

Title	Moral perfection in Kant's practical philosophy and two models of carrying out tasks
Sub Title	
Author	Nakayama, Hirotarō
Publisher	慶應義塾大学倫理学研究会
Publication year	2020
Jtitle	エテイカ (Ethica). Vol.13, (2020.) ,p.27- 47
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	
Genre	Journal Article
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA12362999-20200000-0027

慶應義塾大学学術情報リポジトリ(KOARA)に掲載されているコンテンツの著作権は、それぞれの著作者、学会または出版社/発行者に帰属し、その権利は著作権法によって保護されています。引用にあたっては、著作権法を遵守してご利用ください。

The copyrights of content available on the KeiO Associated Repository of Academic resources (KOARA) belong to the respective authors, academic societies, or publishers/issuers, and these rights are protected by the Japanese Copyright Act. When quoting the content, please follow the Japanese copyright act.

Moral Perfection in Kant's Practical Philosophy and Two Models of Carrying out Tasks¹

Hirotao NAKAYAMA

Abstract

This article tries to clarify Kant's account of moral perfection. Though it is one of the core issues of Kant's ethics and various interpretations have been suggested in the literature, none of them sufficiently explains his complex account of it. In order to elucidate the conception of moral perfection, I answer three questions in this article. Firstly, what kind of task is it to achieve moral perfection? Secondly, what is required for us to achieve it? And finally, how is the value of the task evaluated? By means of answering the first question we will obtain the answers for the remaining two as well. In order to answer the first question, I distinguish two models of tasks. One is the completion model in which particular processes are directed to realize the final state of the task, and the other is the constitutive model in which all processes form a whole of the task as its necessary components. I suggest that the task of moral perfection has been mistakenly conceived of in the completion model and that we should understand it along the line of the constitutive model. When we consider the task to achieve moral perfection along the line of the new

¹ For this article and related projects, I received funding from Keio University Doctorate Student Grant-in-Aid Program.

model, we will find that the requirement to achieve moral perfection is our continuous commitment to the project of moral progress, and the value of moral perfection should be essentially holistic.

What is moral perfection? The answer to this question necessarily reflects one's own ethical point of view. The aim of this paper is to present Kant's account of moral perfection. In order to achieve this, I will answer three sub-questions. Firstly, what kind of task is it to achieve moral perfection? Secondly, what is required for us to achieve it? And finally, how is the value of the task evaluated? By means of answering the first sub-question, we will reach the answers for the remaining two as well.

This paper consists of three sections. Firstly, I present the passages in which Kant presents his account of moral perfection. Since moral perfection is the necessary condition of the highest good which is the final aim of pure practical reason (cf. V:122)², moral perfection should also be achievable, unless we give up on the highest good. The exegetical difficulty consists in the tension between the achievement of moral perfection and the infinite approximation to it through moral progress. I introduce four interpretative options suggested in the literature and point out none of them sufficiently explains Kant's own description.

Then, in the second section, I proceed to a preparatory analysis in order to answer the first sub-question. I distinguish two models of tasks. One is the completion model, as I shall call it, and the other is the constitutive model. They are distinguished from each other, concerning (i) the relation between processes involved in them and a final state, (ii) the way to be evaluated, and (iii) the

² Works by Kant will be indicated by the volume and the page number of the German Academy edition. English translations of works by Kant will follow the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Allen Wood and Paul Guyer, (eds.) 1992–.

respective requirement to carry out the task. I insist that all the four interpretative options, explicitly or implicitly, simply take the task to achieve moral perfection in the sense of the completion model, and it is the common root of their failures.

In the third section, I suggest that we take the task to achieve moral perfection in the constitutive model. In order to support this claim, I refer to Kant's own explanation about moral perfection in his later work, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. The key to releasing the tension between the achievement and the approximation to it is the distinction of two perspectives, the human and the divine. When we properly capture the task to achieve moral perfection, the achievement cannot be the final state of our progress. At this point, we will also acquire the answers to the latter two sub-questions. What is required for us is not the realization of a certain stable state, but the continuous commitment to the project of moral improvement, and the value of our morally good actions in the middle of the moral progress has an essentially holistic character.

1 Moral Perfection and Four Interpretative Options

The conception of moral perfection plays a core role in Kant's practical philosophy. For Kant, the whole and complete good for human beings is not reducible to either morality or happiness. Rather, the highest good is the harmonious combination of morality and happiness (cf. V:110-111). In this combination, according to Kant, morality should have priority to happiness. In this sense, morality is "the supreme condition of the highest good" (V:122). Because of this priority, morality is a necessary condition of the highest good. Thus, if we cannot achieve moral perfection, then we cannot acquire the highest good. In other words, the impossibility of moral perfection leads us to despair, in which we are convinced that it is essentially impossible to realize what we most highly evaluate. In this line of thought, Kant says:

The production of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. But in such a will the *complete conformity* of dispositions with the moral law is the supreme condition of the highest good. This conformity must therefore be just as possible as its object is, since it is contained in the same command to promote the object (V:122).

Kant explicitly identifies the moral condition for the highest good with moral perfection, which he calls “holiness”. We do not only have to be morally good, but to be perfect to achieve the highest good. However, Kant confesses the difficulty of the achievement of holiness. “Complete conformity of the will with the moral law is, however, *holiness*, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence” (V:122). In order to overcome this difficulty, Kant presents an enigmatic solution:

Since it is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can only be found in an *endless progress* toward that complete conformity, and in accordance with principles of pure practical reason it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object of our will (V:122).

Suddenly, this solution raises interpretative questions. How can moral perfection be found in an “endless” progress? Why should we not end the progress “after” the achievement of moral perfection? And how can we reconcile this solution with the impossibility of holiness for us referred above?

For the conception of moral perfection, various studies, especially concerning the studies of the highest good, have presented interpretative options. Now, I introduce and examine four distinct options. The first option is the simplest. It assumes that we can achieve moral perfection, someday infinitely far from here, at

the end of the moral progress. In this interpretation, there is no tension between the achievement of moral perfection and the progress to it, because the progress is a “usual” process to achieve a certain goal. The first interpretative option takes the task to achieve moral perfection in the same manner as daily tasks, though much more difficult than them. This option can be categorized into the immanent and transcendent version further. According to the immanent version, moral perfection is achieved as a certain stable state of affairs in space and time³. In contrast to this, in its transcendent version, the moral achievement is not an immanent member of the progress, but the somehow transcendent final member of it.

The textual problem with the immanent version is clear. Kant denies that we can achieve moral perfection at a certain temporal point in the passages quoted above. Then, how about the transcendent version? For the first option, it is characteristic that moral perfection is the stable state as the final member of the series of moral progress. Is our morality evaluated in this manner, insofar as moral perfection is concerned? Kant suggests it is not the case.

For a rational but finite being only endless progress from lower to higher stages of moral perfection is possible. *The eternal being*, to whom the temporal condition is nothing, sees in what is to us an endless series the whole of conformity with the moral law, [.....] (V:123)

³ Most recent literature on the highest good explicitly or implicitly assumes the highest good as a certain immanent state achievable in this world, and thus moral perfection too. See Beiser 2006, Engstrom 2016, Guyer 2019, Kleingeld 2016, Reath 1988. Regardless of the variety of ways to explain the conception of the highest good, they commonly assume that the highest good is realized as a certain state of affairs, and accordingly that the moral condition is also satisfied in the same manner. In this sense, all these immanent interpretations are categorized into the immanent version of the first option.

What these sentences imply is that moral perfection is evaluated by God in his special manner. In the human evaluation, morality is thought in a serial manner. In contrast to this, “the eternal being”, i.e. God, captures our morality in a non-serial manner. And only when our morality is seen from the divine perspective, moral perfection is seen in the infinite progress. This argument weakens the transcendent version, because it conceives moral perfection, though the perfection transcends immanent parts of a series, clearly in a serial manner.

The second option introduces the divine element to the account of moral perfection. This option is suggested by Lawrence Pasternack⁴. According to Pasternack, moral perfection should be conceived as the final state, as in the first option. However, we cannot achieve it by ourselves, because what we can do is the infinite approximation to moral perfection, and there should always remain a gap between the achievement of moral perfection and the approximation to it. At this point, Pasternack claims, divine forgiveness is required. Only when the gap between the achievement and the approximation is filled by the forgiveness by God, moral perfection is achievable⁵.

The second option is more sophisticated than the first. It sufficiently explains why Kant claims the achievement of moral perfection is impossible for us. And it seems that Kant’s reference to the divine evaluation supports this interpretation. However, we cannot take this second option, because Kant clearly denies that divine forgiveness is required for moral perfection. A human being can hope “to be fully adequate to God’s will (without indulgence or dispensation, which do not harmonize with justice)” (V:123-124). We cannot rely on divine help as this would amount to “indulgence or dispensation”. This is critical for the second option. We cannot fill

⁴ Pasternack 2014

⁵ “Thus, he follows the tradition that the humanity is unable to become genuinely worthy before God and so depends on His forgiveness, taking our efforts through eternity “as [equivalent to] possession” (CPrR:5:123n)” (Pasternack 2014, p. 143)

the gap between the achievement and the approximation of it with divine aid⁶.

The third option is the classical interpretation of the highest good suggested by Silber⁷. Silber claims that we have to assume both the transcendent and the immanent conception of the highest good. While the transcendent conception requires us to achieve moral perfection, we only have to morally improve ourselves in the immanent conception. In contrast to the first and second option, Silber admits it is impossible to achieve moral perfection in the transcendent conception⁸. What we can do, and ought to do is a mere improvement of morality in the immanent conception. Moral perfection itself is impossible for us, and it has only the regulative role to lead the immanent improvement as the ideal standard of morality⁹.

However, Silber's reading has a severe textual difficulty. Kant explains that moral perfection as holiness "can only be found [angetroffen werden können] in an endless progress toward that complete conformity" (V:122). What Kant says is moral perfection is required and it is "found in" the endless progress. This sentence

⁶ The reading which draws on divine forgiveness faces another difficulty concerning the practical postulate of God's existence. If we require divine help to achieve moral perfection, we have to practically postulate the existence of God within the argument for the perfection. However, Kant postulates God *after* the argument about morality. Thus, the second reading ignores the order of the argument in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Divine forgiveness suggested by Pasternack must be efficacious, because an effect on us is required to fill the actual gap between holiness and the approximation of it. When we admit this efficacious role of God, we have to practically postulate the existence of God. Holiness should be evaluated from the divine perspective, as we have seen in the critique of the first interpretation. Does this evaluation require the practical postulate of the existence of God? I insist it does not. This evaluation does not imply the postulate, because it is not efficacious, in contrast to the forgiveness. The divine judgement should be just and fair, and thus it does not add or reject anything in what is evaluated in us. In this sense, the evaluation is not efficacious.

⁷ Silber 1959

⁸ Silber 1959, p. 473

⁹ Silber 1959, p. 489

does not say what is required is the progress itself. And if moral perfection is impossible, it will not be found anywhere. Thus, the third option is also untenable.

The fourth option suggested by Mariña is, in a sense, the sophisticated version of Silber¹⁰. Mariña inherits the dual conception of the highest good from Silber. We require both the transcendent conception with moral perfection and the immanent conception with moral progress. While Silber denies the achievability of moral perfection, Mariña does not. For Mariña, the transcendent moral perfection is more significant than the immanent progress. She describes the transcendent conception as *telos* of the immanent progress¹¹. This interpretation is distinguished from the first and the second option, because she denies the transcendent perfection is a member of the series of moral development¹². The transcendent perfection has an independent status as *telos*.

It appears this fourth suggestion can overcome the problems in the previous three. Moral perfection is not conceived of as the member of the series, in contrast to the first and the second option, and it clearly claims what is required is moral perfection, and does not deny its achievability, in contrast to the third. The problem of the fourth option is not textual, but its ambiguity. If moral perfection is not the member of the series of progress and isolated from it, how can the progress and the perfection be connected? She characterizes the transcendent conception of the highest good as *telos*. But what should be clarified is not whether moral perfection is *telos* of our moral progress, but how it can be, and in what sense it can be *telos* of our moral efforts. Thus, the fourth option has no textual problem. It is simply

¹⁰ Mariña 2000

¹¹ “The highest good in the world has meaning only insofar as it refers to its ultimate *telos*, itself standing outside the world of sense; this implies that the highest good as transcendent is its principle and more important sense” (Mariña 2000, p. 331).

¹² Mariña 2000, p. 339n

insufficient¹³.

In this section, I have presented Kant's own description in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and four interpretative options of it. We have examined them and found that none of them properly explains Kant's accounts of moral perfection. In the next section, I start with a preparatory analysis of two models in terms of which tasks can be accounted for and reveal the common root of the failures of the four options.

2 Two Models of Carrying out Tasks

In the previous section, I have presented the role of moral perfection in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and introduced four interpretative options. In this section, I carry out a preparatory analysis apart from Kant's text, and distinguish two models of tasks. One is the completion model, and the other is the constitutive model. I analyze the models of tasks in two aspects. Firstly, I focus on what is evaluated in the achievement of the task in question. Is it simply evaluated to realize the purported final state? Otherwise, is the performance of the task itself, constituted by several processes, holistically evaluated? Secondly, I examine the relation between the particular processes of the tasks and the final state of it. It is the question of whether the particular processes of the task are necessarily instrumental for the realization of the final state of it.

¹³ "It is not only an ideal of reason; it is also the end to which the world is teleologically ordered. This end, however, stands outside of the series of empirical events occurring in time" (Mariña 2000, p. 339n). Surely, the view of Mariña can be interpreted as the transcendent version of the first interpretation. But I emphasize her phrase "outside of the series of empirical events", and interpret it in the sense that there is no continuity of the empirical series of moral progress and the transcendent perfection. If her interpretation is the transcendent version of the first option, it will be susceptible to the objection of the non-serial character of the divine intuition, as we have already seen.

Firstly, we shall consider the completion model. The task in the completion model is the one in which the realization of the final state of the task makes the processes to achieve the final state meaningful. For instance, the daily tasks, such as “making a certain contract in business” or “brushing my teeth before I go to bed”, are categorized into this model. Let us take the contract in business as an example. The task “making a certain contract in business” is directed to the final state in which the contract has already been made. And this final state is realized through various particular processes, such as making slides for a presentation, attending the meeting or negotiating. In this task, the particular processes have their value, insofar as they are instrumental to the realization of the final state. Now, if he or she fails to make the contract, and the purported final state is not realized, all the processes for it are “in vain”, and lose their value¹⁴. This is because the particular processes have only the instrumental value in relation to the realization of the final state. Accordingly, the completion model has two distinct features. Firstly, the task is completed by the realization of “the purported final state”. And secondly, only the final state can have value in itself, all the particular processes for it have merely instrumental value¹⁵.

However, not all the tasks are suitable for the completion model. I call the other model the “constitutive model”. In the constitutive model, instead of the final

¹⁴ Surely, when we consider business in an everyday setting, we might give comfort to our colleague, and say “Your efforts to make good presentation slides are not completely in vein. You learned a lot and you can make use of them for other contracts”. It is true of this daily example, because we have several independent ends when conducting our daily business. However, I take the distinction as a preparatory analysis for the account of moral perfection. Since morality has a distinct status from other arbitrary ends, and there is no alternative end for moral perfection, I construe the special example of business directed to one single purpose.

¹⁵ This implies the dependency of the whole process on the final state with regard to value. Thus, when the final state itself is not valuable, even if it is successfully realized, the processes leading up to it has no value.

state, the whole of the processes itself has value, and the particular processes constitute the value as its parts. The typical case of the constitutive model is a dance. A dance consists of various behaviors and many steps. However, it is not proper to evaluate the first step as instrumentally dedicated to the final step. Rather each step is a part of the dance as a whole. The first step and the final step are equally significant insofar as both of them are the components of the dance. It is important that the value of each step and each part of the process is not instrumental. But the value of particular processes is not independent. The processes have their value, only when they play the role of parts of the completed whole. The analysis clarifies two features of the constitutive model. Firstly, the task in the constitutive model is carried out, when the particular processes form the whole of the processes as its parts. And secondly, the processes do not have the instrumental value in relation to the final state, but holistically contribute to the value of the whole¹⁶.

The preparatory analysis above has shown the distinct two models of tasks. Now, we are back to the interpretation of Kant. According to which model should we understand the task to achieve moral perfection in Kant's practical philosophy? I shall examine the four interpretative options again. The first option, which assumes moral perfection is the final member of the series of our progress, clearly takes the task of moral perfection in the sense of the completion model. The second option which requires divine forgiveness also commits itself to the completion model. Since moral perfection is the final state which we cannot reach by ourselves, divine forgiveness is required. As we have already examined, we cannot adopt the first and the second option because of their textual difficulties.

¹⁶ Though there is no direct source of the constitutive model of tasks, the narrative approach for value, suggested by Velleman 1991 and developed by Fischer 2009, inspired me. According to the narrative approach, an event at a certain moment in life has its value in the context of a story of life as a whole. The constitutive model which I suggest inherits the holistic character of value from the approach, but the whole in the model is not necessarily narrative.

How about the third option? It assumes moral perfection as “the ideal state” in the virtual end of the series of our moral development. In this sense, Silber takes moral perfection in the sense of the completion model, and at the same time claims the completion is impossible. Silber seems to maintain that the immanent progress has value in itself. However, how the processes can be meaningful if the task is taken as the completion model? There is no way to explain the value of uncompleted processes in the completion model.

Finally, I shall speculate about the background behind the fourth option suggested by Mariña. The problem of the fourth option is its ambiguity. If the transcendent perfection is isolated from our progress, how can moral perfection be *telos* of our moral improvement? Mariña keeps silent about the relation between the achievement and the progress. Why does not she explain this? I guess that precisely because she understands *telos* in the sense of the completion model, she cannot clarify the relation. As I argued in the criticism against the first option, it is impossible to assume moral perfection as the final member of the series of our progress. At this point, Mariña properly isolates moral perfection from the series. However, when perfection is apart from the series, it is impossible to conceive it as the final state. If we stay in the completion model, we cannot find any connection between the series and the perfection.

All the four options commonly assume the task to achieve moral perfection in the sense of the completion model, and none of them sufficiently explains Kant’s own description. Then, according to what model should we understand the task of moral perfection? The third and fourth option give important lessons. The third option finally needs to evaluate the progress itself, but cannot find a way for doing so. The fourth option cannot provide the explanation of the relation between moral perfection and our progress. In the last section, I present my own interpretation. The key to understanding the conception of moral perfection is Kant’s own explanation in his later work, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. As we shall see,

when the task is conceived in the constitutive model, we will find the answer to the remaining sub-questions.

3 The Constitutive Model and Holistic Holiness

In the previous section, I have shown that all the four interpretative options presuppose that the task to achieve moral perfection should be understood in the sense of the completion model. Is it the only way to conceive the task? In this section, I suggest reading the task to achieve moral perfection in line with another model, namely the constitutive. Though the *Critique of Practical Reason* implies the evaluation of the whole, which is the key feature of the constitutive model, Kant makes this point more explicitly in his later work, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. I shall start to present the feature of moral perfection in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

As we have already seen in the criticism of the first option, only when our morality is evaluated from the divine perspective, not from the human perspective, moral perfection is found in the endless progress. Kant characterizes this evaluation by God as the non-serial, in contrast to the human serial. Moral perfection is found as “the whole of conformity with the moral law” (V:123). The meaning of this phrase is ambiguous, because Kant does not provide any explanation of it. What is “the whole” in the divine non-serial thought? And why can moral perfection as such be found in our moral progress, even though our progress never reaches the perfection within the series of it?

How should we conceive the complex account of moral perfection including both the human and the divine perspective? Kant argues the topic in more detail in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*:

However, that a human being should become not merely legally good, but

morally good (pleasing to God) i.e. virtuous according to the intelligible character [of virtue] (*virtus noumenon*) and thus in need of no other incentive to recognize a duty except the representation of duty itself - that, so long as the foundation of the maxims of the human being remains impure, cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being (a transition to the maxim of holiness of disposition). And so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation (John, 3:5; compare with Genesis, 1:2) and a change of heart (VI:47).

We cannot achieve moral perfection through our progress as "gradual *reform*". Moral perfection is never a member of the series of progress. In spite of this, "a transition to the maxim of holiness of disposition", namely moral perfection is achieved as "a *revolution* in the disposition". In order to understand this properly, we have to presuppose the binary account of morality in the preceding part of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

Kant chooses the expression "a revolution in the disposition" to explain a change from an evil state to a morally good state. Let us start the interpretation with specifying the nature of moral badness. How does Kant conceive of the moral badness of an agent? Let us take a thief as an example. He steals in accordance with his desire to steal, and feels pleasure, when he achieves to steal. Why is this thief morally bad? Is he evil, just because he has such a distorted desire? Kant denies that morality is decided solely by the mere possession of a certain desire. Kant claims:

Hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other* (VI:36).

The possession of a certain desire is not sufficient for the human agent to be morally evil or good. Morality rather depends on a “subordination”. A revolution in the disposition will be found in this “subordination”. We have to presuppose Kant's account of free agents in his practical philosophy and clarify the meaning of the phrase “the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim”, in order to understand what the subordination means.

For a free agent in Kant's practical philosophy, a certain desire or incentive as a physiological or psychological state does not sufficiently form a reason for acting. Taking the example of a thief again, mere possession of the desire to steal does not imply that the agent has a reason to steal, or he can justify his action. Thus, this fact does not decide the morality of the agent. When a free agent “incorporates” a certain desire into an action-guiding principle named a “maxim”, and acts in accordance with the principle, he provides a justification for his spontaneous action. Because of the spontaneity, he is responsible for his action. This is the incorporation of a desire into the maxim¹⁷.

When an agent incorporates a desire into his maxim, he indicates a primary standard and explains why he adopts the action-guiding principle, and how he justifies his own action. Kant assumes only two possibilities of such primary standards. One is the standard which says incentives from self-love are prior to incentives from the moral law, and the other is its opposite. The agent adopting the former claims his action is justified, because the action contributes to the satisfaction of his desire from self-love. When an agent adopts the opposite standard, he insists that he takes a certain action, just because it is morally good.

¹⁷ Allison properly argues this in his Incorporation Thesis: “First, it makes it clear that for Kant an inclination or desire does not of itself constitute a reason for acting. It can become one only with reference to a rule or principle of action, which dictates that we ought to pursue the satisfaction of that inclination or desire” (Allison 1990, p. 40).

The “subordination” in the phrase quoted above is found on the level of this primary standard for the incorporation of incentives. When an agent adopts the primary standard prioritizing self-love, incentives from the moral law are subordinated to incentives from self-love. Such an agent is morally evil. On the contrary, an agent is morally good, and sets the opposite primary standard to himself, i.e. incentives from self-love are subordinated to incentives from the moral law. The ground of the moral badness of the thief is not his possession of the distorted desire, but his spontaneous choice of the primary standard of self-love on the basis of which he prioritizes the satisfaction of his desire to steal to the moral law. Moral perfection as a revolution is intelligible, when we assume this binary account of morality. When an agent abandons the primary principle of self-love and newly sets the opposite principle to himself, the agent revolutionarily achieves moral perfection.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the revolution is carried out “in the disposition”. Kant claims “[t]he disposition” is “the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims” (VI:25). What we call the primary principle is attributed to our dispositions. The disposition is not an empirical aspect of human agents. It is the non-spatiotemporal aspect of human beings, and the state of it is outside of the series of the spatiotemporal events. Thus, the priority between two kinds of incentives cannot be decided by the physiological or psychological state of an agent at a certain moment. The revolution is an essentially transcendent change.

The account of the revolution in the disposition can be summarized as follows. The morality of an agent depends on the priority between incentives from self-love and incentives from the moral law on the level of the primary standard which provides the final justification for his action. When the evil disposition prioritizing incentives of self-love changes into the good disposition prioritizing moral law, the agent revolutionarily achieves moral perfection. This revolutionary model appears to overcome some interpretative problems in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Firstly, since the shift in the priority is a binary change, the gap between moral perfection and the approximation to it vanishes. And secondly, moral perfection through the revolution is compatible with the impossibility of holiness in space and time, because the revolution is essentially non-spatiotemporal and transcendent.

Does Kant give up the account of the *Critique of Practical Reason* in which moral perfection is found in the endless progress in morality?¹⁸ It is not the case. Moral progress plays an essential role even in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. At this point, we have to consider the two perspectives of the divine and human standpoints, which is already implied in the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

but he[a human being] is a good human being only in incessant laboring and becoming i.e. he can hope - in view of the purity of the principle which he has adopted as the supreme maxim of his power of choice, and in view of the stability of this principle - to find himself upon the good (though narrow) path of constant *progress* from bad to better. For him who penetrates to the

¹⁸ Pasternack 2014 assumes this kind of evolutionary understanding of moral perfection. According to it, Kant abandons the immature account which relies on divine aid in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and adopts the completely new revolutionary model which enables us to achieve moral perfection by ourselves (cf. Pasternack 2014, pp. 142-148). This shift can be described as the shift from the anti-Pelagian account relying on God in the *Critique of Practical Reason* to the Pelagian account which allows us moral perfection by ourselves in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. As Pasternack himself argues with regard to di Giovanni's translation, it is controversial whether the revolutionary model requires divine aid or not. In this paper, I do not argue whether the revolutionary model in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* is Pelagian or not. However, in contrast to Pasternack's reading, the account in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is clearly Pelagian. As we have seen, Kant precisely denies relying on divine "indulgence or dispensation" (V:123-124), in order to achieve moral perfection. This is the hallmark of Pelagian. We do not have to and should not assume divine aid in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

intelligible ground of the heart (the ground of all the maxims of the power of choice), for him to whom this endless progress is a unity, i.e. for God, this is the same as actually being a good human being (pleasing to him); and to this extent the change can be considered a revolution (VI:48).

Gradual reform in the endless progress and moral perfection in the revolution of the disposition are not two alternatives, but two aspects of one and the same change. How are these two aspects related to each other? What God directly evaluates is not the series of moral progress, but the supersensible disposition. However, because the disposition "represents[vertritt] the totality of the series of approximations carried on *in infinitum*" (VI: 67n), the whole of the series of our moral progress is indirectly evaluated¹⁹. Kant explains this relation in the following way:

But because of the *disposition* from which it derives and which transcends the senses, we can think of the infinite progression of the good toward conformity to the law as being judged by him who scrutinizes the heart (through his pure intellectual intuition) to be a perfected whole even with respect to the deed (the life conduct) (VI: 67).

When our infinite moral efforts form the whole of the series, holiness in the supersensible aspect corresponds to the whole. The whole constituted through our

¹⁹ It should be emphasized that the evaluation of the completed whole of moral progress is indirect. As we have seen in the critique of the first interpretation, the divine evaluation should be essentially non-serial. Thus, the whole itself cannot be the direct object of the evaluation. What God directly evaluates is the supersensible disposition. Since the disposition "represents" the whole of the progress, the whole should be seen the corresponding part of the disposition, and can be indirectly evaluated. It is compatible that the divine evaluation is non-serial and that the whole of the series is indirectly evaluated.

improvement is the correspondent of holiness seen from the divine perspective. The progress and holiness are two aspects of one and the same change. In this sense, holiness is found in an endless progress²⁰.

Now, we can conceive the task to achieve moral perfection in a completely new model. Our moral effort is not merely instrumental or transitional processes directed to the final state. Rather each morally good action constitutes the whole of the processes which is evaluated. The task to achieve moral perfection should not be conceived in the completion model presupposed by most interpretations, but in the constitutive model²¹.

²⁰ The self-understanding from the human perspective consists of two further aspects. Moral progress is literally endless, and we cannot reach completion anywhere, when we see it from the merely human perspective. This is one side of the self-understanding. In contrast to this, when we assume the whole of the series of our moral progress corresponds to holiness judged by God, then we acquire the other aspect of the self-understanding, in which we can believe that our effort at a certain moment constitutes the correspondent of holiness as its part. The second aspect is theological, which provides the elucidation of the divine conception from the human perspective. Accordingly, by means of the combination of these two aspects, we can understand the task of moral perfection in the constitutive model, and rationally commit ourselves to it.

²¹ I have not referred to the practical postulate of the immortality of the soul, which for Kant is the necessary condition of moral perfection. Though I cannot fully develop the argument about it in this paper, I show that the special task in the constitutive model, achieving moral perfection, requires the immortality. Moral perfection in the model is achieved, only when the disposition seen from the divine perspective represents the whole of the series of the infinite progress of a human being. This whole corresponding to supersensible holiness requires that we actually carry out the endless improvement. Now, suppose that human beings were finite, and they completely disappeared by their death. It is essentially impossible for the merely finite beings to carry out the infinite improvement, just because they are limited in a certain spatiotemporal span. If we understand ourselves as a kind of such a mere mortal animal, we cannot rationally commit ourselves to the project of the infinite progress, and we need to give up achieving moral perfection. The immortality of the soul is practically postulated at this point. If we assume the infinite duration of ourselves, it is at least possible to carry out the

Conclusion

I have examined three sub-questions in order to clarify Kant's conception of moral perfection. Firstly, what kind of tasks is the task to achieve moral perfection? Secondly, what is required for us to carry out this task? And what is the value of the task of moral perfection? Now, we have reached the answer to the first sub-question, and consequently the answers to the remaining two as well. The task to achieve moral perfection should not be conceived of in the completion model, i.e. with a focus on realizing the final member of the series of moral development, but in the constitutive model in which the particular processes form the whole. What is required for us is not the realization of the certain state "at the end of the series". In this constitutive task, what we can and ought to do is the continuous commitment to the project of moral improvement. This is the answer to the second sub-question. And finally, the value of our morally good actions as the processes in the series of the progress is not merely instrumental. Each morally good action is a component of the whole which is evaluated from the divine perspective. The value of the particular process is holistic because it has value in relation to the whole of the processes. Only holistic holiness is moral perfection for human beings.

endless progress, and it is not irrational to commit ourselves to the project of it. The role of the immortality in the constitutive model is different from the one in the usual completion model. In the completion model, we require a long time to complete a difficult task, and one of the most difficult tasks, achieving moral perfection, might require an infinitely long time. However, as we saw in the reading by Pasternack, the postulate of the immortality based on quantitative shortness must fail, because the infinite extension cannot fill the gap between moral perfection and the approximation of it. Even if human beings somehow technologically win the immortality in the future, they never achieve moral perfection "at any moment of his existence" (V:122). In contrast to this failure, the immortality is required only for the commitment to the project of the infinite moral progress itself. Only an endless being can carry out endless improvement.

<Bibliography>

- Beiser, Frederick 2006, "Moral Faith and the Highest Good". In Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 588-629.
- Engstrom, Stephen 2016, "The Determination of the Concept of the Highest Good". In Thomas Höwing (ed.), *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*. De Gruyter. pp. 89-108.
- Fischer, John Martin 2009, "Stories and the Meaning of Life". In *Our Stories: Essays on Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Guyer, Paul 2019, *Kant on the Rationality of Morality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kleingeld, Pauline 2016, "Kant on 'Good', the Good, and the Duty to Promote the Highest Good". In Thomas Höwing (ed.), *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*. Berlin: De Gruyter. pp. 33-50.
- Mariña, Jacqueline 2000, "Making Sense of Kant's Highest Good", *Kant-Studien* 91 (3);pp. 329-355
- Pasternack, Lawrence 2013, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant on Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Routledge.
- Reath, Andrews 1988, Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (4). pp. 593-619.
- Silber, John 1959, Kant's Conception of the Highest Good as Immanent and Transcendent, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 68 (4), pp. 469-492
- Velleman, David 1991, Well-Being and Time. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1):48-77.

(Doctoral student, Graduate School of Letters, Keio University)