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Research Article

**The Position of the Concept of God in Kant's Theoretical and Practical
Philosophy^a**

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Abstract

Introduction: This study is concerned with Immanuel Kant's understanding of God. Our study aims to reveal the position of God in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy.

Method: In our study, we examine the antinomy of the necessary being, the ideal of pure reason, the criticisms against the speculative proofs in favor of the unique existence of the object of the ideal of pure reason, and the theme of the moral postulate.

Results or Findings: The main finding of our study is that to the extent we take the ideal of pure reason as an ideal whose theoretical meaning is the transcendental ideal of pure reason and whose practical meaning is God, and thus as an ideal with both theoretical and practical manifestations, God occupies a positively central position not only in Kant's practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy. With this aim, function and claim, we believe that we will make a efficacious contribution to the Kantian literature.

Discussion or Conclusion: In order to accept the main conclusion of our study, we need to pursue the matter quite sensitively. Accepting this conclusion demands fidelity to the infallible limits Kant sets through his theoretical and practical criticism. When it comes to God, we have neither the right to violate the prohibitions of Kantian theory nor to ignore the demands of Kantian practice.

Keywords: Kant, God, antinomies, the ideal of pure reason, postulate

JEL Codes: Y4, Z10, Z12

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Araştırma Makalesi

Kant'ın Teorik ve Pratik Felsefesinde Tanrı Kavramının Konumu^a

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Öz

Giriş: Bu çalışmada Immanuel Kant'ın Tanrı anlayışıyla ilgilenilmektedir. Çalışmamız Tanrı'nın Kant'ın teorik ve pratik felsefesindeki konumunu ortaya koyma amacını taşımaktadır.

Yöntem: Çalışmamızda zorunlu varlık antinomisi, saf aklın ideali, saf aklın idealinin nesnesinin varlığı lehine öne sürülen spekülative nitelikteki argümanlara karşı ortaya konulan eleştiriler ve ahlaki koyut teması incelenmektedir.

Sonuçlar ya da Bulgular: Çalışmamızın temel sonucu, saf aklın idealini teorik anlamı saf aklın transzendenal ideali, pratik anlamı Tanrı olan, böylelikle hem teorik hem de pratik görünümüleri olan bir ideal olarak aldığımız ölçüde, Tanrı'nın yalnızca Kant'ın pratik felsefesinde değil ama aynı zamanda teorik felsefesinde de olumlu anlamda merkezi bir konuma sahip olduğudur. Bu amaç, işlev ve iddiaya sahip olan çalışmamızla Kant literatürüne etkili bir katkı sunacağımıza inanıyoruz.

Tartışma ya da Yapılan Çıkarımlar: Çalışmamızın temel sonucunu kabul edebilmek için konuyu oldukça hassas bir biçimde takip etmemiz gerekmektedir. Bu sonucu kabul etmek, Kant'ın teorik ve pratik eleştirisi aracılığıyla ortaya koyduğu şaşmaz sınırlara sadık kalmayı talep etmektedir. Tanrı söz konusu olduğunda ne Kantçı teorinin yasaklarını çiğneme ne de Kantçı pratiğin taleplerini görmezden gelme hakkımız bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kant, Tanrı, antinomi, saf aklın ideali, koyut

JEL Kodlar: Y4, Z10, Z12

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Introduction

There are four interrelated themes that a study aiming to determine the position of the concept of God in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy must necessarily address. These are, respectively, the antinomy of necessary being, the ideal of pure reason, the criticism of speculative proofs in favor of the being of the object of the ideal of pure reason, and the theme of the practical postulate. As far as I have observed, there is no article in the literature that deals with these four themes together in detail. Apart from this deficiency, another point that attracts my attention is that the positive aspects of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God are often overshadowed by the negative aspects or the positive aspects are not discussed strongly. At this point I argue the following: Kant has given God a central position in a positive sense not only in his practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy. Therefore, I think that this study is important in two respects. First, it will clearly demonstrate the positive aspects of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God. Secondly, through the relevant themes I will address, a holistic understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of Kant's conception of God will be obtained.

In his theoretical philosophy, Kant problematized God in terms of the possibility of his being and his theoretical meaning. Kant first problematizes the possibility of God's being in the antinomy of necessary being (in the fourth antinomy of pure reason) under the title 'Antinomy of Pure Reason' in the 'Transcendental Dialectic' section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Secondly, it is brought up under the heading 'The Ideal of Pure Reason' in the same chapter (through the criticism of speculative proofs aiming to justify the claim of God's being). Both in the resolution of the antinomy of necessary being and in the critique of speculative proofs (ontological, cosmological and physico-theological proofs), Kant declares that God's being is unknowable. This declaration is the negative aspect of the theoretical dimension of Kant's understanding of God: God's being cannot be known through theoretical reason. However, for Kant, this declaration does not mean that God's being is theoretically impossible. God's being cannot be known, but this does not mean that he does not exist, that his being is unthinkable. We have the theoretical right to assume that God exists. This right is the first positive aspect of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God. The second and relatively more important positive aspect is the theoretical meaning given to God. The theoretical meaning of God is that he is the transcendental ideal of pure reason: the ideal of pure reason as the representation of a singular object whose idea, not its unique existence, can be assumed.

On the other hand, in his practical philosophy, Kant problematized God in terms of the realization of our moral goals and thus in terms of its practical meaning, function or role. In his practical philosophy, Kant posited the being of God as one of the conditions for the possibility of the highest good. God is a practical postulate that must be assumed for the realization of the highest good, which is the necessary object of practical reason. As a matter of fact, happiness in accordance with moral perfection, which is the first element of the highest good, is only possible by taking God's being as a postulate. In this respect, according to Kant, affirming God's being is a subjectively valid moral imperative. More precisely, God is a belief of pure reason. Therefore, while theoretically God is in a position whose being cannot be known but can be assumed, practically God is in a position whose being can be believed. Thus, Kant justifies our right to assume God's being through practical reason. This is the positive aspect of the practical dimension of Kant's conception of God. This positive aspect reveals the practical meaning of God, that is, it affirms that God can be taken as a practical postulate. Accordingly, while the theoretical meaning of God is the transcendental ideal of pure reason, its practical meaning is that it is a practical postulate.

Necessary Being Antinomy and Solution

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant raised God primarily as a matter of antinomy in terms of the possibility of his being. In general, antinomies are examples of dialectical reasoning. Dialectics, on the other hand, is a logic of delusion, a logic of illusion, which arises because the transcendental conditions of experience are ignored. Kant put forward the paralogisms about the thinking subject, the four fundamental antinomies of pure reason, and speculative proofs aimed at justifying the being of the ideal of pure reason as examples of dialectical reasoning. The antinomy of necessary being corresponds to the fourth antinomy of pure reason. This antinomy consists of two theses that give opposing answers to the unique existence of necessary being. The thesis is that there is a necessary being that belongs to the universe. The antithesis is that there is a necessary being that is the cause of this universe, neither in the universe nor outside it. After laying out the argumentation of these two theses, Kant tried to resolve the antinomy. Let us now examine this process.

According to the thesis, there is a necessary being that belongs to the universe. As a matter of fact, there is a sequence of changes in the universe as the totality of appearances. If this sequence of changes did not exist, time or the representation of temporal sequence as the condition that makes the sensible universe possible would not exist either. But within subjective and objective relations, there is time and therefore a temporal sequence of changes. On the other hand, every change is under the influence of a condition that precedes it in terms of time. Accordingly, every conditional (change) has a condition (the cause of change). But this series of conditions must continue until there is an uncondition that exists in an absolute sense. Indeed, without such an uncondition, a given sequence of change could not occur as a result. If there were no unconditioned being that initiates the conditions to affect each other in the backward progression/investigation of conditions, the change we take as given could not exist. Therefore, there is a necessary being that is itself unconditioned and initiates the series of conditions. Moreover, this being belongs to the sensible universe. For it is impossible to assume that this being is outside the universe. As a matter of fact, the beginning of the series of changes is only possible because of a cause that precedes this beginning with respect to time. Therefore, this first cause belongs to time and to the sum total of appearances, whether it is considered as the whole series of the universe itself or only a part of this series (Kant, 1998).

In his note on the thesis, Kant stated that the thesis was not legitimate. In fact, as we shall see below, the thesis is similar to the cosmological proof put forward to justify the unique existence of the ideal of pure reason. The reason why the demonstration is illegitimate is that it rises from the conditional in appearance to the unconditioned in concept. It is rightly assumed that there is a dependence from the changes in the universe to the causes that determine these changes. But every condition in the series of causes that condition each other must be dependent on another condition. Therefore, there is no first beginning (uncaused cause) or highest member in the series of causes. This is why the demonstration is illegitimate. For although it starts from a set of empirically determined conditions, i.e., contingent concepts, according to the principles of experience, it moves on to a comprehensible set that finds the unique existence of a necessary cause that cannot be empirically determined and that does not depend on any sensory conditions (Kant, 1998).

On the other hand, according to the anti-thesis, there is a necessary being neither in the universe nor outside the universe that can be seen as the cause of this universe. The anti-thesis arrives at this conclusion by first showing a double contradiction that we would fall into if we were to argue that there is a necessary being that belongs to the universe. In this sense, we can defend the unique existence of a necessary being either by thinking that there must be an

unconditionally necessary, uncaused beginning to the sequence of changes in the universe, or by thinking that although the sequence lacks a beginning and is contingent and conditional in all its parts, it is absolutely necessary and unconditional in its whole. However, both cases involve a contradiction. The first possibility contradicts the dynamic law of the determination of all appearances in time: every appearance or chain of change has a beginning. The second possibility is also contradictory, since if at least one member of the multiplicity in the sequence does not have a necessary existence, the sequence itself cannot be thought to have a necessary existence. But these two contradictions arise when the necessary being is thought to belong to the universe. In that case, we can think of the necessary being as a being that causes the universe but is outside of it. But this third option would also contain a contradiction. Indeed, if we assume such a being, we will think that it initiates the existence of the series of changes. However, this being would also have to be able to initiate action. If this is the case, the causality of this cause would belong to time and therefore to the universe. This would contradict our assumption that puts necessary being outside the universe (Kant, 1998).

In his note for the antithesis, Kant drew attention to the strange contradiction he observed in the antinomy. This contrast is the inference of two different conclusions with equal soundness on the same ground of demonstration. The supporter of the thesis deduces the unique existence of an absolutely necessary being. Indeed, he believes that he finds both conditional conditions and an unconditioned condition in the regress in the series of appearances. The supporter of the antithesis, on the other hand, concludes that there is no necessary being at all. Indeed, he believes that in the regress in the series of appearances he finds all conditions conditioned, and hence there is no unconditioned. According to Kant, this is because the supporter of the thesis sees the absolute unity of the sequence of conditions that belong to time and determine each other in time, and hence the unconditioned/necessary, whereas the supporter of the antithesis sees only those conditions that determine each other contingently in a temporal sequence, between which there is no unconditioned or absolutely necessary being (Kant, 1998). Under the influence of dialectical reasoning, reason thus falls into an antinomy by means of two conclusions that, although they contradict each other, appear equally plausible.

Now, we can begin to see how Kant provides a solution to this antinomy. Strictly speaking, Kant resolves this antinomy by considering that the condition and the conditional may not always be in the same sequence. Therefore, both the thesis and the antithesis can be true at the same time but in different relations. Accordingly, necessary being can be assumed to exist, but on condition that we put it as an intelligible, not a sensory, cause, as a being of the faculty of understanding (noumenon/thing-in-itself). That is to say, when we think in terms of appearances, we would have to say that everything is changeable under the influence of a condition. Among these conditions, no unconditioned member can be found. Everything will depend on a sensory condition that itself depends on another condition. But dynamic regression is different from mathematical regression. Mathematical regression is based on the decomposition of an intuitional whole into its parts, or on the combination of parts into a whole. For example, I might think that the pencil in my hand constitutes a whole and can be decomposed into its parts. However, each part that emerges in this decomposition must be identical to the whole of the pen to which it belongs. Each part has to be an appearance. But in dynamic regression, it is essential that a condition is derived from the cause on which it depends, or that a substance with a contingent existence is derived from a necessary existence. Therefore, the condition need not necessarily form an empirical series with its subordinate conditional (Kant, 1998). In other words, the condition need not be identical with the conditional. When we bring this distinction (the distinction between mathematical and dynamic regress) into the context of the antinomy of necessary being, in relation to the unconditioned existence of the

substance itself, we are entitled to assume that the regress in the series of appearances can be grounded in an intelligible, not sensible, being that can be assumed a priori to all appearances. In this respect, it can be assumed that the sequence of members in the sensible universe has an existence that is contingent or empirically conditional, but that on the other hand this sequence arises due to a non-empirical, unconditional necessary being. This shows not the possibility of necessary being, but not its impossibility. In such a way that the unconditioned condition, which itself does not depend on a condition, can be thought of as a non-sensory condition, a condition that exists outside the sequence.

On the other hand, this assumption is an arbitrary assumption. Kant clearly states that he does not aim to ground the unconditional existence or possibility of necessary being with this assumption (Kant, 1998). With this resolution of the antinomy, Kant only aims to show that necessary being cannot be considered impossible.¹ For this purpose, a limit is drawn to both reason and the faculty of understanding. The limit imposed on reason prevents it from leaving the pursuit of empirical conditions and deviating into a transcendent realm that cannot be given in concreto. On the other hand, the limit imposed on the faculty of understanding, which has only an empirical use, prevents it from deciding on the possibility of things in general and from declaring things that are intelligibly/thinkably valid as impossible because it cannot find them in appearance (Kant, 1998). It is therefore essential to state the following: the assumption of an intelligible condition outside the sequence, despite the fact that the conditions for the conditioned are sensory, would still not imply that this intelligible condition is known. In this sense, one cannot claim to have knowledge either that necessary being exists or that it does not exist. What is important here is that necessary being is not theoretically impossible and therefore can be assumed. On the other hand, this conclusion does not mean that its being can be known. As a matter of fact, according to Kant, this intelligible reason, which can be assumed in terms of ends, in terms of the pure, not empirical, use of reason, satisfies the transcendental ground of the possibility of the sensory series, which cannot be known by us (Kant, 1998).²

As can be seen, the solution of the antinomy of necessary being reveals both the positive and negative aspects of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God. This solution has a negative aspect because it declares that God's being is unknowable. On the other hand, this solution also has a positive aspect, because it shows that God's being is not impossible, but can be accepted as an assumption. In this way, we can think that the basic claim of our study has been grounded to a certain extent. Indeed, with the resolution of the antinomy of necessary being, the first positive aspect of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God has emerged. We can now move on to the second and relatively more important aspect of the theoretical dimension of Kant's conception of God. At this point, we will need to turn our attention to the ideal of pure reason. With this step, we will see that Kant gives God a central position in his theoretical philosophy in a positive sense, and we will have fully justified the main claim of our study.

The Theoretical and Practical Meaning of the Ideal of Pure Reason: The Transcendental Ideal of Pure Reason and God

Just after the resolution of the antinomy of necessary being, Kant begins to investigate an absolutely necessary being, the ideal of pure reason, from which the concepts of all things

¹ Indeed, as Şahabettin Yalçın states, "according to Kant, not having theoretical knowledge about something does not mean that it does not exist" (Yalçın, 2011, p. 16).

² As Necmettin Tan states, the necessary being "is by no means a being that is within the limits of time and space as formulated by Kant, or that can be observed and sensed within those limits. This excludes it from being an object of knowledge in the Kantian sense" (Tan, 2011b, p. 158).

can be derived. So, what is the ideal of pure reason, which is subject to the effects of the dialectical illusion and therefore must be handled by trying to carefully distinguish it from these effects? At this point, it is useful to first see what an ideal means in general. As a matter of fact, Kant first explains what the ideal of pure reason is through what an ideal is in general. This explanation is provided through a comparative narrative initiated through categories. We can now follow this path.

Accordingly, as is well known, the categories of the faculty of understanding are pure forms of thought. On the other hand, the ability to represent an object with these forms of thought depends on the accompaniment of the conditions of the faculty of sensation. If the conditions of the faculty of sensation do not accompany the conception of the object, the categories will have no objective reality. In other words, the objective reality of categories can be ensured through their application to an appearance. Through such an application, the faculty of understanding provides itself with the necessary material for its own concepts and presents these concepts in concreto as a presentable concept of experience.

But in the case of a theoretical idea, it is not entirely possible to provide the necessary material. Ideas are always incomplete in terms of objective reality compared to categories. This is because no empirical knowledge can ensure the completeness of an idea or exemplify this completeness. Take, for example, the idea of the universe. This idea actualizes itself in every division of the universe. However, each division remains within the scope of this universe idea. Since the idea of the universe cannot be given in its whole, or, for example, a house cannot give the whole universe, this idea exceeds the possibility of experience. Therefore, we can say that through an idea, reason aims only at a sequential unity. This unity is provided by the position of the parts in relation to each other, by the range of the many, in a certain unity, through ideas. However, even though the reason strives to bring the unity that it creates through empirical knowledge closer to the sequential unity provided by the ideas, it never succeeds in achieving this sequential unity in its wholeness (Kant, 1998).

On the other hand, in the case of an ideal, which, according to Kant, is a singular thing determined by ideas, objective reality is even further removed from the idea. Indeed, while the idea gives a rule, the ideal offers an origin-image. Kant stated that by the term ideal he meant not only an idea *in concreto* but also an idea *in individuo*, a singular thing that can be determined only through the idea. For example, the human wisdom that goes with virtue is an idea, but the (Stoic) wise man is an ideal. The ideal of the wise man is a regulative principle that carries in itself a practical power and underlies the possibility of the completeness of our actions. This ideal is in complete harmony with the idea of wisdom and exists only in thought. Accordingly, the ideal of the wise man, which implies a divine person, is the origin-image of our actions. Although we will never reach the fulfillment demanded by this ideal, we strive to better ourselves by comparing ourselves to it (Kant, 1998). According to Kant, however, we cannot attribute objective reality (existence) to ideals, even though they are not the delusions of the human mind. Ideals offer a measure to reason. With this measure we determine the degree and incompleteness of the incomplete. In this respect, someone who has made progress in his or her virtuous life measures his or her own deficiencies according to the ideal of the wise man. Therefore, we cannot realize an ideal that serves only as a measure in the realm of appearance. Accordingly, the concept of an ideal must be seen as something completely transcendent to experience (Kant, 1998).

After explaining what ideal means in general, Kant moves on to describe the ideal of pure reason. At this point, Kant first presents us with the principles of ‘determinability’ and ‘complete determination’. In Kant’s eyes, every concept stands first under the ‘principle of

determinability'. According to this principle, we can think that only one of two contradictory predicates belongs to the concept in question. For example, A cannot take upon itself both the predicates B and non-B. Either the rose is red or it is not. This fundamental principle, based on the proposition of contradiction, abstracts the entire content of the knowledge at hand and analyzes it in terms of its logical form. On the other hand, Kant also argues that every thing stands, according to its possibility, under a determination that goes from beginning to end, under the 'principle of complete determination'. This second principle is not based solely on the proposition of contradiction. For whereas the principle of determinability sets as a condition that only one of two opposing predicates can belong to the concept, the principle of complete determination determines things in terms of all the predicates that belong to them. In this case, the thing itself is determined by considering its total possibility. All possible predicates of the thing are considered together with their opposites, and accordingly it is stated that either the first total predicates or the opposite total predicates belong to the thing. Obviously, Kant assumes the totality of predicates belonging to the thing as an a priori condition. Each thing acquires its possibility through its derivation from this total possibility, which is assumed as an a priori condition. It must be said, then, that the principle of complete determination is different from the principle of determinability. Indeed, while the principle of determinability abstracts the knowledge/concept from all its content and determines it only in terms of its logical form, the principle of complete determination determines everything by taking its content into account. Accordingly, the principle of complete determination constitutes the complete concept of something. It achieves this by being the principle of the synthesis of all predicates of the thing, differentiating itself from the principle of determinability, which has an analytic characteristic and represents only one of two opposing predicates as belonging to the thing. The principle of complete determination, then, rests on a transcendental assumption, that is, it rests on the assumption of the data, the means necessary for all possibility, which a priori includes the data necessary for each thing to acquire its particular possibility.

Accordingly, "the proposition that everything that exists is determined from beginning to end implies that not only one of each pair given in opposition to each other, but one of all possible predicates [pairs] always belongs to the thing" (Kant, 1998, p. 554). Therefore, for the complete determination of a thing or for the complete knowledge of a thing, all possible things must be known. Accordingly, in fact, complete determination is a mere concept, which can never be given *in concreto* in a complete form, but finds its place in an idea in the reason. This idea, which is a fundamental concept, is the idea of the ground/sum of all possibility (all reality/omnitude realitatis). Through this idea we think the sum of all possible predicates, despite the predicates not yet given. Every given predicate witnesses the subjective reality of this idea.

The ideal of pure reason is the concept of a singular representation determined by the idea of the ground/sum of all possibility. In this respect, similar to the way human wisdom determines the ideal of the wise man, the idea of the ground/sum of all possibility determines the ideal of pure reason. All possibility is not only under this concept, but also within it. Everything derives its share of possibility from the ideal of pure reason, which is determined by the idea of the ground of all possibility. Accordingly, the ideal of pure reason (more precisely, the transcendental ideal conceived as a thing-in-itself) underlies the complete determination of everything that exists. It satisfies the highest and complete contentual

condition of the possibility of all things. It is such a condition that all thoughts of things in general are traced back to it in terms of their content (Kant, 1998).³

According to Kant, the object of the ideal of pure reason that can only be found in it is called the originary being (*ens originarium*). Since there is nothing above the ideal of pure reason, it is also called the highest being (*ens summum*). Moreover, since everything is conditionally dependent on it and stands below it, the ideal of pure reason is also seen as the being of all beings (*ens entium*). According to Kant, however, despite all these statuses, the relation of the ideal of pure reason to things is not like the relation of an actual object to other objects. The relation here should be thought of as the relation of an idea, which has an organizing function, to concepts. It must be said, then, that we are in complete ignorance of the unique existence of the ideal of pure reason, which is not an actual object (Kant, 1998).

Now, precisely at this point, one might ask whether Kant, with his conception of the ideal of pure reason, is referring to the concept of God that has been influential since the beginning of civilization. For Kant, is God the ideal of pure reason? It can be said that this pioneering question is quite useful for revealing at least the theoretical aspect of Kant's conception of God. Moreover, this question is in direct connection with the claim we put forward at the beginning of our study. So much so that this question leads us to explain or justify this claim. In fact, it would be correct to try to answer the question before us by justifying our claim. Indeed, our claim is that God satisfies the practical meaning, if not the entire meaning, of the ideal of pure reason, and thus, to the extent that the ideal of pure reason (which bears the influence of practical reason) is viewed as God in terms of the totality of pure reason, God occupies a positively central position not only in Kant's practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy.

On the other hand, when we follow Kant, contrary to what we might expect, we get the feeling that this claim of ours is not supported in any way. Accordingly, one might think that the answer to the question before us must be entirely negative, and that therefore our claim (which has already made it clear that God is a concept that belongs to morality, not to theoretical reason) does not receive any support from Kant. As a matter of fact, after all the explanations we have quoted, which reveal the theoretical function of the ideal of pure reason, according to Kant:

Now if we pursue this idea of ours so far as to hypostatize it, then we will be able to determine the original being through the mere concept of the highest reality as a being that is singular, simple, all-sufficient, eternal, etc., in a word, we will be able to determine it in its unconditioned completeness through of in a transcendental sense, and thus the ideal of pure reason is the object of a transcendental theology, just as I have introduced it above. Meanwhile this use of the transcendental idea would already be overstepping the boundaries of its vocation and its permissibility. For on it, as the

³ As Wood puts it, "what is meant here by the complete determination of the individual concept is the precise binding of the perfections (or 'realities') that will be included in the concept and the perfections (or 'negations') that will not" (Wood, 2020, p. 170). For this kind of synthesis, one can conceive of many examples, each describing a process of complete determination. For example, Guyer gives the following example: "While any object may or may not be an animal, this object is an animal; while any animal may or may not be a mammal, this animal is a mammal; while any mammal may or may not be a human being, this mammal is a human being; while any human being may or may not be male or female, this human being is a female; and so on until we have a complete determination of a particular person, for example Kant's eldest sister. To think particular things in this way, we must think of 'the totality of possibility as the sum total of all the predicates of things in general', as if it were a pool of possibilities from which actual things are constituted by making choices" (Guyer, 2022, pp. 248-249).

concept of all reality, reason only grounded the thoroughgoing determination of things in general, without demanding that this reality should be given objectively, and itself constitute a thing. (Kant, 1998, p. 558)

As can be seen, in order to say that the ideal of pure reason satisfies God, it is as if we need to make certain interventions in the ideal of pure reason, in a sense to transform this representation into God. But are these interventions, this attempt at transformation, legitimate? The answer to this question forces us to answer no to the above question. Because Kant clearly stated that these interventions are not theoretically acceptable, as we have seen. In this respect, in fact, this most realistic ideal of being is theoretically only a representation. It is not an object, it is not hypostatic, nor does it have a personality. But this ideal, which legitimately exists as a mere representation, is first realized under the influence of dialectical thinking. Here, the ideal, of which only the idea is assumed, is brought to the position of an object. Then it is hypostatized. In the last step, it is accepted as a person (Kant, 1998). However, according to Kant, for the purpose of determining precisely the necessary determinations of things, reason does not presuppose the existence of a being corresponding to this ideal, but only the idea of it. Because of such an assumption, we can think that all these interventions (objectification, hypostatization, or personification interventions) in the ideal of pure reason under the influence of dialectical thinking lead us to misunderstand the representation, and that in fact the ideal of pure reason in no way corresponds to God.

But does this conclusion mean to say that Kant never or in any way gave God one of the most important positions he could have given God in his theoretical philosophy? In other words, does it follow that we should think that Kant problematized God in his theoretical philosophy (in the context of the antinomy of necessary being, discussed above, or the critique of speculative proofs, discussed below) only in terms of the possibility of God's being? We will return to the negative and positive consequences of this problematization later. But what needs to be decided here is under a different topic. Our question, in the first step, is this: Does Kant only bring God to the issue in terms of the possibility of his being? In a further step, our question becomes this: Does Kant in his theoretical philosophy in no way give God a different meaning or a positive function, a role that is positively central? The final point of our question would be the following: Should it be said that in Kant's representation of the ideal of pure reason, the search for God in positive steps is a futile effort? Obviously, it is imperative to answer these questions without being led into conclusions as superficial or false as those of the opposing camp, which tends to immediately transform the ideal of pure reason into God.

Indeed, it is clear that trying to transform the ideal of pure reason into God by walking down the wrong paths that Kant diagnoses would be of no use in Kant's eyes. Kant has already admitted that it is impossible to know the being of God theoretically, either before (in the antinomy of necessary being) or after (in the axis of speculative proofs) coming to the issue of the ideal of pure reason. Therefore, it can be seen immediately that Kant would not approve of any attempt to transform the ideal of pure reason into God through theoretically unacceptable interventions, ignoring the negative aspect of the solution to the problem of God's being. On the other hand, does this definitive conclusion mean that Kant did not think of a correct way to bring the ideal of pure reason into relation with God, that he did not think it possible, or that he thought it impossible? Kant accepted that it is impossible to know the being of God. This is the negative aspect of the theoretical solution to the problem of the possibility of God's being. However, Kant also argued that God's being is not theoretically impossible, but can be assumed, even if arbitrarily. This is the positive aspect of the theoretical solution of the problem in question. At this point, therefore, one might wonder whether Kant left the door open to a way of bringing the representation of the ideal of pure reason into a more positive relation with God,

or even whether he himself established this relation. Or, more humbly, one might ask whether this positive relation is implicitly, if not explicitly, assumed by Kant.

In our opinion, when it comes to Kant's philosophy, these questions can be answered not only within theoretical limits, but also with a meaningful or partial accuracy that takes into account practice. Accordingly, in order to put forward the answers to our questions in a more general perspective, it will be useful to reach the point where the progress of theory can no longer take a step further and then turn to Kant's practical philosophy, his metaphysics of morality. What we will ultimately see on this path in comparison with practice is that Kant accepts the being of God as a practical postulate and puts it forward as the practical correlate of the transcendental ideal of pure reason, which is a theoretical concept. Therefore, we can think that there is a positive answer to our basic question. Accordingly, it can indeed be said that Kant gives the theoretical meaning of the transcendental ideal of pure reason to God, which he includes as a given in his practical philosophy. But how is this realized? How can it still be argued that the representation of the ideal of pure reason has a positive relation to God after having identified what the theory mistakenly fails to do? How can this positive relation be shown?

In our opinion, it can be argued that, in Kant's eyes, God satisfies the practical meaning of the representation of the ideal of pure reason, and therefore there is a positive relation between this representation and God. We can see this positive relation by affirming the practical needs or capabilities of the theoretically progressive reason. In fact, there does not seem to be much point in arguing that this positive relation is from practice to theory and that theory has no door that opens voluntarily to such a relation, and that this relation is established as a compulsion of practice to theory. For such a claim would be based on a failure to correctly evaluate Kant's understanding of both reason and God.

Thus, first of all, theoretical and practical reason are different parts or uses of one and the same reason, supported by common principles, processes or requirements. Kant's conception of reason presupposes a reason whose parts are peaceful or supportive of each other. According to Kant, reason is capable of providing answers to the problems at hand that are theoretically and practically compatible with each other. In this respect, for example, the theoretical reason, while it connects the being of God to the unknowable with certainty, also preserves an indeterminacy. Indeed, according to Kant, neither natural nor speculative knowledge of God's being is possible. It cannot be asserted epistemologically that God exists, but on the other hand, it cannot be theoretically denied that such a being can be thought or arbitrarily assumed. God's being is neither theoretically possible nor impossible, so even if it cannot be known that God exists, it can be thought –God can be assumed as a thing-in-itself. Within all these limits and tolerances of the theory, reason can arbitrarily assume God as a being that is neither possible nor impossible. In order to open at least a neutral line to this problem, which reason has theoretically condemned to unknowability, Kant gave reason the theoretical right to assume the being of God. This right is gained from an uncertainty. Indeed, the fact that neither the being nor the non-being of God can be theoretically demonstrated includes the fact that the final decision about his being or non-being depends on the arbitrary attitude of the researcher. It is precisely at this point, in this unknowability or modest uncertainty, that reason can be given another non-theoretical, practical support, another light. The neutral attitude of theoretical reason can be linked to the positive choice of practice. By giving up every illegitimate claim that it cannot theoretically assert, and by protecting every legitimate right it has acquired, reason can bring a final practical solution to this problem it finds before it. In this respect, reason in Kant's eyes can, so to speak, add a practical eye that believes in God's being

to its theoretical eye that does not see God's being as impossible - even though it is neither theoretically nor practically compelled to do so.

On the other hand, what needs to be clarified at this point is, to put it more precisely, whether reason, theoretically and practically unified by Kant on the question of the possibility of God's being, can be unified in a way that allows for a unified, coherent position on the meaning, function or role of God. Obviously, in the end, there seems to be no problem with the second part of this question. For, indeed, for Kant, God has a positively central position, meaning, function or role in practical philosophy, in practical reason. As we mentioned above, God is seen by Kant as a concept that belongs to morality, not to theoretical reason. In Kant's practical philosophy, God satisfies one of the basic conditions and principles of the possibility of the highest good, which we aim to practically attain through the ideas of freedom and moral laws. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how the correspondence between our will, which we determine according to a priori rules or laws, and nature can be built on a reliable ground without God as a practical postulate. More precisely, in Kant's view, to the extent that we choose to do what we ought to do in order to be deserving of happiness, we need to accept God as a necessary condition for the second element of the highest good, namely, for our hope to share in this happiness to arise. Thus, in his practical philosophy, Kant presents God as the wise, just, and omnipotent creator of the order of intelligible things. This is the position, meaning, role or appearance of God in Kant's practical philosophy. In this position, the limits of theoretical reason are set aside and no epistemic claim is made that God exists. As a matter of fact, the subject of pure reason in its entirety can at most have an assumption or belief about the being of God. Kant, too, included God only as a belief of pure reason, as the condition for the realizability of our moral goals, the happiness that constitutes the necessary object of our will. God is a benevolent power, the cause of the order of intelligible things and of nature, who is able to provide them with a just distribution of the happiness that rational beings set aside in the realization of what ought to be, but which they can expect as a matter of hope as a result of their actions. It is precisely on this practical basis that one can believe in the being of God. But can it be said that this clarity for the second part of our question is also present for the first part? It would be right to try to answer this now.

Accordingly, as we might expect for the accuracy of our claim, to argue that God is taken as a problem in Kant's theoretical philosophy only in terms of the possibility of his being, and to suggest that the original representation of the ideal of pure reason free from the effects of dialectics has nothing to do with God, is not supported by Kant in the first place. On the contrary, Kant argues that:

The necessary tendency to the highest good through respect for the moral law and the resulting recognition of the objective reality of the moral law ... leads through the postulates of practical reason to concepts - concepts that theoretical reason can posit as problems, but cannot resolve. (Kant, 2014, p. 144)

And that at the end of this path, what theoretical reason can think but leaves vague as a transcendental ideal, namely, the theological concept of the first being, is given a practical meaning as the highest principle of the highest good in the intelligible order and through the positing of the moral law (Kant, 2014).

Therefore, after this passage, it becomes difficult to think that Kant has severed all contact between the transcendental ideal, or the ideal of pure reason in general, and the concept of God. One might even think that there is a positive connection between the transcendental ideal, which Kant posits as a theoretical concept, and God, which he posits as a belief, a practical

postulate of pure reason, and that they satisfy the theoretical and practical meaning, appearance or position of the ideal of pure reason.

In our opinion, the ideal of pure reason is an inclusive representation formed by the concepts of the transcendental ideal and God. While the transcendental ideal is the theoretical counterpart of the ideal of pure reason, God can be taken as its practical counterpart. On the other hand, the ideal of pure reason cannot be given the meaning of God on the basis of a theoretical authority. The ideal of pure reason can only be given the meaning of God practically, according to a practical authority. When we believe in God practically, what the theoretical reason leaves indeterminate as a transcendental ideal, without wanting it to constitute something, becomes something, God, with a practical eye/will. Therefore, by establishing a relation of correspondence, not a relation of addition, between the concepts of the transcendental ideal and God, we can make sense of the ideal of pure reason as the transcendental ideal or God with a relative eye. Accordingly, it can be said that the ideal of pure reason can be reduced neither to the transcendental ideal nor to God. But at the same time, the ideal of pure reason can be thought to correspond to both the transcendental ideal and God. For this reason, Kant does not speak of the ideal of pure theoretical reason or pure practical reason, but of the ideal of pure reason in general. The ideal of pure reason corresponds to the representation of a thing-in-itself formed by the transcendental ideal, a theoretical concept, and God, a practical concept, in a relation of theoretical and practical correspondent.

Kant, both in philosophy and in the history of thought in general, does not regard the creative power called God as a theoretical concept, but recognizes it as a practical concept. Kant's argument to the contrary, that is, that God can be taken as a theoretical concept, is fraught with many impossibilities, and we do not have to go down this road at all. Theory does not necessarily need the concept of God, because it has another concept that corresponds to this concept on theoretical grounds, namely, the concept of the transcendental ideal. It is practical reason, not theoretical reason, that brings the concept of God in front of pure reason. Pure reason calls what its theoretical part calls the transcendental ideal and what its practical part calls God, an ideal of itself, that is, the ideal of pure reason. Therefore, we argue that by taking God as the practical counterpart of the ideal of pure reason, it is possible to say that God, through the ideal of pure reason, occupies a positively central position not only in Kant's practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy. But can it not be said that this association, this matching and unification, and this acceptance of the ideal of pure reason as God at the same time as a practical choice, free from illusion, would lead to an inconsistency in the Kantian system? How can it be said, even implicitly, that there is still an acceptable relation between the ideal of pure reason and God, after it has been shown that theory can falter in a dialectical illusion and that its unacceptable interventions into the ideal of pure reason do not succeed in transforming it into God? How can this association, this matching and unification, be approved?

Now, it seems to us that if it is true that reason is one despite its different parts or uses, then we might expect that what is present for reason in theory must have a counterpart in practice, or what is present for reason in practice must have a counterpart in theory. Indeed, Kant did not avoid mentioning an aspect of the harmony between theoretical and practical reason that often amazed him. In this respect, it seems difficult for us to think that God, whom Kant includes in his practical philosophy (and according to an important function or role), is merely a nothingness for theoretical reason. If Kant offers a central position for God from the practical side of reason, he might have thought of a similar position from the theoretical side. Now, if we are only talking about a possibility here and are immune to a dialectical illusion, there is no harm in considering with which theoretical concept such a similar position could be established.

Thus, without going too far, it turns out that we can liken God to the transcendental ideal of pure reason, which is among the concepts of theoretical reason. Accordingly, it can be said that the vague counterpart of the concept of God, which Kant sees as belonging to morality and not to theoretical reason, corresponds to the transcendental ideal of pure reason. But how is this possible? In our opinion, this requires, first of all, not to take the wrong path opened by the dialectical steps taken by a delusional reasoning to transform the ideal of pure reason into God, and to abandon the wrong steps taken under the influence of dialectical thinking. In other words, it presupposes not to realize/objectify, hypostatize, or personify the ideal of pure reason. Therefore, when it is said that God satisfies the ideal of pure reason, or rather is its practical meaning or appearance, it is imperative to note that to the extent that the ideal of pure reason is not theoretically realized/objectified, hypostatized, or personified, God satisfies the practical meaning or appearance of this ideal. In this respect, the first stage can be thought of as a neutralization that returns to the natural attitude of a clear mind, free from illusion, towards all questions. This neutralization is a theoretical neutralization, free from the effects of dialectical illusion, and it reintroduces all the limits of theoretical reason about God, simultaneously with the ambiguity Kant introduced in the resolution of the antinomy of necessary being. It is precisely at this moment of neutralization that it can be seen that it is not through theoretical reason that the ideal of pure reason is given the meaning of God. Theoretical reason cannot say that the ideal of pure reason is God, because theory has no explanation to right such a proposition. On the other hand, the theoretical reason, in union with the practical reason, cannot say that the ideal of pure reason is not God, because it does not have the authority to make such a signification, which the practical reason generally puts in front of pure reason, impossible. In this respect, the second stage gives us a practical point of view in which we no longer need to be content with what theoretical reason sees. This view does not shed a second light on the way of using theoretical reason. This path in question is already illuminated by the entire authority of the theoretical reason. More precisely, this view does not create an expansion in the knowledge of the theoretical reason, but only offers a practical solution to a concept that the theoretical reason has left problematic or ambiguous. In other words, this view offers to shed light on the ambiguity that the theory encounters with respect to God (which we have presented above as a positive consequence of unknowability at the theoretical level), and to offer only a practical determination of this ambiguity. In this respect, this is the perspective of a practical faith that does not assert any theoretical knowledge but considers all the possibilities and limits that theory offers. It can be argued, then, that the last theoretically acceptable formulation of the ideal of pure reason can ultimately satisfy the last theoretically acceptable meaning of God, after the practical reason has given it the meaning of God through the idea of the postulate. Indeed, renouncing the transformation of the representation of the ideal of pure reason into God does not mean that this representation has nothing to do with God, has no resemblance to God, or that we have to accept such a vision. More precisely, this renunciation does not forbid us from thinking that God, within an acceptable framework or limit, satisfies the practical meaning, if not the whole meaning, the practical appearance, if not the whole appearance, of the representation of the ideal of pure reason. In other words, this renunciation neither allows nor precludes conceiving of the theoretical function or role that the transcendental ideal of pure reason fulfills within the Kantian system as the theoretical function or role of God.

Based on what has been said, we can say that at this point we have explained the central claim of our study. This claim was that God, insofar as he is seen as the ideal of pure reason, occupies a positively central position not only in Kant's practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy. Now, it is clear from the controversial points made during the presentation of the claim that this claim does not impose the conclusion that God is the ideal of pure reason, and that such an equation is in no way possible. Moreover, this conclusion in no

way implies that Kant protects the rights illegitimately passed to the account of the concept of God through dialectical reasoning that feeds traditional metaphysical conceptions. At this point, we are neither carrying the practically accepted role of God into theory, nor are we transferring the final representation of the transcendental ideal of pure reason into practice. We are merely suggesting that from the point of view of Kant or the pure reason he posits, God can be thought to have a theoretical and practical position, meaning, appearance, and associated function or role. Our claim is that the theoretically acceptable final representation of the ideal of pure reason is the theoretically undeniable final formulation of God as a practical concept from the point of view of pure reason. The final theoretically acceptable representation of the ideal of pure reason corresponds to the ground of the complete determination of things, a mere representation, a regulative principle, a transcendental ideal, in which not the being of its object but its idea is assumed. In this respect, we argue that the position of the concept of God in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy can be understood through the simultaneous consideration of the transcendental ideal representation, a concept of the theoretical reason, and the postulate representation, a concept of the practical reason. However, in the hope of overcoming some of the difficulties that make it difficult to understand the theoretical aspect of Kant's conception of God, we formulate our claim that God, insofar as he is seen as the ideal of pure reason, occupies a positively central position not only in Kant's practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy. Consequently, when we take the transcendental ideal of pure reason as the theoretical counterpart of God to the extent of theoretical acceptability, it can be said that this concept does not give knowledge, but is important in that it adds value to knowledge in the way of giving it unity and wholeness: "Kant shows that the ideal of God should be considered not in terms of producing knowledge (constitutive) but in terms of regulating knowledge (regulative)" (Güneç, 2009, p. 175).

As can be seen, there is a correspondence between the solution of the antinomy of necessary being and the way the ideal of pure reason is conceived. This correspondence can be observed on both positive and negative levels. Kant argued that necessary being is not impossible, and that its unique existence can be seen as an assumption, even though it cannot be known. This conclusion coincides with the ideal of pure reason, which is taken as the basis for the complete determination of things, that all reality is not to be taken as objectively given, and that only the idea, not the unique existence, of the being corresponding to this ideal can be assumed.⁴ Thus, we can state that the positive aspects of the theoretical dimension of Kant's understanding of God end at this point. The theory says that God's being cannot be known, but it is not impossible, and moreover, it can be taken as an ideal for the complete determination of things. Therefore, to go beyond these theoretically acceptable appearances of God would be to pursue only an illusion. As a matter of fact, Kant pointed out that through dialectical reasoning, certain proofs are brought forward that can be seen as examples of precisely this illusion. Through these proofs, it was imagined that the being of God (necessary being/the ideal of pure reason) could be justified.

Kant's assertion that there is no way to ground the unique existence of a highest being in terms of the purely speculative use of pure reason should not be considered astonishing, but a necessary consequence of basic transcendental acceptances that are far removed from dialectical illusions. According to Kant, it cannot be theoretically proven that the object of the ideal of pure reason exists. On the other hand, Kant has already come to this conclusion by

⁴ As Mehmet Güneç states, in the ideal of pure reason, "the aim of reason is not to reach a proof of God, but to conceptualize the sphere of being on a better ground. For this, it thinks as if all that exists comes from a single being. Thus, it reaches the conclusion that being is actually in unity. But what actually happens is not unity in being, but unity in reason" (Güneç, 2009b, p. 84).

analyzing the fourth antinomy of pure reason, which is another example of dialectical thinking. Indeed, the failure of speculative proofs aimed at justifying that the object of the ideal of pure reason exists is consistently related to the negative consequences of the resolution of the antinomy of necessary being. On the other hand, Kant, who argues that these proofs are impossible in terms of their aims, has shown that the conclusion of the antinomy of necessary being, which can be considered neutral from a theoretical point of view and positive from a practical point of view, is that the unique existence of a highest being is not speculatively impossible and can be assumed, albeit arbitrarily. Accordingly, for Kant, a necessary being is a being that cannot be seen as impossible in terms of its existence, a being that can be thought to exist but cannot be known. From this point on, we can now turn to the failures of speculative proofs that are compatible with the negative conclusion of Kant's resolution of the antinomy of necessary being. This will allow a more holistic theoretical examination of the ideal of pure reason. In this way, we will see more clearly that the right to assume God's being is not theoretically justifiable. As a matter of fact, the justification of this assumption, as we have stated above, can only be achieved through practical reason, through a moral belief.

Refutations to Speculative Proofs

Kant divided theoretical knowledge into knowledge of nature and speculative knowledge (Kant, 1998). Natural knowledge is the knowledge of an object or its predicates that can be given in experience. Speculative knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge of an object or its concepts that cannot be given in any experience. In this respect, we can think that speculative proofs that aim to justify God's being aim to reveal the knowledge of an object or the concept of this object that cannot be accessed in any experience. Strictly speaking, Kant discussed three speculative proofs that aim to justify God's being and argued that they fail in their aims. These proofs are the ontological, cosmological, and physicotheological proofs. Let us first examine the ontological proof.

Basically, the ontological proof aims to prove God's being through his conceptual determination. Obviously, this proof has a long history and different formulations in the history of philosophy. Although Ross states that Aristotle is the herald of the ontological proof, this proof can be traced back to Plato, who aims to prove the existence of the soul (and thus the gods) based on its definition (Plato, 2012; Ross, 2011). Moreover, it can be said that Farabi's proof for necessary being provides a different formulation of the ontological proof (Farabi, 2019; Kaya, 2014⁵; Fakhry, 2002). However, Anselmus and Descartes provided more explicit formulations of the ontological proof (Anselmus, 2019; Descartes, 2007). Ağca mentions that:

Although all these versions differ at certain points, it can be argued that they all contain in some way the thesis that if the meaning or nature of the concept of God is fully understood, we must conclude that He really exists. (Ağca, 2021, p. 250).

Accordingly, we can formulate the argumentative steps of the proof in general as follows: (i) God is perfect, (ii) perfection involves being, so (iii) God exists.

Kant's first objection, which aims to show that the ontological proof fails, is based on the view that If the subject of a judgment is denied, the predicates likewise come to nothing. This view is a consequence of the basic assumption that the absolute necessity of judgments is not an unconditional necessity of things, and is therefore a warning against confusing judgments with things or their existence. In Kant's view, the absolute necessity of judgment is only a

⁵ This study is based on al- Fârâbî's *Uyûnu'l-Masâil*, translated into Turkish as *Felsefenin Temel Meseleleri* by M. Kaya.

conditional necessity of the thing or the predicate in the judgment. In this respect, according to Kant, the unique existence of a necessary being actually depends on the condition of the givenness of the subject to which such an existence is predicated, on the way we conceive of it. In an identical proposition, we call God, who is the subject, an omnipotent being. In fact, this is like a judgment that must necessarily be accepted. Because if I accept the being of a God, I would indeed have to think that he is omnipotent. Just as, as Descartes said, if I posit a triangle, I would have to think that it must have three angles. However, according to Kant, who argues that this is a strong illusion, when we deny the triangle, we can also deny that it has three angles. Just as if we say that God does not exist, we have the right to reject all predicates that are said to belong to him. Accordingly, if the subject that constitutes a judgment is rejected together with its predicate (whatever that predicate may be), no contradiction (external or internal) will arise (Kant, 1998).

On the other hand, Kant's second main objection to the ontological proof is based on the view that propositions of existence are synthetic, not analytic. In a synthetic proposition, one must always appeal to intuition. However, a proposition like 'God exists' cannot be verified by intuition (Kant, 1998). In other words, even if we think that the concept is rich in content, if we were to predicate a certain existence to the object to which this concept relates, we would have to go beyond the concept of this object. In this case, there is no problem in terms of the objects of the senses, because the connection that our perceptions establish/can establish with their objects is under the protection of empirical laws. When we think in terms of the objects of the senses, our concept is not only logically possible, but also realistically possible, since the object of this concept is absolutely given. Kant points out that:

But for objects of pure thinking there is no means whatever for cognizing their existence, because it would have to be cognized entirely a priori, but our consciousness of all existence (whether immediately through perception or through inferences connecting something with perception) belong entirely and without exception to the unity of experience, and though an existence outside this field cannot be declared absolutely impossible, it as a presupposition that we cannot justify through anything. (Kant, 1998, p. 568)

Thus, in the case of God or any other non-empirical object of pure thought, we would have to say that this object is not given under its own concept as a reality for which experience itself is the criterion. Accordingly, the assumption that every proposition of existence must be synthetic leads to the conclusion that the claim that God exists is an illegitimate, unacceptable claim.

Kant's third objection to the ontological proof is based on the view that being is not a real predicate. In this respect, according to Kant, in a proposition such as 'God is omnipotent', we see that two concepts, each with its own object, are actually included. The subject concept corresponds to God and the predicate concept corresponds to omnipotence. In this respect, the 'is' in the proposition (the auxiliary verb 'ist' in German and 'is' in English) should not be regarded as an additional predicate, but as a conditional that allows us to posit the concept of subject and the concept of predicate in relation. Accordingly, by bringing together a series of predicates, including predicates such as omnipotence or omniscience, in the concept of God as the subject, and then saying 'God exists', we do not add any new predicate to the concept of God as the subject, but only posit this subject with all the predicates that belong to it. In this case, the subject is posited as the object in relation to the concept that belongs to us. Accordingly, we do not create an expansion in the concept of any subject by adding being. In

such a way that we preserve our ability to say that the concept we had when we started out and the concept obtained after the addition of the entity encompass one and the same thing.⁶

Now, after a brief presentation of Kant's critique of the ontological proof, we can turn to another speculative proof that Kant brings up, namely the cosmological proof. For Kant, the cosmological proof also fails to demonstrate that God exists. According to Kant, the cosmological proof, which shows the main lines of all the proofs in favor of God's being, is based on inferring the unlimited reality of any given being from its givenness. Kant formulated this demonstration in a dual view. Accordingly, first, if there is something given, there is also a being that is absolutely necessary: I exist, therefore there is an absolutely necessary being. In the reasoning here, "the minor premise contains an experience, the major premise an inference from an experience in general to the existence of something necessary" (Kant, 1998, p. 570). Kant's second formulation of this introduction develops through causality, which is turned into the identity of a law. According to this, everything contingent (i.e., everything whose absence is possible as well as its presence) has a cause of being. If this cause of being is itself contingent, it must similarly have a cause. Thus, the series of contingent things that are each other's causes of being continues until an absolutely necessary being that can bring this series to an end. Therefore, there is an absolutely necessary being.

According to Kant, this demonstration is based on experience. Since it finds its beginning in experience, this demonstration does not proceed entirely as an a priori or ontological demonstration. However, at a final sight, it turns out that it meets the type of proof that brings us back to the old path (the ontological proof) that we have abandoned for its sake after some wandering, even though it promised to lead us to a new path (Kant, 1998). As a matter of fact, in order to proceed on a reliable path, this introduction relies on experience in the first place. Thus, it appears to be different from the ontological proposition, which seeks its foundation only in pure a priori concepts. For Kant, however, the cosmological proposition relies on experience in order to take only one step, namely, to ground the unique existence of a necessarily existing being. The small premise in the empirical mode cannot show what the qualities of a necessary being are. Therefore, reason sets aside experience in order to see the qualities that belong to necessary being. Reason does not recourse to experience, but to concepts, as in the ontological demonstration, to determine what, among all possible things, belongs to a necessary being. As a result of this recourse, reason again takes as its basis the concept of a most real being that is not itself contingent, and from this point it deduces that this most real concept of being is an absolutely necessary being. Kant (1998) states:

But it is clear that here one presupposes that the concept of a being of the highest reality completely suffices for the concept of an absolute necessity in existence, i.e., that from the former the latter may be inferred—a proposition the ontological proof asserted, which one thus assumes in the cosmological proof and takes as one's ground, although one had wanted to avoid it. (p. 571)

Accordingly, the cosmological proof, which begins with experience and then has to abandon it's witnessing because it is no longer supported by experience, and thus jumps to the ontological proof, the falsity of which has already been demonstrated, turns out to fail.

Finally, the physico-theological proof, which we have witnessed in Aquinas's a posteriori proofs—just as in the case of the cosmological proof—contains a demonstration that, according to Kant, should always be spoken of with respect, but from which apodictic certainty

⁶ For a detailed explanation of Kant's argument that "being is not a real predicate" and why this argument invalidates the ontological proof", see (Oral, 2024, pp. 160-193).

cannot be expected. Accordingly, the physico-theological proof aims to demonstrate the unique existence of a necessary cause that is proportional to the regularity, harmony, and purposiveness observed in the universe in a contingent way. In this case, it seems that the defender of the physicotheological proof expects us to think that the relationship that exists between a machine and an engineer who builds it according to its efficient causes also exists between the universe and God. Just as the regularity or purposiveness in the functioning of the machine leads us to an engineer who built this machine, the regularity or purposiveness observed in the universe leads us to a God who is the creator of this universe. However, Kant tells us that this proof has no apodictic certainty. Indeed, according to Kant, this proof actually makes an illegitimate transition from empirical grounds of demonstration to transcendental concepts. The proof initially asks us to turn our eyes to the universe and pay attention to the regularity that exists everywhere. In this respect, it can be said that the physico-theological proof, like the cosmological proof, is not based on mere concepts, but on experience. But then, by suggesting that the contingent regularity throughout the universe is only possible through the unique existence of a necessary thing, the physico-theological proof leads us to the concept of an object that cannot be provided by experience at all. Accordingly, the proof begins with the contingency of the universe and moves on to the unique existence of a necessary thing that ensures the orderliness of the universe, to a precisely determinable concept of this necessary thing, that is, to an all-encompassing concept of reality. Kant indicates that:

Thus the physico-theological proof, stymied in its undertaking, suddenly jumps over to the cosmological proof, and since this is only a concealed ontological proof, it really carries through its aim merely through pure reason, even though at the beginning this denied all kinship with it and had proposed to base everything on evident proofs from experience. (Kant, 1998, p. 582)⁷

In other words, it can be said that the physico-theological proof has a similar structure to the cosmological proof, and that the former has a similar reflective procedure, path and end to the latter. Moreover, these two proofs implicitly rely on the ontological proof. However, it has already been demonstrated that the ontological proof fails. Therefore, it can be said that there is a chain failure. Accordingly, it can be argued that all of the speculative proofs that are claimed to ground the claim that God exists fail according to general principles.

On the other hand, it is worth remembering that Kant, who dispels knowledge in order to make place for faith, can only see this result as a beginning when it comes to the practical use of pure reason. As a matter of fact, according to Kant, the unique existence of a highest being could be preserved in the purely speculative use of pure reason as an ‘assumption’, and increasingly as an assumable ‘necessity’, even if all the attempts that came forward on the path of speculative interest were shown to be ‘utterly unproductive and, according to their internal structure, zero and nothing’. The claim that God exists could not gain the value of knowledge through theoretical grounds. Moreover, all the proofs put forward to support this claim have failed. On the other hand, the being of God is not considered theoretically impossible. God can be thought to exist, his being can be assumed. And the justification of this assumption, according to Kant, can be given practically by pure practical reason (by accepting God as the

⁷ Şahabettin Yalçın states that, in Kant’s view, it is epistemologically impossible to establish a causal connection between the purposive qualities thought to exist in nature and God: “for the order that is thought to exist in nature is not essentially a quality of nature itself, but a result of the harmony between our mind and nature. In other words, according to Kant, the order in nature does not have an objective quality; rather, this order is a property that human beings, the knowing subject, attribute to nature” (Yalçın, 2011, p. 18).

postulate of the possibility of the highest good, which is the necessary object of the same reason).⁸

The Highest Good and God

At this point, we can think that we have seen the ways in which God is problematized in Kant's theoretical philosophy or what his theoretical meaning and position is. Now we can move on to the practical philosophy that will complete this theoretical position in terms of the whole of pure reason. In this way, the holistic position of God in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy will be revealed. Moreover, in this way, the claim we put forward at the beginning of our study will be fully justified and it will be seen that God has a central position in both Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy in a positive sense. At this point, the basic concept to which we should direct our attention is the concept of the highest good.

For Kant, the highest good is realized in the world and is the necessary object of a will determined by the moral law. On the other hand, the highest good has two basic elements. The first of these two basic elements is moral competence (being deserving of happiness or virtue), which is also the highest condition, and the second is happiness. Kant thinks that both moral competence and happiness can be brought together in a synthetic relationship, but for this we need certain postulates. Moral competence, or complete compliance with the moral law, is made possible by the thought of an infinite progression, that is, by the condition of immortality. In this respect, Kant solves the problem of the necessary competence of morality with eternity, with the thought of an infinite progress. But moral competence is the first essential part of the highest good. However, there is also happiness, which is the second element of the highest good. However, since there is no guarantee that a person who acts towards the realization of his or her moral competence can immediately attain happiness at first hand, or since the concept of happiness cannot be analytically deduced from the concept of moral competence, these two elements must be synthetically connected to each other, and the condition of the possibility of this connection must be revealed. In other words, the possibility of this happiness, which is in accordance with moral competence, must also be demonstrated. This necessity, in turn, leads us to the assumption of a cause that is fully appropriate to this effect (happiness), that is, to the being of God.

For Kant, happiness is the state of the rational being in the world. In this state, everything develops in accordance with the will of the rational being. Therefore, happiness is based on the correspondence between nature and the cause of determination that underlies the will of the rational being. On the other hand, the moral law, which is a law of freedom and reason, commands in a completely different way from the causality of nature. Practical reason or the law of this reason cannot be posited as the cause of nature. In other words, the rational being who acts in this world with a certain will is not the cause of this world. "In the moral law, therefore, there is no reason to establish a necessary relation between morality and the happiness of a being, which is part of the world and therefore dependent on it, in proportion to its morality" (Kant, 2014, p. 135). There is no guarantee that nature will make us happy because we are

⁸ As Necmettin Tan states, "the second front of Kant's positive theology, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, is an attempt to justify this assumption in practical or moral terms" (Tan, 2011a, p. 218). In fact, as Mehmet Demirtaş states, Kant "believes that the being of God can only be justified by moral proof" (Demirtaş, 2013). In this respect, the situation stated by Mehmet Güneç is in question: "the assumption of God is necessary not for being moral, but for the realization of moral goals" (Güneç, 2009a, p. 176). Accordingly, as Gülşah Bakubala states, "a proof of morality is a proof that takes its data from human moral experience and, by finding an unconditional obligation in this experience, tries to establish the being of God as a postulate or to show that God is the source of ideal moral values [the highest good]" (Gülşah, 2006, p. 50).

moral. As a matter of fact, the rational being, which is not the cause of nature but is dependent on it, cannot be the cause of this nature simply by willing it. The rational being cannot harmonize nature with the principles underlying its will, simply by its own will or authority.

In this way, a being that is the cause of the whole of nature, which contains the basis for the relevance or exact correspondence of happiness to morality, can be brought forward as a postulate. “This supreme cause contains not only the ground of nature’s compliance with a law of rational beings, but also the ground of nature’s compliance with the representation of this law, when these beings set this law as the supreme determining cause of willing” (Kant, 2014, pp. 135-136). Therefore, the possibility of the highest good, the first part of which is moral competence and the second part of which is happiness, can be grounded on the acceptance of a supreme cause that establishes a correspondence between the causality of nature and the causality of reason. This supreme cause is God, the cause and initiator of nature. As we have stated above, God as a moral concept gives a practical meaning to the transcendental ideal that belongs to theoretical reason, and it seems to be assumed by Kant as the guarantor of the correspondence between our will and nature in general, and of our hope for a share in happiness in particular.

Conclusion⁹

In this study, we are concerned with Kant’s conception of God based on his theoretical and practical philosophy. In our study, we reveal the theoretical and practical manifestations and position of Kant’s conception of God. As can be seen, God is problematized in Kant’s theoretical philosophy in terms of the possibility and meaning of his being. At the first level, we have witnessed Kant’s positive and negative explanations of God’s being. This witness was provided by our investigations into the antinomy of necessary being and the criticism of speculative proofs (ontological, cosmological and physico-theological proofs). For Kant, it is impossible to know the being of God at the theoretical level, nor is it possible to claim that God’s being is impossible. At the second level, we have seen that God is the practical counterpart of the transcendental ideal of pure reason, which is a theoretical concept. On the practical level, we have witnessed that God is positioned by Kant as a moral postulate. Thus, at this point, we can consider that the main claim of our study has been fully justified. Accordingly, God can be considered to have a positively central position not only in Kant’s practical philosophy but also in his theoretical philosophy.

Finally, we can conclude our work in line with our purposes by emphasizing some important points in particular. First, the following question may be asked: (a) does making an inference about God’s existence based on the fact that it cannot be known but can be thought imply a return to the ontological argument? Or would it not mean a leap of faith? In fact, viewing God as a being that cannot be known theoretically but only conceived intellectually means abandoning the claim of knowledge that affirms God’s being from the very outset. However, someone who defends an ontological or similar speculative argument does not abandon this claim; rather, they strive to ground it. Therefore, what is meant by “conceivability” here is only that God is not an impossible object, even if He is not possible, and can be accepted as existing according to the researcher’s arbitrary attitude. This arbitrariness serves to limit the capacity for understanding in the face of the reason’s demand for wholeness and order. Arbitrariness serves to bring a determination to the uncertainty regarding God’s being, based on assumptions, in light of the requirements of theoretical research. Therefore, it can be thought

⁹ The writing of the second paragraph of this conclusion section came about thanks to the valuable questions posed by the review committee. I am grateful to them.

that what is happening here is not a leap, but rather the researcher bringing light to the existing uncertainty with his own theoretical attitude, whether positive or negative. Secondly, the following question may be asked: (b) Does “thinking” here mean knowing “what” it is? Being able to think about something does not provide us with knowledge about what it is. Indeed, knowledge concerns objects that are absolutely possible, that is, phenomena. What we can think about, if it is not an impossible object, can be accepted as a noumenon. However, what things are in themselves is completely closed to us. Nevertheless, we say that the thing-in-itself referred to here is God. This leads us both to tradition and to Kant's analyses. Tradition refers to this thing-in-itself more as a being whose non-existence is impossible. Kant also uses this definition. However, Kant, in my defense, also defines this concept as the ideal of pure reason. Thirdly, the following question may be asked: (c) If not, then wouldn't someone who does not accept the existence of God have the same right according to Kant's neutral position? I believe that my answer to the question asked in point “a” can serve as my response to this issue. Nevertheless, I should add that it is theoretically possible to make a positive or negative choice regarding God's being. However, after theoretically affirming His being, believing in His being should also be seen as a subjective necessity in practice. Fourthly, the following question may be asked: (d) Perhaps as a more fundamental question: What would happen if we removed the idea of God as a condition of willing the good-in-itself? As a rational being, can a human not be moral without referring to the idea of God? Kant does not derive the moral law from theology. Therefore, it seems unnecessary to say that we need God in order to obey the moral law. On the other hand, a will determined by the moral law must necessarily aim at the highest good. In this case, it must also explain how the highest good can be achieved. Therefore, if there is no God, we must find a theoretical and practical basis that will ensure our moral competence and happiness. If we cannot find it, we may have to agree with Albert Camus, who says that life is absurd and does not make sense. This last statement requires a lengthy discussion. Because on a deeper level, the issue is not only the possibility of the highest good, but also how the harmony between the laws of reason and nature is possible. We must answer this question speculatively, not on naturalistic, historical, or political grounds, but in a way that ensures the unity of reason and the wholeness of experience.

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