and morality, whereas autonomy of will establishes them.

It is not sufficient that the will be in harmony with the moral law, it must also be directly determined by that law, which must be the only motive of a human will. Any other motive than the categorical imperative of the moral law makes the will heteronomous, and deprives its acts of their ethical character. Reverence for that universal law not merely constitutes a motive of pure practical reason, or morality, but is in itself morality. Reverence for the moral law is the only feeling which can be known a priori, and which can be perceived to be necessary. The