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The final end of imagination: On the relationship between moral ideal and reflectivity in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*[1]

O fim final da imaginação: sobre a relação entre ideal moral e reflexividade na *Crítica* de Immanuel Kant sobre o Poder do Juízo

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ABSTRACT

One main quandary that emerges in the context of Immanuel Kant's moral ideal, The Highest Good, is that on the one hand Kant sets it as a moral *demand*, that is, as a principle that must be comprehended as an *attainable* end for man in practice while, on the other hand, it is set as a moral *ideal*, i.e. as something that *cannot* be concretized and realized *within* the empirical world. The main goal of this paper is to argue for the realizability of the moral ideal by means of the principle of reflective judgment as a form of judgment that in fact clarifies *human limitation*. I assert that the very recognition of this limitation constitutes the possibility for *hope* in that ideal, or for striving towards it, and that this striving is the only way that the moral ideal can be concretized. I examine man's recognition of self-limitation as a response to the moral demand to realize the moral ideal and the necessity of the power of imagination for this, used reflectively.

Keywords: culture, final end, Highest Good, hope, imagination, Kant, moral ideal reflective judgment, ultimate end.

RESUMO

Um dos principais dilemas que surge no contexto do ideal moral de Immanuel Kant, O Bem Supremo, é que, por um lado, Kant o define como uma demanda moral, isto é, como um princípio que deve ser compreendido como um fim possível para o homem na prática enquanto, por outro lado, é definido como um ideal moral, ou seja, como algo que não pode ser concretizado e realizado dentro do mundo empírico. O objetivo principal deste artigo é argumentar pela realizabilidade do ideal moral por meio do princípio do juízo reflexivo como uma forma de julgamento que de fato esclarece a limitação humana. Afirmo que o próprio reconhecimento dessa limitação constitui a possibilidade da esperança neste ideal, ou para alcançá-lo,

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e que essa luta é a única maneira de concretizar o ideal moral. Examino o reconhecimento do homem da auto-limitação como uma resposta à demanda moral para realizar o ideal moral e a necessidade do poder da imaginação para isso, usado de forma reflexiva.

Palavras-chave: cultura, fim final, bem supremo, esperança, imaginação, Kant, juízo moral reflexivo ideal, fim último.

Introduction

One of the most puzzling terms in Immanuel Kant's practical philosophy is that of the Highest Good (henceforth: HG).[3] HG is discussed in all three *Critiques* mutatis mutandis as the combination of happiness (or worthiness to be happy) and morality and is set as the ultimate end of human endeavor.[4] One main quandary that emerges in this context is that, on the one hand, Kant sets the HG as a moral *demand*, that is, as a principle that must be comprehended as an *attainable* end for man in practice while, on the other hand, it is set as a moral *ideal*, i.e. as something that *cannot* be concretized and realized *within* the empirical world.

The main goal of this paper is to argue for the realizability of HG by means of the principle of reflective judgment as a form of judgment that in fact clarifies *human limitation*. I assert that the very *recognition* of this limitation constitutes the possibility for *hope* in HG, or for striving towards it, and that this striving is the *only* way that HG can be concretized. I examine man's recognition of self-limitation as a response to the moral demand to realize HG, and the necessity of the power of imagination for this, used reflectively. I argue that precisely the reflective use of our imagination can, in practice, turn us into part of the ideal moral human community, as HG demands,[5] in spite of the fact that such a community *cannot* be realized in any concrete representation.

By "reflective use of imagination", I refer to the way man recognizes his ability to reshape nature by means of *culture*. Culture demonstrates human striving to give teleological shape to nature as a whole, including to man himself as the ultimate end of nature in accordance with his cognitive powers. My emphasis will be on the *manner* in which man constructs himself as the ultimate end of nature by means of culture, which in fact regulates him to think about his moral development towards HG while, at the same time, entailing recognition of human limitation precisely because it involves reflection on our *need* to set an ideal final moral end and to strive towards it as a natural human inclination.

I start with a general presentation to Kant's doctrine of reflective judgment and point out the distinct function the power of imagination has in it. Then I present the difference between *ultimate end* and *final end*, contending that in order for man to *recognize* himself as the final end of nature (namely, his moral vocation) he needs a form of reflective judgment. Next I demonstrate the sense in which culture, as an ultimate end of nature, constitutes the ground for the final end and thus regulates man towards his moral duty to realize HG. Finally, I examine the recognition of the human need to give an ideal end to the entirety of human action as a basis for *hope* in the realizability of HG, and I point to the reflective use of imagination required for this.

Imagination and Reflective Judgment

In the fourth section of the introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*CJ*) Kant distinguishes between two types of judgments and describes them as follows:

> *If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it […] is* **determining**. *If, however, only the partic-*

[3] The concept of "HG" (*Summum Bonum*) appears in all three *Critiques* and in many of Kant's post-critical writings, mainly on history and religion. The multiple contexts in which Kant discusses this concept are often incompatible with one another and it is not clear whether it maintains the same significance at all times. For instance, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant distinguishes between the "Supreme Good" (*das höchste Gut*) and "HG" (*das oberste Gut*) and argues that while the latter in itself is a condition for happiness, only the combination of *both* provides the complete understanding of the moral ideal as a Supreme Good. I will not go into the depth of Kant's linguistic distinctions regarding HG in the present paper. Instead, I relate to it in its basic definition as the ultimate object or end of practical reason, i.e. as the combination of complete happiness and complete moral virtue. What interests me is not a logical or theoretical analyzation of HG, but the *practical* question of its realizability. For a detailed account of HG see: Engstrom (1992, p. 747-780).

[4] See for example: Kant (2000, *CP*, A810-811/B838-839, A813-814/B841-842); Kant (2002b, *CPR*, 5:107-141); Kant (2002a, *CJ*, 5:429-436, 442-453).

[5] The ideal community I refer to here as implied from HG is different from the idea of "the kingdom of ends" that Kant presents in the 'Second Critique' (Kant, 2002b, *CPR*, 5:108) and in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant, 1997, *G*, 4:439). For the kingdom of ends refers to morality alone detached from any natural inclination such as happiness. While HG indicates an ideal world where "Happiness […] [is] in exact proportion with the morality of the rational beings who are thereby rendered worthy of it" (Kant, 2000, *CP*, A814/B842). I will argue that this ideal community is entwined with the idea of culture as presented in the 'Third Critique'.

> *ular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely* **reflecting** *(Kant, 2002a, CJ, 5:179).*

Kant discusses the determining power of judgment mainly in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*CP* A/B). There he examines the transcendental conditions of our ability to make judgments on empirical objects of experience, that is, how we subsume empirical sense data under general a priori concepts. However, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant raises a different unique sense of judgment: the reflecting power of judgment. Here, our judgment begins with a given particular and only *then* looks to give it a rule. In other words, instead of applying a determinate a priori concept to a particular case given in experience, in reflective judgments we should infer from the specific given case *itself* the rule that this case is supposed to represent.

Accordingly, the end of the judgment also varies. While determining judgments seek to determine the empirical object under conceptual rules of the understanding, the purpose of reflective judgments is "to ground the unity of all empirical principles under equally empirical but higher principles" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:180). Stated differently, reflective judgments seek to bring the systematic order given in experience *towards* a concept, and not the other way around as in determining judgments. The point is that the *act* of reflective judgment itself generates the rule according to which it is supposed to operate. In order for it to do this, Kant states that the power of reflective judgment must assume a special kind of concept that will serve as a guiding principle for the judgment: "the purposiveness of nature" [*die Zweckmäßigkeit der Natur*].

Stated very generally, Kant asserts that reflective judgments are involved in certain requirements that are necessary to the way *we* reflect about nature. Hence, the principle of "the purposiveness of nature" becomes the condition for the *correlation* between *human* judgments on nature and nature itself. It transpires that we are not referring here to an actual reachable purpose or end but to reflective judgment *itself* as the power to comprehend the *possibility* of an end in general. Put differently, when judging reflectively we *must* comprehend nature through the principle of "the purposiveness of nature" in order for the judgment to be implemented. However, because this principle is not based on our objective experience in nature, as noted, its status is *subjective*. It follows that reflective judgments refer to the ability of the *subject* to give a rule to *herself* through the application of her reflection on nature.[6] The point is that although this rule is subjective it nevertheless stands as a necessary assumption that constructs the *manner* in which we must judge nature in order for it to conform with our faculties of cognition.

Here is where the power of imagination comes into view: instead of serving as a mediator between sensibility and the understanding, as it does in determining judgments, in reflective judgments imagination provides a sensible representation of the subject's *state of mind* while performing the judgment. In other words, while in determining judgments imagination provides a representation related to an object that leads to a determination of that object, in reflective judgments the representation given by imagination is determining the *subject* and her feeling in the act of judging (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, First Introduction, 20:223). Put differently, instead of providing us with objective representation, imagination in reflective judgment gives us a *mental* representation of the *manner* in which we are able to make judgments in the first place.[7]

This representation is unique because it does not present any specific content in intuition; instead it presents only the *form* according to which we perform judgments: the form of *purposiveness*. Therefore, in order to assume that nature is indeed organized in a way that is compatible with our cognition, we must be able to represent in our imagination a principle of *pure* purposiveness, i.e., purposiveness as a mode or form of activity, through which we can reorganize nature and apply general concepts to it.[8]

For the purpose of the present article, pointing to the involvement of imagination in the principle of "the purposiveness of nature" helps to emphasize the reflective aspect of judgment as an activity that relates to *how* we represent the conditions of our possibility of thinking both nature as purposive and ourselves as its ultimate end. The main point I would like to argue is that through the ability to think nature purposively a space is opened for us to think also our moral purposes, such as HG, as practically possible. I wish now to elaborate on the relationship between natural and moral purposiveness. In particular, I would like to dwell on the connection between ultimate and final end in the *teleological* nexus in which they appear in the second part of the 'Third Critique.'

Ultimate End and Final End

Unlike the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*CPR*), where Kant discusses the moral ideal of HG regarding the individual, the discussion of HG in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* relates to humanity *as a whole*. The emphasis is on the fact that, while from a purely practical perspective man is

[6] Kant names this ability "Heautonomy" [*Heautonomie*]. See: Kant (2002a, *CJ*, 5:186).

[7] In what follows we shall see how this reflective use of imagination is used in relation to objective natural ends within the teleological context. There, the weight will be on imagination's ability to provide the subject with a representation of her *need* to give a teleological form to nature as a whole and to the self-reflection accompanying it.

[8] I am not referring in this context to the free play between imagination and the understanding in the aesthetic judgment of beauty, but rather to the human capacity to freely set ends in nature. This sense of purposiveness as a form of activity that allows us to reorganize nature is best illustrated through the idea of culture, as I will demonstrate ahead.

described as an end-in-itself and, consequently, as being a finite end *apart* from nature, the perspective of reflective judgment proposed in the 'Third Critique' illustrates the way that human purposiveness *can* be fully connected with the purposiveness of nature.

The connection between the principle of purposiveness and reflective judgment finds its clearest articulation in the second part of the 'Third Critique', "the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment". Here, Kant no longer discusses the idea of purposiveness without an end, as he did in the first part, "the Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment". Rather, he focusses on the purposiveness of nature as a *real objective end* (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:194).[9] Let us recall that the idea of purposiveness without an end is a key principle of aesthetic judgment in that it constitutes an essential premise regarding the existence of systematicity in nature in order for us to be able to judge it.[10] The point is that, in spite of being an *essential* premise its status remains subjective, as stated earlier, and therefore Kant connects it to judgments of taste. In contrast, teleological judgments, although they too belong to a form of *reflective* judgment, generate assertions regarding the *objective* purposiveness of nature, namely, regarding objects that we necessarily judge as purposeful and consequently are no longer connected to taste but rather to the concepts of understanding and reason.

Kant asserts that certain natural processes can only be fully understood when, in addition to an explanation grounded on purely mechanical causality, they are *also* described in terms of purposiveness.[11] Stated differently, Kant points out that the explanations by which we determine things in nature on the basis of our theoretical reason are in need of *complementation* by means of reflective judgments that also relate to the *purposes* of these things. This complementation is manifested in the teleological principle of natural purposiveness.[12]

In his "Appendix to Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment", Kant presents two separate ends of nature, 'ultimate end' [*letzter Zweck*] and 'final end' [*Endzweck*]. The first refers to the highest end of nature and is conditional on other ends that preceded it, while the second refers to an end "which needs *no* other [end] as a condition of its possibility", and refers to the moral end (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:434). Kant develops the idea of an 'ultimate end' by addressing the objective purposiveness of nature as a *system* of ends. The emphasis is on the ability to grasp nature as purposively organized as an ability that is unique to *man*. For us to be able to grasp how the mechanical mode of operation of the laws of nature works in harmony with the essential order of the phenomena of nature as *we* human beings grasp them, we must assume that nature has an underlying holistic structure, *as if* all of nature were organized "in accordance with final causes" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:434). In other words, for us to be able to grasp the diverse natural mechanical processes occurring in nature in accordance with the way that we think of the organisms in it, we must assume the concept of 'end.'[13] That is the only way we can grasp nature, "given", in Kant's words, "the nature of our understanding and our reason" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:434).

It is important to stress here that in assuming a natural purposiveness we are *not* imposing a transcendental interpretation on nature, as though there were a *real* regulative purpose beyond it. Rather, we are talking of a necessary methodological premise that allows us to reflect on nature *as* an object of knowledge. That is, we are talking of a principle of reflective judgment (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:429). Man is set as the ultimate end of nature. Kant explains this by the assertion that man "is the only being on earth who forms a concept of ends for himself and who by means of his reason can make a system of ends out of an aggregate of purposively formed things" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:426-7). Kant asserts that only man can refer to nature as a system because it is only *he* who provides the foundation around which that system can be created in the first place. That is to say, since man is the only organism in nature who raises the question of the purposiveness of its other organisms and who can use them as means for his own ends, this leads man to reflection on nature as a whole system whose apex is he himself. Therefore, it follows that the purposiveness of nature *as* a system entails an inseparable connection with the purposiveness of man, given that the very *ability* of man to think and to direct his behavior purposively constitutes the *condition* for his being the ultimate end of nature.

However, although man constitutes the ultimate end of nature, he cannot, for all that, also serve as a final end of the existence of that very nature in the literal sense of the word. The main reason for this lies in the fact that man is a natu-

[9] It is important to note that although this is an objective end, the form of teleological judgment does not constitute a condition for the *ontological* possibility of this end as something that exists materially within nature. Instead, it refers to the ways in which the *subject* relates *a priori* to the structure of nature and places objects within it.

[10] See above "Imagination and Reflective Judgment".

[11] It should be emphasized that although Kant discusses here natural processes, the reference is more to nature in a psychological and sociological sense and less in the sense of material nature. For the empirical nature in which the moral ideal of HG is supposed to be embodied is composed first and foremost of interpersonal relations and social institutions.

[12] "The principle of the purposiveness of nature" described in the introduction can be considered the ground for the teleological principle of natural purposiveness.

[13] One of Kant's famous examples in this context is that of the watch: Kant asserts that without assuming the concept of purpose it is impossible to understand the organism as a whole and the connection between its parts. See: "An organized being is thus not a mere machine [i.e., a watch], for that has only a *motive* power, while the organized being possesses in itself a *formative* power" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:374).

ral being and consequently is conditioned, while, as we saw earlier, the main characteristic of the final end is that it is unconditioned. In other words, the final end is, by its very definition, absolute and total, and therefore cannot be embodied in nature or in a natural being, such as man. Moreover, the systematicity of nature per se does not give its existence any meaning, and therefore man, as the last link in the purposiveness of nature, cannot simultaneously constitute the validation of that same nature. Yet Kant gives man a key role as an ultimate end of nature *towards* the final end. For precisely human ability to grasp ourselves as the ultimate end of nature leads us to *think* about its final end:

> *As the sole being on earth who has reason, and thus a capacity to set voluntary ends for himself, he is certainly the titular lord of nature, and, if nature is regarded as a teleological system, then it is his vocation to be the ultimate end of nature; but always only conditionally, that is, subject to the condition that he has the understanding and the will to give to nature and to himself a relation to an end that can be sufficient for itself independently of nature, which can thus be a final end, which, however, must not be sought in nature at all (Kant, 2002a, CJ, 5:431).*

The explanation lies in the assertion that only when we think about ourselves *reflectively*, by giving ourselves the principle of purposiveness, do we have the possibility to reflect on nature and to think of it, *too*, in terms of a system of ends. Kant stresses the fact that this reflection necessarily leads *beyond* that purposive system of nature. For it is only in light of a higher end than nature, to which nature is subordinate, that we can give that nature teleological meaning and identify ourselves as the ultimate link in its chain. Stated differently, it emerges that the ultimate end of nature in fact *prepares the ground* for the realization of its final end.

Kant clarifies this by asserting that the role of the ultimate end is "to prepare [man] for what he himself must do in order to be a final end" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431). That is, the idea of man as the ultimate end of nature contains an additional idea, namely, that the final purpose of man is to free himself from nature and to act according to a purely rational motive: the moral principle. It should be noted that Kant does not maintain that man as he is given in the present constitutes the final end. Rather, he is referring to a future situation preparing man "for what he himself *must* do" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431, emphasis mine). In other words, man in his present natural state can serve *solely* as an ultimate end of nature. In order for him to *also* be its final end he must act "under moral laws" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:448-9), as Kant asserts further on in reference to the ideal of HG that human reason imposes, as noted, as a final end on nature as a whole. The point is that, as long as man is viewed as a rational being who can act according to moral principles independently of nature, he does not count *only* as part of conditioned nature.

I would like to address man's freedom to act independently of nature from two different yet interconnected perspectives. One is the practical perspective, which sets the idea of culture as an ultimate end that constitutes the ground for the final end. For culture allows man to shape nature itself as an end according to the ends that he freely sets on himself. The second perspective is that of the moral ideal, which seeks to examine what man *can and must* do as a rational being, acting independently of nature in order to reshape nature as a moral system. I will now examine these two perspectives and will pose the question: how can the idea of culture as the ultimate end of *natural* order direct man towards the moral *ideal* of HG?

Culture and Moral Ideal

Kant describes culture as man's ability in general to set ends for himself. I previously noted that man cannot serve as an ultimate end of nature if he is not capable of simultaneously directing nature towards its final end. This means that man must direct *his own* existence purposively by freely determining his actions. Culture is the tool that assists him in this, because it does not describe any *specific* goal or end. Rather, it allows man to freely direct his actions, by allowing him "to feel an aptitude for higher ends, which lie hidden in us" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:434). Kant distinguishes here between culture and happiness as two natural ends of man and asserts that while happiness "is the *matter* of all of [man's] ends on earth" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431),[14] culture constitutes the *formal* condition for man to freely set ends for himself, that is, to use nature without being dependent on it.

In fact, Kant sets culture as a natural end from a general teleological perspective, that is, as an end whose role it is to *allow* men in general to think about their moral development, both as individuals and as part of the human community, by developing their ability, as said, to set themselves ends that are not conditional on nature. 'Ability' here refers to man's power to structure himself as an ultimate end of nature by means of culture. "But", says Kant, "not every kind of culture is adequate for this ultimate aim of nature" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431). In fact, Kant seeks to point to an inner division that the term 'culture' requires and, to this end, distinguishes between what he terms "culture of skill" [*Geschicklichkeit*] and what he terms "culture of discipline" [*Kultur der Zucht*] (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431-432). The former refers to the way man structures his external surroundings materially, that is, to the way he devel-

[14] In the context of HG Kant again emphasizes happiness as the sum of all of man's natural ends. There, the stress is on our desire for happiness as a *natural* human interest – in addition to morality, which is purely rational interest – without which HG as a moral ideal is not complete.

ops means to satisfy his desires in order to increase his happiness and well-being (the term 'culture' is here used in the basic sense that we today ascribe to it). The latter, in contrast, does not refer to systems that man imposes on the external world. Rather, it refers to that which develops the internal freedom of man, namely, the *manner* in which he sets ends for himself on the basis of reason alone.

The main point here is that, in order to develop our humanity according to the ends of reason, we must develop the two kinds of culture – of skill and of discipline – simultaneously. This is because the first is responsible for promoting our end-setting in general as natural beings, while the role of the second is to perfect and refine these natural ends according to the ends required by reason. Stated differently, culture as a whole gradually separates man from his immediate ends, which are influenced, among other things, by his sensual nature, in order to make "room for the development of humanity" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:433). It can be said that culture creates a kind of human who is capable of controlling her natural impulses and desires, on the one hand, while, on the other, simultaneously developing new kind of desires that are defined by culture *itself*. In other words, culture helps man to free himself from dependency on ends dictated to him by his sensual nature while allowing him to set new *higher* ends within the boundaries of that culture. Kant goes on to assert:

> *Beautiful arts and sciences […] make human beings, if not morally better, at least better mannered for society, very much reduce the tyranny of sensible tendencies, and prepare humans for a sovereignty in which reason alone shall have power (Kant, 2002a, CJ, 5:433).*

It is important to note that culture in itself (see: "beautiful arts and sciences") does not represent the moral vocation of man. At the same time, Kant emphasizes that, without culture, man would not have the ability to free himself from the heteronomy of his natural inclinations and to independently set ends for himself.

The question arises: if nature in itself cannot lead man to the moral end, but only to culture as an ultimate end of nature, how can we continue to imagine the final end from this position? Put differently, how can man bridge the *gap* between culture as the ultimate end of nature and the final end as the moral ideal of HG? I would like to suggest that the answer to this question finds expression in the *form* of reflective judgment. By this I mean the way man reshapes nature by setting ends, albeit not by dogmatically defining ends in nature by way of determinative judgments but, rather, by means of his ability to think *critically*, by using reflection, about the way he himself sets ends in nature.[15]

Kant asserts that, although the ends that culture sets are also connected with nature, much like determinative judgments that set objects in nature, thereby enabling it, the ends that culture sets do not derive *directly* from nature. In other words, culture is not a condition that constitutes experience. Rather, it has the *form* of a regulative principle, "a guide for the power of judgment in reflection on the products of nature" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:399). The fact that culture serves as a demonstration of a regulative principle is reflected in the way nature regulates the subject to make judgments that are essential for beings like him, that is, natural beings endowed with reason who seek to give their actions meaning. This means that culture uncovers something essential in the nature of man that does not find expression when he acts according to his sensual nature alone, namely, the human *need* to give teleological form to nature as a whole, including to man himself as an ultimate end of nature "appropriate to our cognitive faculties" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:399). The main point here is not the revelation of an internal purposiveness in nature itself but, rather, the *self-awareness* of the human striving to systematize nature. It emerges that the *way* we recognize ourselves as possessing moral ability, that is, as having the aspiration to realize HG, is conditional on our recognition of ourselves as cultural beings, namely, on self-awareness of our potential to promote our ability to freely set ends in nature.

It is important to note that I do *not* mean to assert that the ideal of the HG can be positively portrayed in this manner as a *concrete* moral goal. Rather, my assertion is that the development of our abilities by means of culture enables us to recognize ourselves as possessing moral ability within our limited existence in nature. It follows that cultural practice *itself* (through the ability to freely set ends) creates in us the *need* to raise the question of the moral ideal and whether we have reason to *hope* that it can indeed be realized within the empirical world.

In the final section I will examine that human need to provide a highest moral ideal end as a need that points to human *limitation*, rather than to an ability to arrive at that final end in practice, while arguing that the recognition of that limitation is the ground for hope in the moral ideal.[16] My point is that this recognition is involved in our reflective use of imagination, which provides man with a *self-representation* that presents both human limitation as a *need* to give

[15] In sections §§ 74-75 Kant once again raises his distinction between determinative and reflective judgments, as presented in the first section of the book in relation to aesthetic judgments. The difference is that in the teleological context he calls the first "dogmatic" and the latter "critical". This distinction is relevant here since the emphasis is on the fact that Kant's claims regarding culture and human natural inclinations must be considered within the context of moral teleology as 'critical', i.e. as involving reflection (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:395-401).

[16] A very interesting interpretation of reflective judgment as a form of judgment that indicates limitation as a basis for hope in the moral ideal can be found in Eli Friedlander, who argues that the moral ideal makes us *feel* our limitations in the sense that it presents to us our dispositions in a certain order: organized as a whole, and consequently we judge ourselves by feeling our limitations in respect to it (Friedlander, 2015, p. 80, 110).

teleological form to nature as a whole and human moral ability as the *capacity* to freely set ends for ourselves, the capacity for culture for that matter, as a form of activity that reshapes nature. I wish to argue that this dual self-representation inevitably leads to reflection on the actual human condition vis-à-vis the perfect human moral condition, i.e. HG, which in turn demonstrates its realizability through a structure of hope.

Limitation as a Ground for Hope

Kant describes man's need for a highest end, one that combines all his other ends as a whole under one principle, as a necessary outcome of the *limitation* of human practical reason. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (*Rel.*) he writes:

> *[The idea of HG] meets our* natural need, *which would otherwise be a hindrance to moral resolve, to think for all our doings and nondoings taken as a whole some sort of* final end *[…] it is one of the* **inescapable limitations of human beings and of their practical faculty of reason** *[…] to be concerned in every action with its result, seeking something in it that might serve them as an end (Kant, 1998,* Rel., *6:5-7n, emphases mine).*

Kant asserts that *all* rational human activity, without exception, is intrinsically directed towards systematic progress and the creation of totality. In other words, even when the absolute condition of the will is fulfilled, reason demands, all the same, to generalize all of man's actions towards one highest end: HG.[17] Kant calls this human need for totality "one of the inescapable limitations of human beings" (Kant, 1998, *Rel.*, 6:5-7n), in the sense that it is a *necessary* limitation of human practical reason. Kant's argument is that man is a goal-directed-being by his very nature and, therefore, inevitably directs himself to the question regarding the final end of his conduct. This does not mean that HG constitutes the moral *motive* but, rather, that human beings necessarily *imagine* its possibility when they commit themselves to an action on moral grounds. As noted above, this does not refer to the ability to provide any material embodiment to HG but, rather, to the possibility to give it *meaning* as a regulative idea that can be used as a guide for action.[18]

Two main, interconnected matters arise here. The first relates to the human need to direct all actions as a whole towards one ideal end, while the second relates to the need to grant objective reality to that ideal end in order to be able to act according to it in practice. These two matters simultaneously point to, on the one hand, the limitations of human nature – due to the very *need* to set an ideal end in the first place – and, on the other, man's *recognition* of these limitations, with this very recognition constituting the ground for hope in that final end as a *real* possibility. The question that arises is: Why is it *precisely* man's recognition of self-limitation in empirical nature that opens up the possibility to think of a moral ideal that goes *beyond* everything that can be recognized or known empirically? And, further, how can that moral ideal be justified at the practical level of human actions? The answer I propose relies, as stated, on the principles of reflective judgment as a form of judgment that does not determine HG but, rather, demonstrates that it can only have meaning with regard to the purposeful application of man's subjective cognitive abilities.[19]

Kant contends that human understanding is of a special kind, since it allows us to relate to organisms in nature as though they stem from a representation of ends, by means of which we make the unifying lawfulness of nature possible.[20] The main point is that this is not a matter of a mere speculative option; rather, the discursive structure of our mind *compels* us to think of the totality of nature by means of this form of systematic representation, where the whole constitutes the end of its parts. In other words, due to the discursivity of our understanding, we are unable to think of nature *other than* by means of teleological principles.[21]

[17] See: "Pure reason, whether considered in its speculative or in its practical use, always […] demands the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned. […] it seeks the unconditioned totality of the *object* of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*" (Kant, 2002b, *CPR*, 5:107).

[18] A similar idea can be found in Yirmiahu Yovel's interpretation of HG as a regulatory idea of *history*. According to Yovel, HG does not point to a transcendental world that is beyond the empirical world. Rather, it indicates two states of affairs of the same world: one that is given and another that is ideal. According to this interpretation, HG becomes the end of the world from the perspective of human history, since it is the perfect state of reality in which people actually live and act (Yovel, 1980, p. 29-80, 158-200). I share with Yovel the motivation to give HG moral meaning *within* the empirical space of human activities. My addition is the prominence of both imagination and reflection.

[19] Cf. Kneller (2009, p. 50-52). Jane Kneller presents a similar interpretation yet from the opposite direction. She argues that our moral *imperative* to realize HG in practice already assumes that we have the ability to *imagine* that such realization is possible and that it is possible within our cognitive abilities.

[20] See Kant's (2002a) discussion in *CJ*, sections §§ 76-77

[21] Here the issue of limitation arises from another perspective by raising the possibility of an understanding that is different from ours, i.e. an intuitive understanding that does not have the need for the concept of purposiveness since it does not distinguish between reality and possibility, and therefore is only an idea. It is important to note that Kant does not claim that this "different understanding" exists, but that the discursive nature of our cognition imposes upon us both the idea of "different understanding" and of thinking in terms of natural purposiveness as two essential methodological assumptions that involve one another. In other words, in order to understand the concept of natural purposiveness as derived from our limited discursive understanding (it is limited because it *must* think of nature in terms of purposiveness) we need only the *possibility* of non-discursive understanding (i.e., God), that is, an ideal one. I will not go into this argument here as it requires independent discussion. For further discussion, see Beiser (2006).

HG emerges, too, as an essential presupposition that follows, as noted, from the human need to set a final moral end that comprehends the totality of actions in practice. Human limitation, in this respect, is demonstrated in practice in man's ability to use his reason by reflecting on that limitation. Kant argues that man must ask himself in what manner his reason can be used without setting ends, and his conclusion is that without a purposive structure *no* use can be made of reason (neither practical nor theoretical).

With this in mind, and returning to the idea of culture as an ultimate end of man that prepares him "for what he himself must do in order to be a final end" (Kant, 2002a, *CJ*, 5:431), it can be said that culture involves recognition of human limitation precisely because it entails reflection on a representation of the *structure* of human progress towards an ideal final end *as* a natural human desire. Put differently, my claim is that HG is not something that can be represented in intuition as any other practical end that we might pose to ourselves. Rather, it is something that can only be portrayed in thought as having the *form* of an end and it is articulated through culture as the human ability to freely set ends in nature. Now, because HG is a moral end, man is *obliged* to strive to realize it despite, as stated above, his inability to represent it intuitively. It is here, I would like to argue, that the reflective use of imagination takes place.

It should be stressed here that I am not pointing at any direct representation that we create in our imagination, in the sense of the ability to give embodiment or realization to HG. Rather, I am talking of the reflective use of imagination, which gives us a criterion solely for a *reflective assessment* of how close, or how far, we are to, or from, realizing that ideal. It emerges that our very *striving* towards HG as a final end points to our human limitation with regard to it, on the one hand, while, on the other, the representation of this unavoidable *self-limitation* that we create in our imagination enables us to give an articulation to that striving in the form of the *gap* between us and that final end.

It follows that our very recognition of human limitation points to the fact that there will *always* be a gap between our present state and HG. This gap is a necessary characteristic of the *manner* in which human beings think of HG as an ideal final moral end. Consequently, given the fact that the moral ideal cannot be fully realized in human life and yet we have a moral duty to promote it, the *only* way of concretizing it is through our recognition of self-limitation as constituting the ground for striving for that ideal. In other words, recognition of human limitation is the preliminary condition for human freedom to set ourselves a totally rational moral ideal *within* the empirical world and to *re*-regulate our actions according to it as a *real possibility*, in spite of our awareness of the fact that we will never be able to completely attain that moral ideal in our present life.[22]

The conclusion I want to point to, in this respect, is that the *hope* in the possibility of realizing HG is demonstrated through the *way* that we choose to assume it, in contrast to the *thing* that we assume. The emphasis is on the way we choose to see ourselves as morally capable beings. It can be asserted that we are in need of a form of judgment that clarifies the recognition of our limitation as beings who *also* act according to natural desires and inclinations, in order to create the basis for hope in our rational abilities to act according to practical reason. I am referring, as noted, to the form of reflective judgment that is not directed to determining the object, that is to say, I am not talking of the possibility of knowing or recognizing the moral ideal as a substantial end but, rather, of the ability of the subject to presuppose it as a rational principle according to which it is possible *to act*. In other words, the sense in which I wish to establish the connection between the principle of reflective judgment and the moral ideal is in the idea that through the structure of purposiveness, or the ability to think nature teleologically, one can think of the moral ideal *too* as a practical possibility.

In conclusion, it can be said that although HG cannot be realized in practice, the *hope* in its possibility remains an essential condition for our ability to act in light of that ideal in the empirical world. This is as part of man's recognition of himself as an ultimate end of nature who possesses the possibility of freely setting himself ends in that nature. I wish to point to the fact that this possibility is involved in the reflective use of imagination, clarifying man's recognition of his limitation while simultaneously allowing him to *imagine* himself in a manner that *extends* his given transcendental conditions, in so far as reflection presents man's abilities to regulate his conduct also according to his practical reason and therefore constitutes a ground for hope.[23] This use of imagination sets the ultimate end of nature as *part* of the general final end, thereby meeting the need to supply cultural and teleological explanations of ourselves as striving towards this final end, even if, as stated, this end cannot be positively imagined.

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[22] The relevant discussion at this point is that of the postulates of practical reason, particularly that of God and the immortality of the soul. I discuss these postulates and their relation to HG in a separate article. See Godess Riccitelli (2017).

[23] This 'ground for hope' can already be traced in the *CP* where Kant raises the third question of the interest of reason, namely: "What may I hope?" (*CP*, A805/B833), to which the answer is: hope you will participate in HG.

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