



The Ninth Magazine

Produced by Members of

The World Intelligence Network.

The
WIN ONE

12th December 2012

Welcome to the Ninth WIN Magazine!

I am very pleased to welcome you to this, the ninth magazine of the World Intelligence Network, and my fifth as editor.

This Edition is full of philosophical notions. It will, I guarantee, tax the most ardent intellectual brains who contemplate those ideas. Therefore, I have divided some articles into two parts. Read the first part, reflect on what you have taken in, then you will benefit greatly from the experience.

Other articles are also thought-provoking and amusing, so please feel free to write to me about the content: I am keen to initiate a commentary page on the concepts presented, not only based on the ideas purported in this Edition, but written about in the previous Editions as well.

Alan Wing-lun has created a puzzle for this magazine. His music puzzle from the 8th Edition has been solved by a few of the WIN members, but more attempts will be gratefully received by him. You can find him on facebook, for example, or you can e-mail me your answers, then I'll pass them on to him. The definitive answer will, according to Alan, be presented in the next WIN ONE.

Many of the images in this magazine revolve around the 12th Asia Pacific Conference on Giftedness attended by several members of the WIN. The new Vice President of the WIN, Dr. Manahel Thabet (see the photo below) has written a personal account of her involvement in the Dubai conference, and in doing that, I believe she reaffirms how fortunate the WIN is to have her amongst its members. The conference was also useful in putting WIN members in personal contact with members of other influential organisations, and for forging links with gifted people and their relatives from all over the world.

Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis continues to develop the WIN website and he organises its maintenance as well. Please make an effort to explore the cornucopia of opportunities available to you on the site, and try to follow the developments that will occur in the near future; www.iqsociety.org already has games, IQ tests, information and links to many IQ societies and other groups interested in developing human potential. You can read some of the presentations made in Dubai as well; soon many of the workshops and keynote speeches will be available on youtube, a great resource for all those who read this, plus make their way in the modern world.

Finally, I hope you enjoy this magazine and will consider contributing to it very soon.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Powell



Contents.

Front page: **Waterfall in Dubai.**

Page 2: **Introduction.**

Page 3: **Contents Page.**

Page 4: **The Importance of Kant's Concept of the Highest Good, by Paul Edgeworth. (Pt.1)**

Page 14: **A Meeting of Minds: pictures from Dubai. (Various) Comments by Graham Powell.**

Page 18: **The Importance of Kant's Concept of the Highest Good, by Paul Edgeworth. (Pt.2)**

Page 26: **The Corporate Strategy Column, by Elisabetta Di Cagno.**

Page 27: **Differentiating features of gifted children and dealing with high IQ societies, by Marco Ripà.**

Page 33: **Organizing the 12th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness, by Dr. Manahel Thabet.**

Page 36: **Poems by Greg A. Grove.**

Page 37: **On the Epistemic Standing of Claims of the Nonexistent, by Phil Elauria.**

Page 42: **3D Lego Griddler "Chasing Nessie," by Alan Wing-lun.**

The Importance of Kant's Concept of the Highest Good

- by Paul Edgeworth

1. The Capstone Concept

Modern commentators of Kant's moral philosophy have often neglected his conception of the highest good, for they suppose that the philosophically significant core of his ethics can be adequately explained without reference to the highest good.¹ Some other scholars disagree as to whether the highest good belongs in Kant's moral theory at all.² Is the highest good then merely an extra moral, i.e., religious, addition to Kant's theory and irrelevant to practical judgment and the choice of a course of conduct?³ An examination of Kant's works shows that his concern for the highest good runs through all three critiques, and indeed, is the sustained focus of attention throughout the dialectic of pure practical reason in the second critique.⁴ Accordingly, it is the purpose of this discussion to demonstrate that Kant's conception of the highest good, instead of being regarded as a merely superfluous appendage, should be seen rather as the capstone of his ethical system.

2. Proper Relationship of Virtue with Happiness

What then is the highest good and what is essential to this doctrine if we are to understand it? As already noted, the highest good receives its most detailed treatment in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where it is introduced by Kant as the "unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason."⁵ That is to say, it is an object of pure practical reason, considered as a whole, and conditioned by no other object.⁶ Kant next distinguishes two ways in which "highest" is to be understood. It can mean either the supreme (*supremum*) or the complete (*consummatum*).⁷ "The first is that condition which is itself unconditioned, i.e., not subordinate to any other (*originarium*); the second is that whole which is not part

¹Lance Simmons, "Kant's Highest Good: Albatross, Keystone, Achilles Heel," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 10 (October 1993): 355.

²Andrews Reath, "Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (October 1988): 593.

³Thomas Auxter, "The Unimportance of Kant's Highest Good," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17 (April 1979): 121.

⁴Simmons, 355.

⁵Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. and ed. by Mary Gregor with an intro. by Andrews Reath (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 91.

⁶Simmons, 355.

⁷*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 92/5:110.

of a still greater whole of the same kind (*perfectissimum*).⁸ Virtue, since it has unconditioned worth, qualifies as the supreme good, but Kant claims that virtue does not constitute the supreme good.⁹ Though Kant regards the concepts of virtue and happiness as quite heterogeneous, he nonetheless holds that virtue becomes part of a greater whole of the same kind, i.e., part of a greater good, when combined with happiness.¹⁰ Since only the greater good can make up the totality of pure practical reason's object, the highest good must therefore consist of virtue combined with happiness.¹¹ Again, we can say that every moral action involves two elements, the material element or object of desire and the formal element or moral law.¹² Accordingly, the highest good as the adequate object of moral action, involves the completion of each of these elements.¹³

Because we have a sensuous nature, the highest good requires the satisfaction of both elements. Unlike the Stoics and Epicureans, Kant does not conceive of the issue as a choice of virtue or happiness, rather it is a matter of the proper relationship between the two.¹⁴ The highest good is a synthesis of these two elements rather than a schema involving a reduction of virtue to happiness.¹⁵ If happiness were the ground of virtue, the will would be determined heteronomously, and so Kant argues that virtue is the ground of happiness, i.e., virtue is the condition of our worthiness to be happy.¹⁶ Thus we see that the unconditional requirements of virtue makes happiness a subordinate partner in the synthesis.¹⁷

3. Highest good Arises Out of Morality

Although worthiness¹⁸ has absolute moral priority over happiness,¹⁹ and virtue must remain the

⁸Ibid.

⁹ Stephen Engstrom, "The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant's Moral Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52 (December 1992): 750.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²J. Ralph Lindgren, "Kant's *Conceptus Cosmicus*," *Dialogue* 2 (1963): 294-95.

¹³Ibid., 295.

¹⁴ Patrick Shade, "Does Kant's Ethics Imply Reincarnation?" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 33 (Fall 1995): 349.

¹⁵Simmons, 355.

¹⁶Shade, 349.

¹⁷Simmons, 355.

¹⁸In light of the aforementioned subordination, virtue may be partially and non-analytically characterized as "worthiness to be happy." Ibid.

supreme good, it is not the whole and perfect good, for man's ideal of the highest good must include happiness as well.²⁰ At first glance, this position might appear to go against the heart of Kant's morality, for he has insisted that morality excludes determination of the will by such motives as happiness.²¹ Man, Kant never wearies of telling us, must do his duty out of respect for the law and never from inclination or from such motive as the anticipation of happiness.²² But the concept of the highest good does not introduce happiness as a determining ground of the will; rather, happiness is included as a component of the object of a will determined by the moral law.²³ Thus, the highest good does not determine the will to act morally, but the highest good instead results from the moral action of the will.²⁴ As Kant says, "this idea [of the highest good] arises out of morality and is not its basis."²⁵



4. The Antimony of Practical Reason

Although happiness cannot be included in the determining ground of the will, it must be a part of the highest good as the object of practical reason. This is so, because the nature of the highest good derives from the nature of the human being. We must keep in mind that man is a member of two worlds, the phenomenal as well as the noumenal, and that it is therefore his vocation to "subsume the data of sensibility under the demands of reason."²⁶

It is necessary to address the antinomy of practical reason at this point in our discussion. Since virtue and happiness are not identical in concept, they must, therefore, be related as cause and effect.²⁷

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. with an intro. and notes by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (La Salle: Open Court Pub., 1934; Harper Torchbooks, 1960), lvi.

²¹Shade, 348.

²²*Religion*, lvi.

²³Shade, 348.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.; *Religion*, 5.

²⁶Shade, 350.

²⁷Lindgren, 295.

Kant gives us two possibilities: “either the desire for happiness must be the motive to maxims of virtue, or the maxim of virtue must be the efficient cause of happiness.”²⁸ It turns out that the first is impossible because morality is not a matter of seeking happiness, and the second is also impossible as it involves the necessary connection rendered through cause and effect (which is a matter of natural causality applicable only to appearances).²⁹ “If, therefore, the highest good is impossible in accordance with practical rules, then the moral law, which commands us to promote it, must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false.”³⁰ Such an apparent impossibility of the attainment of the highest good would threaten the foundations of morality, and to have to believe that the moral law is false would be, for Kant, the “greatest calamity that could overtake us.”³¹ Kant proceeds to resolve this antinomy by stating that the first proposition is absolutely false, and the second conditionally false, i.e., “if we consider virtue as in the intelligible world and happiness in the sensible world, then such a connection is possible though not through natural causality.”³² Kant then proceeds to indicate the two conditions necessary for such a connection within the notion of the highest good: the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.³³

5. Two Postulates of Pure Practical Reason

Thus by the introduction of immortality and God as postulates of pure practical reason, Kant hopes to account for the possibility of the highest good and to show its suitability as an object of the will.³⁴ Each postulate³⁵ is “a *theoretical* proposition, though one not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an *a priori* unconditionally valid *practical* law.”³⁶ Since we have no sensible intuitions corresponding to their objects, these postulates cannot be known, in the meaning of knowledge,

²⁸*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 95/5:113.

²⁹Lindgren, 295.

³⁰*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 95/5:114.

³¹*Religion*, lvii.

³²Lindgren, 295.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴John R. Silber, “Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good as Immanent and Transcendent,” *Philosophical Review* 68 (October 1959): 471.

³⁵Kant tells us that given an absolutely certain fact, and if that fact is absolutely necessary, then those conditions which are absolutely necessary for its real possibility must be postulated. Because it does not express what ought to be, but what is or must be, it is then a theoretical proposition, but because it is based on a given moral law, it is related to reason’s practical employment. A postulate of practical reason therefore expresses the practical necessity of an undetermined condition to a given necessary fact. In the case of the postulates of practical reason, the given necessary fact is the moral law, and the necessary conditions are immortality and God. See Mary-Barbara Zeldin, “Principles of Reason, Degrees of Judgment, and Kant’s Argument for the Existence of God,” *Monist* 54 (April 1970): 294-97.

³⁶*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 102/5:122.

understood in the first critique.³⁷ The practical postulates, however, are not *ad hoc* additions to Kant's system, for they can be known, in another sense, by stipulating the necessary conditions for obedience to the precepts of the moral will.³⁸ Therefore, insofar as there is an obligation to promote the highest good, then it must be necessary to believe that the postulates are true.³⁹ This must be the case even though we necessarily lack theoretical certainty about these postulates.⁴⁰ Accordingly, they cannot be dismissed as being merely subjective in a pragmatic sense, but rather they must be seen as objective in that they are inescapable concepts that reason must accept in its reflection upon its own activity in the practical realm.⁴¹

6. The Postulate of the Soul's Immortality

Kant tells us in *The Critique of Practical Reason* that the achievement of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law.⁴² But in such a will, the complete fitness of dispositions to the moral law is the supreme condition of the moral good. This conformity, therefore, must be just as possible as object, as it is contained in the command that requires we promote the latter. However, complete fitness of the will to the moral law is holiness,⁴³ a perfection of which no rational being in the world is capable of at any time of his existence. Nevertheless, it is required as practically necessary and can be found therefore only in an endless progress toward that complete conformity. This endless progress is possible, however, "only on the presupposition of the *existence* and personality of the same rational being continuing *endlessly* (which is called the immortality of the soul)."⁴⁴ Thus, for Kant, the highest good is practically possible only on the supposition of the soul's immortality.⁴⁵ That is to say, the absolutely binding character of the imperative which issues from our moral freedom requires that we be able to represent the outcome of our efforts in the moral realm as both abiding and as

³⁷Shade, 350.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Simmons, 356.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹R.Z. Friedman, "The Importance and Function of Kant's Highest Good," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22 (July 1984): 340.

⁴²102/5:122.

⁴³Holiness or perfect virtue is the complete fitness of intentions to the moral law. It can only belong to a will which is incapable of maxims that conflict with the moral will. Since Kant tells us that the human will is pathologically affected, it is not holy. Therefore, human beings cannot achieve perfect virtue. See Shade, 351.

⁴⁴*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 102/5:122.

⁴⁵Ibid.

unreservedly our own.⁴⁶ Consequently, the supreme condition of the attainment of the highest good is the complete determination of intention by this law; hence, this determination must, in turn, be possible.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this determination is not possible for a finite being in any particular period of duration that we could point to; therefore, since we have said that it must be possible, it can only be attainable through an infinite progress.⁴⁸ Accordingly, since this entails the continued existence of the rational individual, Kant believes that the immortality of the soul must be postulated.⁴⁹ Only then on this supposition can the highest good be said to be practically possible.

7. The Postulate of the Existence of God

Kant reiterates that the necessary completeness of the first and principal part of the highest good, i.e., morality, led to the postulate of immortality, since this can only be fully accomplished in an eternity.⁵⁰ He now declares that the same law must also lead to the possibility of the second element of the highest good and that is happiness which, in turn, must be proportioned to that morality. Furthermore, Kant tells us that this must be done as disinterestedly as before, i.e., solely from impartial reason; all of which is to say that it must lead to the supposition of the existence of an adequate cause to this effect. This then results in the postulate of the existence of God as belonging necessarily to the possibility of the highest good which as object of our will is necessarily connected with the moral lawgiving of pure reason.⁵¹ "Happiness," as defined by Kant, "is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*, and rests, therefore, on the harmony of nature with his whole end as well as with the essential determining ground of his will."⁵²

And in the *Critique of Judgment*, happiness is defined by Kant as the object of man's desire " 'that can be satisfied by nature in its beneficence.' "⁵³ Since happiness has to do with man's sentient nature, it cannot

⁴⁶Philip Rossi, "Kant as a Christian Philosopher: Hope and the Symbols of Christian Faith,"

Philosophy Today 25 (Spring 1981): 29.

⁴⁷Lindgren, 296.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 103-4/5:124.

⁵¹Ibid., 104/5:124.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³*Religion*, lix.

be attained without the cooperation of his environment.⁵⁴ But the moral law as a law of freedom commands through determining grounds that are quite independent of nature and of its harmony with our faculty of desire; furthermore, the rational being in the world is not also the cause of the world or of nature itself. There is, as a result, not the least ground in the moral law for a necessary connection between the morality and the proportionate happiness of a being belonging to the world.⁵⁵ Nor can this being by his will be a cause of this nature and, as concerns his happiness, cannot by his own powers make it thoroughly harmonize with his practical principles. The human capacity does not therefore suffice for bringing about happiness in the world proportionate to its worthiness to be happy.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, in the practical task of pure reason which is the pursuit of the highest good, such a connection is postulated as necessary. Thus Kant declares, “We *ought* to strive to promote the highest good (which must therefore be possible).”⁵⁷



⁵⁴Theodore M. Greene points out that Kant is a profound pessimist as to the attainment of a hedonistic goal. Due to man's fickleness and natural perversity in the ways in which he seeks his happiness and destroys the happiness of other men, and because of nature's indifference, a balance of happiness is not to be counted on if man is left solely to his own devices. *Ibid.*, lix-lx.

⁵⁵Steven G. Smith reminds us that the happiness which can only be given by God, such as freedom from degrading poverty, disease, or untimely death--happiness which exhibits some human control but never completely--is an object of hope, only on the supposition that God is a member of the moral community. If there is no God, the moral community consists only of ourselves, and nothing but human reciprocation may be hoped for. Only if God exists and controls nature would it be tragic then for a virtuous person's gesture to go unanswered. Thus only if God exists is the necessity of full proportionality between virtue and happiness possible. See "Worthiness to be Happy and Kant's Conception of the Highest Good," *Kantstudien* 75 (1984):188.

⁵⁶Silber, 471.

⁵⁷*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 104/5:125.

Accordingly, the highest good in the world is possible only insofar as a supreme cause of nature having a causality in keeping with the moral disposition is assumed. Which is to say that the supreme cause of nature, if it is to be presupposed for the highest good, must be a being that is the cause of nature by understanding and will, that is to say, God.⁵⁸ Consequently, the postulate of the possibility of the highest derived good (the best world)⁵⁹ is likewise the postulate of the reality of the highest original good, God.⁶⁰ From the foregoing, we see that Kant is arguing



that since man by his finitude is incapable of rewarding virtue with proportionate, i.e., appropriate degrees of happiness, an omnipotent moral ruler is needed to sustain the concept of the highest good as an object

⁵⁸The highest good is composed of virtue and happiness; happiness is the satisfaction of desires. Therefore, just as virtue must be possible through the character of the moral law, so too must happiness be possible through virtuous activity, i.e., by acting in accord with the moral law. But the moral is neither derived from nor the cause of the ordering of nature to the satisfaction of desires. Accordingly, the proportionate coincidence of happiness to virtue cannot be established by humans. Rather such a correlation requires a cause which causes the order of nature to be such that the satisfaction of desires will follow from virtuous acts. Such a cause would necessarily act through the idea of the moral law. Therefore, that cause would be intelligent and its causality would be determined according to this idea of law in a will. Such a being is known to us as God. See Lindgren, 296.

⁵⁹Since the highest good has both an individual and a social end, it is not surprising that it is at times called the “best world,” for this is merely a way of recognizing the social nature of the goal of the highest good. See Victoria S. Wike, *Kant on Happiness in Ethics* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1994), 151.

⁶⁰*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 105/5:125.

of the will.⁶¹ Further, since we cannot intend to do what we know or believe to be impossible, and since nature by itself can offer to us no hope of success in this endeavor, we must postulate the existence of an omnipotent, moral being who can transform nature for us in the required way.⁶² As a corollary to our discussion thus far, we can also see that for Kant the existence of God can only be established by practical reason and that the only God we can know is a moral God.⁶³ The fact that we are limited in what we can say about the objects of the postulates, namely God and immortality, guarantees that the postulates will only be useful in a conceptualization of the world that adopts the rationality of the highest good as our end.⁶⁴

8. The Non-Theist, Theist and the Moral Life

At this point, it is possible to raise an interesting question, namely, how is it possible that the non-theist, i.e., non-believer in the existence of God, can consistently recognize and act upon his duty and still be missing something necessary for moral action? This question has both been raised and answered by Terry Godlove, Jr.⁶⁵ In his response, he notes that while both the theist and non-theist may share an immediate action, only the former may undertake the moral life, for only he



can truly intend to further the highest good. Thus without the hope of success in his moral life (since only an omnipotent moral law-giver could bring about such a state of nature), the non-theist cannot in actuality describe himself as working toward a unified moral end, the highest good, for he cannot intend to do what he knows to be impossible. Nor can he regard his conduct as furthering anything more than immediate ends, since he cannot aim at the final end of moral conduct. Consequently, the non-theist cannot set out to lead a moral life, where by “moral life” we signify “more than a brute concatenation of otherwise independent moral actions.”⁶⁶

It is emphasized by Kant that what belongs to duty for us is the “striving to produce and promote the highest good in the world.”⁶⁷ And so he states “with respect to the holiness that the Christian law demands, nothing remains for a creature but endless progress, though for that very reason he is justified in

⁶¹Silber, 472.

⁶²Terry F. Godlove, Jr., “Moral Actions, Moral Lives: Kant on Intending the Highest Good,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 25 (Spring 1987): 49.

⁶³*Religion*, lxii.

⁶⁴*Critique of Prac. Reason*, xxx.

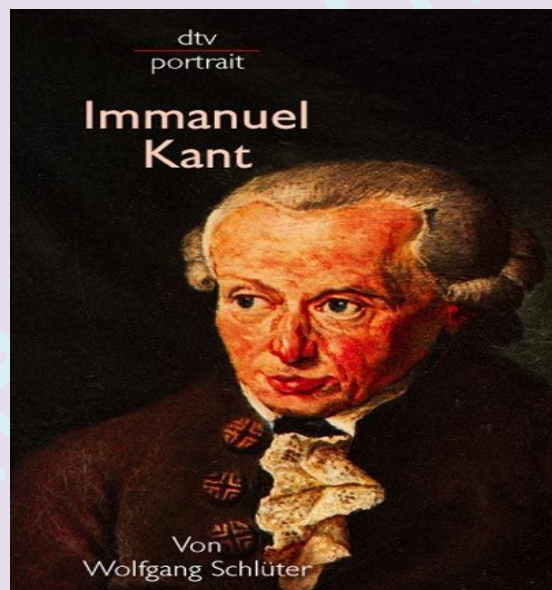
⁶⁵“Moral Actions, Moral Lives,” 54.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁷*Critique of Prac. Reason*, 105/5:126.

hoping for his endless duration.”⁶⁸ Therefore, the Christian doctrine of morals, is said by Kant, to supplement the lack of happiness, by representing the world in which rational creatures devote themselves with the entirety of their souls to the moral law as a kingdom of God, in which nature and morals come into a harmony through a holy author who makes the derived highest good possible.⁶⁹ Holiness of morals is thus presented to them as a rule even in this life, while the well-being proportioned to it, i.e., beatitude, is represented as attainable only in eternity; for as Kant declares, “the *former* must always be the archetype of their conduct in every state, and progress toward it is already possible and necessary in this life, whereas the *latter*, under the name of happiness, cannot be attained at all in this world . . . and is therefore made solely an object of hope.”⁷⁰

Kant is quick to point out that the Christian principle of morals is itself not theological (and hence heteronomy); it is instead autonomy of pure practical reason itself as it places the proper incentive to observing these laws not in the desired results but rather in the representation of duty alone. In this way, Kant observes, the moral law leads through the concept of the highest good “to religion, that is, to the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions-that is, chosen and in themselves contingent ordinance’s of another’s will.”⁷¹ We are therefore commanded by the moral law to make the highest good in a world the final object of all our conduct. And again, Kant reminds us, that morals is not the doctrine of how we are to make ourselves happy, but rather of how we are to become worthy of happiness. Consequently, only if religion enters into it, can we entertain the hope of receiving that degree of happiness which we may be deemed worthy of receiving.⁷²



⁶⁸Ibid., 107/5:128.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., 107/5:129.

⁷¹Ibid., 107-8/5:129.

⁷²Ibid., 108/5:130.

A Meeting of Minds: Pictures from Dubai, by Evangelos Katsioulis, Christina Angelidou, Graham Powell, Jonathan Wai and Marco Ripà.

The waterfall on the right, which forms the backdrop to the front cover for this Edition, is at one entrance to the Dubai Mall, the largest shopping centre in the world in terms of sales area.



This is a view of one of the ceilings inside the Dubai Mall, which many of us visited on several occasions during the 12th Asia Pacific Conference on Giftedness, attended between the 14th & 18th of July, 2012.



Near the centre of the Dubai Mall there is a large aquarium with an array of tropical fish. There is a separate area set aside for people to visit and admire the beautiful wildlife contained there.



The Mall afforded a welcome respite from the afternoon sun during a visit on the penultimate day of the conference, when all of us had finished our workshops and presentations.

Below is a view from the coach which took us to a sumptuous dinner on the Sunday evening.



Here, from left to right, are Jonathan Wai, Graham Powell, Evangelos Katsioulis and Marco Ripà relaxing prior to entering the main dining room of the hotel.

Not only were we treated very well inside the palatial hotel, but we were also entertained while enjoying our meal. Here a troop of men and youths twirl battens to the sound of traditional Arab music.



Evangelos, Marco and Jonathan went out during the early afternoon and, as can be seen from Evangelos's face, it was very hot. The building behind them is one of the underground stations, all of which protect travellers from the direct sun for most of their journey. In July, when travelling around at night, the temperature was still 35 degrees centigrade.

One of the main reasons for going out during the day was to witness the immensely impressive Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world. For more information on the construction of this amazing building, I recommend the documentary Big, Bigger Biggest on youtube. In it, the major advances in technology are explained which led to the Burj Khalifa being made possible.





Some superlative Burj Khalifa facts.

It is 829.8 metres tall, that's more than twice the height of the Empire State Building. It has the fastest lifts in the world, travelling up the 160 floors at 18 metres per second. To construct the Burj Khalifa required cement to be pumped higher than ever before. Aside from the highest residential space, it also has the highest nightclub in the world (on the 144th floor) plus the highest restaurant – on the 122nd floor!

Here Evangelos and Marco take in the spectacle of what was known as the Burj Dubai until its opening ceremony on 4th January 2010. Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President, offered considerable support for the project towards its completion, hence the building was inaugurated in his name.



In the Blue Bar of our hotel, Marco, Graham, Christina and Evangelos relax at the end of the conference.

Part Two: **The Importance of Kant's Concept of the Highest Good**

By Paul Edgeworth

9. **Transcendent and Immanent Interpretations of the Highest Good**

Kant tells us that although the postulates do not extend speculative cognition, they do, nevertheless, "give objective reality to the ideas of speculative reason in *general*."⁷³ But, Kant then asks, is our cognition really extended by pure practical reason, and is what was transcendent for speculative reason immanent in practical reason?⁷⁴ Kant answers affirmatively that this is certainly so but only for practical purposes. It is at this point that the necessity and importance of the idea of the highest good should become clear to us. For we cognize neither the nature of our souls, nor the intelligible world, nor the supreme author of the world as to what they are in themselves, but have merely unified the concepts of them in the practical concept of the highest good as the object of our will.⁷⁵ That is to say, the idea of the highest good as the transcendent object of pure practical reason has been made apparent to our intellect. Though it is a transcendent object, it can nevertheless serve as our model to guide moral action. It also becomes immanent to us in our attempts to approximate the highest good to the fullest extent possible in our worldly existence.

As a demand of reason and as reason's ultimate end, Silber reminds us, the highest good continues to be an object for our rational striving.⁷⁶ Each of us is obligated to attain as much of the highest good as possible. To the extent that the highest good transcends our capacities, it no longer defines our duty but serves rather as a guide for our moral aspirations.⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that by limiting man's obligations to the actual limits of his capacity, that is by defining the necessary object of moral volition as the duty to promote with all our strength and striving the highest good, Kant has succeeded in making the idea of the highest good immanent in our life.⁷⁸ The moral law, which posed the idea of the highest good as the material object of moral volition, is thus no longer threatened by the impossibility of the object which it demanded, for the good to which man is obligated now lies within his reach to achieve and is no longer utterly transcendent to him as a finite being.⁷⁹

As we have seen, the possibility of the highest good as an object of volition has been made meaningful for us through an immanent interpretation of it. But how then can the transcendent aspect of the highest good, that is to say, its normative character, be maintained for us? Silber's discussion of this issue provides an interesting resolution. He states that although we are not obligated to do the impossible,

⁷³Ibid., 110/5:132.

⁷⁴Ibid., 111/5:133.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶478.

⁷⁷Silber, 479.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

neither can we define our capacity in terms of our actual performance. We cannot determine what we are capable of doing, and thus our accountability, by observing what we have already done. Likewise, we cannot excuse ourselves for having failed to do something on the basis that we did not do it. If we argue that it is impossible to do anything which we have not already done, then we would be in the position of arguing away most of our capacities. If this is so, argues Silber, the moral law, without exceeding the limitations of human nature in general or of the individual human being, may indeed obligate a person to do that which he has never done before. Thus one may be morally obligated to attain a more complete approximation of the highest good than he has hitherto achieved.⁸⁰

The foregoing once again illustrates that the moral law provides us with the only standard by which we can measure the extent of our capacities and of our consequent freedom—it is the *ratio cognoscendi* of our freedom.⁸¹ Thus we can say that “ought” implies “can” in the sense that the moral law provides us with the only, and therefore best, indication of our freedom. Likewise, “ought” implies “can” in the sense that, apart from some incontrovertible proof of the impossibility of an action, we must accept as categorically valid the estimate of our capacities which the moral law sets forth in the projection of the highest good.⁸²



Thus the demand of the moral law to pursue and promote the highest good, as far as a man's capabilities will allow him to, embarks him upon a continuous and unending supreme effort and striving. At the same time, man's actual moral responsibility is not judged by the idea of the highest good as the transcendent idea of pure reason, for this object which man is obligated to *attain* in full, serves as the standard that man uses to assess his limits.⁸³ But the idea of the highest good as immanent, that is to say the idea of the highest good as the object which man is obligated to *promote* with all his capabilities, is the standard which delineates man's actual moral obligations.⁸⁴ Thus Kant's conception of the highest good can be seen to be a complex and subtle one which requires that it be both transcendent and immanent.

10. Two Further Interpretations of the Higher Good

Just how complicated and subtle a conception Kant's idea of the highest good truly is, can be grasped if we examine it further from two different and distinct points of view, that is to say, the

⁸⁰Ibid., 479-80.

⁸¹Ibid., 481.

⁸²Ibid., 482.

⁸³Ibid., 484.

⁸⁴Ibid., 484-85.

theological⁸⁵ and secular. The first point of view can be seen to find its backing in the postulates and can be said to locate the realization of the highest good in a world that is in some way distinct from what we presently know.⁸⁶ The second point of view, in turn, can be labeled a secular or political one which requires neither the postulates nor another world, but instead human agency in this world can be said to suffice for the realization of the highest good.⁸⁷

11. A Theological Interpretation

By a theological interpretation of the highest good we thus recognize that our description of man's state of affairs, if it is to be reasonably complete, must bring in some theological notions, for instance, the existence or activity of God, or such notions as that of a life in some form after death or in another world.⁸⁸ The important feature of a theological conception of the highest good is that it would, therefore, be a state of affairs that would come about in another world or life in another form through the activity of God.⁸⁹ The theological conception thus supports this possibility by assuming the existence of another world in which a system for distributing happiness in proportion to virtue is in place, and all individuals who can be said to have developed a good will in this life will eventually enjoy happiness⁹⁰ as well as a result of the laws of that world.⁹¹

Kant tells us little about the nature of man's future state which we call the afterlife.⁹² Generally, he conceives of this afterlife as a continuation of this one in some manner:

At least man has no ground for believing that a sudden change will take place. Rather, experience of his state on earth and the ordering of nature in general gives him clear proofs that his moral deterioration, with its inevitable punishments, as well as his moral improvement and the well-being resulting therefrom, will continue endlessly, i.e., eternally.⁹³

⁸⁵This conception would seem to provide the context for Kant's claim that morality ineluctably leads to religion. *See* Shade, 347.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 347.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Reath, 601.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰A critical comment can be made at this point to the effect that although primacy is accorded to virtue as the supreme condition, yet the definition of virtue as worthiness to be happy seems to place virtue in a merely instrumental position towards happiness as the ultimate end of action. *See Religion*, lxiii.

⁹¹Reath, 602.

⁹²*Religion*, lix.

⁹³*Ibid.*; *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre*, 150.

Kant himself can be seen to attach no importance to the resurrection of the body, “ ‘for who is so fond of his body that he would wish to drag it about with him through all eternity if he could get on without it?’ ”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Kant’s argument for the immortality of the soul seems to carry with it the implication that the empirical self will somehow survive the death of the body.⁹⁵ This is because the notion of a future state in which virtue will be continued to be sought after eternally, and happiness, virtue’s reward, awarded accordingly, suggests that we will be as eager for happiness then as we are now.⁹⁶ Kant’s attitude on this whole matter seems to be one in which this conception of an afterlife does not possess any peculiar value in itself but is merely how we must conceive it to be, if morality and religion are to be practically efficient in our lives.⁹⁷

12. A Theological Implication of Rephenomenalization

While we are focusing our attention on a theological conception of the highest good, we should point out an implication, which Kant apparently failed to recognize or at least explicitly did not address, and that is, that his conception of the highest good implies the reincarnation or rephenomenalization of the moral self.⁹⁸ This claim is made by Patrick Shade on two counts. First, that the phenomenal self is necessary for the progress in virtue required by the highest good, and second, that the highest good’s realization is contingent upon the presence of a phenomenal self whose inclinations constitute the basis for the reward of happiness. Kant has argued that perfect virtue for humans can only be found in an endless striving. Such progress, Kant has told us, requires an infinitely enduring existence and personality of the same rational being. Thus, Shade argues that if the same personality does not underlie this moral progress from worse to better, then there is no progress but only change. Likewise, moral perfection consists in the purification of the determining grounds of the will by means of the resistance of pathological determination. Such resistance, Shade states, is achieved by the subordination of the sensuous to the moral. Therefore, if the phenomenal self dies, and it is not joined with another phenomenal self, all such resistance would be gone, and purification would be complete at that time. Shade also argues that rephenomenalization is also implicated by the temporality presupposed by progress in virtue.⁹⁹ Time clearly pertains to the phenomenal self as was made clear in the first critique. In this regard, it is evident that, as Shade points out, “Progress in virtue consists in the fact that the determining grounds of the same moral agent’s actions at t1 are less pure than they are at t2.”¹⁰⁰ Progress thus presupposes time which is only relevant to the phenomenal self, but since the phenomenal self perishes, the moral self must be joined with another phenomenal self if it is to continue its striving toward the highest good.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴Ibid.; *Streit der Facultäten* (Berlin Edition) VII, 40.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Shade, 348.

⁹⁹Ibid., 348-53.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 353-54; it should be noted that Kant complicates matters by identifying the moral self with the noumenal self to which time would be irrelevant, *CPR*, (A553/B581ff).

¹⁰¹Ibid., 354

13. A Secular Interpretation

By contrast to a theological conception of the highest good, we can say that a secular conception can be described in entirely naturalistic terms, i.e., as a state of affairs to be achieved in this world, not through the action of God but rather through human activity.¹⁰² This is a way of viewing the highest good as a representation of the moral future in community: that is to say, “the good which has been made possible for each and for all through right conduct by each and all.”¹⁰³

It is interesting to note that the theological version of the highest good is more prominent in Kant’s earlier works, such as the first two critiques, while the secular version is more prominent in the third critique and his later works; this enables us to conclude that historically Kant’s thought about the highest good developed in the direction of the secular conception, though we must admit that he never completely dropped the theological version.¹⁰⁴

Turning then to the secular version, we iterate that this version treats the highest good as a social goal to be achieved in history, through human agency and the ordering of social institutions.¹⁰⁵ The discussion of “Ethical Commonwealth” in Book 3 of *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* is one of the clearest references to the highest good to be manifested in an institutional or political form. Reath neatly provides a summation of Kant’s approach for us. He tells us that Kant initially defines the ethical commonwealth as a society founded upon publicly recognized moral principles which are also followed by all; therefore, it is implied that its institutions are aimed at realizing various moral ends, both for the good of the individual and for social harmony as well. Reath states that it is stressed by Kant that it is a social goal to be achieved through the collective efforts of all. Kant identifies it with the “Kingdom of God on earth,” and claims that its proper institutional form is that of a “rational church.” Nevertheless, Reath stresses that the ethical commonwealth should be viewed as a secular conception in that it is a community of humans organized under a particular institutional structure.¹⁰⁶ Reath thus interprets Kant to be saying that in a world in which everyone followed and acted from the moral law, we would find that the happiness of all would result from the conduct of all, for it would be guided by a shared system of moral principles; people would be led to pursue their own ends in ways that did not interfere with the legitimate ends and interests of others; furthermore, as individuals would be guided by moral concerns they would be less inclined to pursue divisive or harmful ends.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰²Reath, 601.

¹⁰³Rossi, 28.

¹⁰⁴Reath, 601.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 603.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 606-7.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 615-16.

14. Highest Good as an Object of an Ethical Commonwealth

Now this duty can be seen as not merely one of men toward men, but rather of the human race toward itself.¹⁰⁸ Sharon Anderson-Gold points out that the highest moral good cannot be obtained merely by the exertions of the individual toward his own perfection. Even if all individuals willed their own moral perfection simultaneously, the highest good would still not be obtained. Thus the highest good is not simply an aggregate of individual moral perfections, but rather there is a moral need for a harmonization of dispositions. The general principle of self-love arises as the self asserts its own ends as the condition for the recognition of the value of others. By withholding identification with others, Anderson-Gold declares, that we determine other individuals as mere means, and it is in the objectification of these others that the debasement of our humanity occurs.¹⁰⁹

Thus we can see that the ethical commonwealth as discussed by Kant in Book 3 of the *Religion* is the end in terms of which the concept of the highest good can become a legitimate object of the human will.¹¹⁰ And if the duty to promote the ethical commonwealth is to be fulfilled, it will require more than an individual-to-individual transaction.¹¹¹ It will require that individuals set goals for group interaction and cooperation as members of moral associations¹¹² to formulate shared purposes.¹¹³ While man is autonomous, each man is, however, only a part of the entire system of ends, for the law extends to all ends.¹¹⁴ Such a community will therefore be possible only insofar as its members are able to abstract from their individual standpoints and conceive of the highest good as a common object that lies beyond their individual capabilities.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸Sharon Anderson-Gold, "Kant's Ethical Commonwealth: The Highest Good as a Social Goal," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (March 1986): 23.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 23-27.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 30.

¹¹¹Ibid., 31.

¹¹²That some individuals take this responsibility seriously can be demonstrated by the formation of the Lonergan Institute for the Construction of the Human Good which has been recently chartered and is presently located at St. Anselm's Abbey, Wash., DC. However, this institution and its members receive their inspiration to set upon this worthiest of endeavors from the writings and work of the Canadian Jesuit theologian and philosopher Bernard Lonergan, rather than from a direct Kantian influence.

¹¹³Anderson-Gold, 31.

¹¹⁴Lindgren, 292.

¹¹⁵Engstrom, 777.



15. A Common and Shared Human Destiny

We can therefore state without fear of contradiction that Kant's formulation of the highest good makes it abundantly clear that it is fundamentally about a common and shared human destiny.¹¹⁶ The picture which Kant provides of mankind's moral future through his concept of the highest good is one in which full attainment of human community is hopefully to be realized. In his writings he continuously speaks of this community in images which make clear its public and shared character, namely, a "kingdom of ends," an "ethical commonwealth," and even a "kingdom of grace."¹¹⁷ Accordingly, hope in the accomplishment of a shared moral future gives present moral endeavor the form of mutuality, that is to say, we are to conduct ourselves to one another in trust that we each and all exercise our freedom for the accomplishment of the future.¹¹⁸ The universalizing will of the individual moral agent must foster and hope for reciprocity in the willing of others which will make the universality of maxims real; therefore, such happiness as in the power of moral agents to give to each other through reciprocal willing is to be hoped for by each of them.¹¹⁹ All of this should make it clear then that the attainment of the moral ideal is the responsibility of the human species and not of individuals.¹²⁰ Hence, we have a duty in pursuing and realizing the highest good which is *sui generis*.

16. The Highest Good as a Pledge of the Harmonious Ordering of Moral Purposes

In this discussion, we have sought to demonstrate that Kant's conception of the highest good is a highly subtle doctrine and well suited to the important role it plays in his interpretation of morality. It will be remembered that the highest good functions in such a way so as to provide the unity between the natural and the moral order under the priority of the moral which the latter requires in order to establish its own objectivity.¹²¹ It should also be remembered that the idea of the highest good is not only the object of moral volition, for it is also an idea of pure reason; indeed, the final idea toward which all rational striving is directed.¹²² Hence, whether the highest good is viewed as object or end (or goal), it is of great practical importance to Kant's ethics. Likewise, we are to bear in mind that while autonomy remains the foundation for moral agency, it is a foundation which must be placed in relation to other persons in a moral community, and ultimately to God for an accounting of human moral activity to be complete.¹²³ In our

¹¹⁶Philip J. Rossi, "Moral Autonomy, Divine Transcendence and Human Destiny: Kant's Doctrine of Hope as a Philosophical Foundation for Christian Ethics," *Thomist* 46 (July 1982): 450.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 451.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 457.

¹¹⁹Smith, 188.

¹²⁰Auxter, 132.

¹²¹Friedman, 342.

¹²²Silber, 486.

¹²³Rossi, 28.

endeavors to understand the concept of the highest good more completely, we have not exhausted all of its complexity, but have, nevertheless, gained significant insight into the existence of the reality of a universe of persons in moral relation to each other, and in which universe the apportioning of happiness pertains; the necessity for a harmonious ordering of moral purposes within this same universe; and perhaps most strangely of all, the recognition of a need for a phenomenal continuity of identity for each moral person in his purposeful striving for all eternity.¹²⁴ We have seen, as it were, that the concept of the highest good constitutes a pledge that the universe is systematically ordered according to moral purposes.¹²⁵ We have even seen how the highest good can be said to reveal itself both transcendently and immanently. We have thus seen how the concept of the highest good has enabled us to bridge the gap between two worlds, functioning as it does in both a noumenal (transcendent) and phenomenal (immanent) aspect.¹²⁶ If we have encountered any confusion in attempting to understand Kant's explanation of the highest good, it is perhaps a function of the heterogeneity of the concept's ingredients, namely, virtue and happiness, which, in effect, gives rise to a natural dialectic from the collision between human noumenal and phenomenal interests which vie, as it were, to interpret the meaning of the highest good.¹²⁷ Indeed, such confusion is inevitable. The highest good is spoken of as if it were in the world and as if it were outside of the world; however, the fault for this ambiguity should not be placed with Kant but rather should lie with reason itself, for it is reason which is unable to determine whether the highest good is possible in the world or only outside of the world.¹²⁸

In conclusion, Kant's conception of the highest good is an important one that, although at times confusing, makes perfect sense in relation to man's dual nature, for it expresses the satisfaction of both our sensuous and rational natures.¹²⁹ Based on the preceding discussion, it is not one to ignore and to do so is to risk not gaining insight into our human nature and human destiny. The result of our inquiry into Kant's conceptualization of the highest good, albeit brief (arguably), should have been sufficient to demonstrate that it furnishes a sound and coherent foundation for a world in which human beings and their actions can have an abiding moral significance. Kant's message still speaks to us from the past and its importance will endure into our future just as it continues to illuminate us in the present.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵*Religion*, lvii.

¹²⁶Jeffrie G. Murphy, "The Highest Good as Content for Kant's Ethical Formalism," *Kantstudien* 56 (1965-66): 103.

¹²⁷Smith, 184.

¹²⁸Wike, 159.

¹²⁹Shade, 358.

The Corporate Strategy Column

by Elisabetta di Cagno

Grab the flashlight. Shine the beam onto the clock. It is still dark, but you must prepare. Gently lift the animals off the bed and set each species separately onto the carpet. Sing to them. Now, open your eyes and in a few minutes you will begin to see in the dark. Stroke the animals and tell them you want the job.

Get out of bed and stretch, maybe do a few push-ups. Walk into the closet and sit there for about a half hour. It's quite normal to cry while sitting in the closet. You may want to get a pair of scissors and cut your clothing. Fine, if time allows, but don't cut the suit you will wear to the interview.

Draw a hot bath, pour in oatmeal and coarse salt. Slide into the water and use the time to pray. It is possible that you will break glass and cut your finger on purpose if you are not selected for the position. Relax. You've read the company's annual report, talked with a couple of vice presidents about the corporate culture, checked on the closing price of their stock; and you hid in the headquarters, after hours one night, and you sat sweating in the chairman's office, holding the pictures—the ones you bought on the islands.

It seems so long ago now. Had someone told you that you would come to believe in the pictures, you would have scoffed. Indeed, you did scoff. And now, you recognize it as the only way. You pressed the pictures onto the framed photograph of the chairman's family and you said the words.

During the interview, look interested and interesting. Avoid any questions about hobbies, never mind trying to come off well-rounded. Ask questions about research and development, and projected quarterly net earnings. Steer away from conversations about tribal life. Do not answer any questions about travel. Just say you are willing to relocate. When you are introduced to future co-workers, and this is important, though you know them and recall their lives in detail, they will not know you.

Differentiating features of gifted children and dealing with high IQ societies

By Marco Ripà

sPIqr Society Founder

Email: marcokrt1984@yahoo.it

Abstract

In this paper, we discuss the most important signs which usually reveal gifted children. A pupil, who alternates very smart answers with clear symptoms of being bored, would be a good Mensa membership candidate. A gifted child is able to understand a given topic faster than others of the same age, but their first characteristic/obstacle is the considerable difference between them and the others.

This means that gifted children often feel alone, or they prefer to escape into their own world, especially if they do not feel adequate acceptance and love from their family, peers or school. It is really important to make the child feel that their family loves them unconditionally and to provide a challenging environment. In fact, the second feature of gifted children is their hyperactivity, even if this hyperactivity does not always imply giftedness.

Finally, the author describes his particular journey from childhood to adulthood, in a country where there are no guidelines for gifted pupils' education, and where only a small percentage of people are able to understand the meaning of the word "giftedness". This personal journey led him to found the sPIqr Society, with the aim of trying to help gifted pupils inside their home country's schools.

Keywords

gifted children; giftedness screening; school; IQ; standardized tests; cheating; Italy.

Introduction

In many countries, governments have not yet fully understood the importance of investing in giftedness and talented youth. Indeed, it is not so difficult for parents to appreciate their son's exceptional status. Even without taking a standardized IQ test, it is possible to look at some signs which are common in gifted children, especially those in the age range 3 to 11.

It is very important for a child to be understood and accepted by his family, because gifted children commonly feel different from others, even if they do not know "why". Giftedness can be a double-edged sword: a great advantage, if used well, or a terrible handicap in the worst environmental situations. A few years ago, a very smart friend of mine sent me a message containing the most important sentence that I have read on the topic: "Average gifted people usually have problems, but profoundly gifted ones usually have big PROBLEMS".

This paper is focused on the importance of discovering the giftedness of a child at an early age, working with him to build a good and happy son first, rather than a worthy student. The matter of gifted underachievers is quite commonly discussed in high IQ societies, and this problem is the result of both internal and external factors. This personal conclusion, which I came to years ago, is fully coherent with Mönks' multi-factorial approach, and encompasses school, coetaneous youths, family, personal motivation, creativity and superior skills.

Anyway, my opinion is that the most important external element which is able to guarantee a happy childhood for the young pupil, also reducing the risk of becoming a gifted underachiever, is family

comprehension. Secondly, is very important to find teachers able to enhance talents and improve personal interests too.

In this paper, the main features of gifted children will be described, debunking a few urban myths (quite common in my country), which are able, by themselves, to spark a terrible domino effect inside the fragile mind of a gifted child.

Outline

Education is a fundamental human right, and it should be suitable for individual needs and capabilities as much as possible. With specific regard to giftedness, it is vital to recognize this human capital in time if we want to safeguard it: “*Nurturing talent-growing potential*”. The first step in this direction is to train teachers to discover gifted children and to intervene in the most correct way (both individually and in the classroom). Sometimes it is not easy to interact with gifted pupils, especially when a teacher has to respond to their existential questions, plus a lot of curiosity and inquisitiveness.

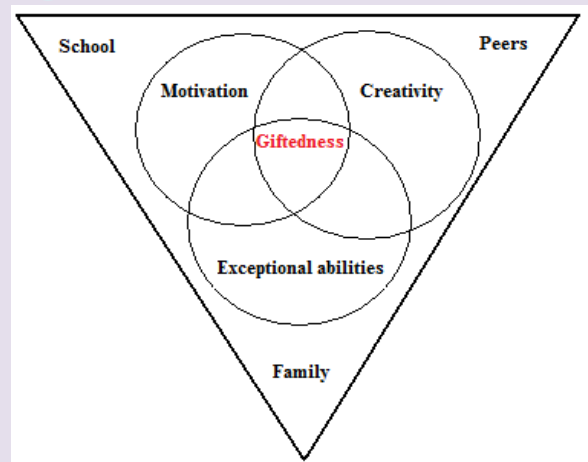
By sustaining individual capabilities, we contribute to personal and psychological good health; but there is more: it is a real strategic resource, directly linked to social development and human progress. Investing in talent will bring benefits not only to the economy, to innovation and to employment, but will also help social cohesion, progress and competitiveness, promoting the growth of the *Knowledge Society*.

It is generally accepted that giftedness is influenced by heredity, environment and school. These factors are taken into consideration by Hollingworth’s approach, starting from 1922 (while Terman’s and Galton’s models did not take into account external factors – i.e. school and environment).

Most recent models, such as Renzulli’s Three-Ring conception of giftedness [6], are based on the interaction between some weakly related factors. Giftedness (subdivided into different levels) is given by a particular conjuncture of both internal and external factors. This idea is also clear in Mönks’ multifactor model [4], in which the author considers three internal elements (*motivation, creativity, exceptional abilities*) plus three external factors (*school, family, peers*).



Renzulli's Three-Ring conception of giftedness (1978).



Mönks' Multifactor model of giftedness (1992).

According to Tannenbaum’s perspective, the most important factors influencing giftedness are: aptitude in a specific area, non-intellectual facilitators (dedication and sacrifice), general intelligence ability, environmental support (mainly Mönks’ external factors) and chance (sagacity/accident), while gifted pupils are clearly characterized by a few distinctive learning elements (Weinert 2000): great speed of learning, great profoundness and level of comprehension, intelligent organization of knowledge, high meta-cognitive competencies, high creative abilities.

Running through Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory [3], the development of this approach lead us to more recent and complex models, which consider a lot of new elements, identifying a wide set of child characteristics relating to general intelligence ability: an extensive and detailed memory, a precocious language and larger vocabulary than others of a similar age, advanced communication skills, asking intelligent questions, ability in identifying key points/characteristics of new concepts or problems, quick learning of information, logic usage to reach common sense answers, a broad base of knowledge, complex conceptualizing and understanding of abstract ideas, capability in using analogical thinking, problem solving or reasoning, relationships, observation and connections insight, difficult/unusual problem solving skills, use of principles and the forming of generalizations during new situations, curiosity, plus learning desire, conscientious work and a high degree of concentration in his interest areas, multiple symbol systems understanding/usage and cognitive reflection on learning.

About talent in artistic fields, we can list some other characteristics; but, despite this great number of elements, it is not very hard to recognize a gifted child between 3 and 11 years of age: we need to pay attention to only seven primary clues. The list which follows contains holistic indications to review for evidence:

- 1) A succinct answer is not enough for him: he asks "Why?" and, sometimes, polemicizes about the explanation given.
- 2) He is bored when someone asks him to study once more something that he already knows.
- 3) At age 3-4, after he has listened to a story a few times, he is able to correct the teller if there are some differences between the previous versions.
- 4) He shows a high degree of concentration, plus a strong sense of duty and self-determination.
- 5) He feels great empathy with others and is affected by the suffering or sorrow of another child (sympathy), thus he shows compassion for him.
- 6) He has a rich vocabulary: he knows a lot of words and many adjectives.
- 7) He is able to memorize a lot of routes and places (e.g. remembering the road between school and home).

There are many myths about giftedness and environmental factors (e.g., family, school and peer groups) which have made the gifted child's situation worse [7-8]. Some of them are as follows:

- 1) Gifted children do not need help during their life.
- 2) Gifted children find enough challenges in a regular classroom.
- 3) Gifted children pull-up the class level becoming a model for their age group.
- 4) All children are gifted in a particular way.
- 5) Acceleration opportunities are socially harmful for gifted children.
- 6) Elitism in gifted child programs is bad or wrong.
- 7) A poor grade students cannot be gifted.
- 8) Gifted students are fine, popular and happy in school.
- 9) A student with a learning disability (e.g. dyslexia) cannot be gifted.
- 10) Gifted pupils' programs/education is too expensive.

The two most evident differentiating features that characterize a gifted child are the boredom signs he/she gives when in a regular classroom, or during a common life family discussion, and his or her hyperactivity status. Millions of gifted children suffer from their sense of being different and very often they feel misunderstood and alone at their home or school. It is vital for a gifted child's parents to be aware of his peculiarity, trying to do their best to encourage him, express their unconditional love for him, and help him to achieve his best by supporting his main interests.

The basic rules to sustain a gifted little boy are as follows:

- make the child conscious that he is accepted as he is;
- empathy (try to understand his feelings and how he feels);
- positive reinforcement (to emphasize his good qualities, minimizing his faults, and linking merits to a reward);
- extinguishment (avoiding reactions when he is stimulated, ignoring bad behavior);
- control (to limit excessive reactions to a stimulus, pushing him to finish a whole project without interruptions).

Obviously, to be “hyperactive” does not automatically mean to be “gifted”, even if these characteristics are very often co-present in the child. A reliable way to assess giftedness is to take a professional (supervised) IQ test, administered by a trustworthy psychologist (WISC-IV, Raven’s Progressive Matrices, SB5). The main risk, if school and family do not recognize in time a gifted/talented child, is to put him in conflict with his environment - a hard situation to manage. In fact, the pupil could be marginalized by peers, or rebuked by teachers and family.

In Italy, 8 out of 100 children are gifted/talented and a performance at or above 1.33 s.d. from the mean on a qualitative IQ test would be a good sign of high abilities (creativity, giftedness, talent). My advice for a parent, if he is in doubt about his child’s abilities, is to ask for a supervised IQ test, in order to get a preliminary indication of his true potential.

Today, in a lot of countries, governments have not fully understood the importance of investing in giftedness and talented youth. Unfortunately, Italy is one of them [5] and I myself have experienced teachers’ incomprehension and friends’ misunderstanding. My family did not know my real situation until, as an adult, I took my first IQ test, scoring in the extremely gifted range.

After my 23rd birthday, I started to join a lot of *high IQ societies* and similar groups (I am currently a member of more than thirty different *societies*), looking for interesting discussions, challenging problems and people with similar personal experiences, rather than strong skills in a given field.

During that period, I began to understand myself better by talking with other gifted people.

In February 2010, I founded a web based high IQ society (establishing the full membership cut-off at the 99.98th percentile among the unselected adult population) with the aim of trying to help gifted pupils in my home country’s schools.

A few children younger than 16 joined the *sPIqr Society*, benefiting from the mutual interaction with their peers, dealing with their topics of interest. In this virtual café, some members have discovered that their situation is quite common in countries and schools around the world (in the same way as me). At the moment, sPIqr counts 60+ prospective/full members.

Nuno Silva, a highly gifted 15 year old Portuguese sPIqr prospective member, describes himself as follows:

I was not a social guru, or a high academic achiever. I remember things easily. Since when I was a toddler, I was always alone in kindergarten...

At the first day of school, the teacher thought I had autism, I just did not respond, but later I came to be the best student in my class.

I rarely studied, almost never did and never liked it. I was averted to school and since the other kids did not understand me, they called me retarded.

I played like a normal child, only with more elaborated stories and (despite not having much scientific knowledge) I had a way to grasp things, such as Big Bang and Newton’s laws.

My world began to collapse when I went to 5th grade, I started to fall in love, get beaten up every day at school and my grades started to get lower.

My GPA went from 86% to 58% and that is the way it stays now. They thought I was stupid. At times, I thought I was stupid too.

In 7th grade I started to get back at the system, I was an outsider, cursed a lot and was miserable: good thing those days are over!

A year later I decided, I was going to prove just how intelligent I am to everyone, I took the WISC IQ test at my psychologist scoring 182 out of 190 ($\sigma=24$).

I changed school for the second time and the bullying stopped, but then again, I was not getting challenged by the rudimentary work at school, I was always leaving classes, I wish there were gifted classes in my country, I wish I had had that chance...

According to my personal point of view, the very first step that every gifted child has to face up to during his growing process, is to become aware of his diversity status from average people/neurological types. To be a member of a few high IQ societies, reading their mailing lists and talking with other gifted people, could be of great assistance to a gifted student, especially during early adolescence (probably the most difficult period of our life).

Conclusion

Unlike talented children (pupils who have proven that they have a clear capability in a specific field), gifted children show distinguishing signs related to fast learning, deep feelings, strong memory, great curiosity, symptoms of boredom when they have to repeat something they have just done, a wide vocabulary and the ability to concentrate well. These characteristics should let parents be aware that their son could be *gifted*, pushing them to ask for a reliable IQ test. The psychologist who administers the test will be able to support the family. The family (*in primis*) and schooling (*in secundis*) have to sustain the child, letting him achieve his best, allowing him (at the same time) to elaborate his principal, distinctive interests. In particular, school should support gifted pupils through acceleration (skipping one or more scholastic years), curriculum compacting and via curricular enrichment.

Appendix

Mathematical talent tends to appear at an early age and in a quite different way from other specific capabilities. Mathematics is perhaps the field in which to recognize a true talent which is able to make a difference in future development (a typical example is represented by Fields Medal winner Terence Tao, who got his PhD at the age of 20).

In 1976, Russian psychologist Krutetskii singled out three basic components: the capability to obtain information, the capability to process it and finally the capability to store it in memory. In his vision, the main difference between a mathematically talented child and an average one is in the quality of the internal mental process that makes the student able to understand complex concepts easily. Kiesswetter (1992) placed six “mathematical activities” at the core of the mathematical talent, that is, the capability to assemble relatively simple problems in more sophisticated thinking structures:

- (1) organizing material;
- (2) recognizing patterns or rules;
- (3) changing the representation of the problem and recognizing patterns and rules in this new area;
- (4) comprehending and working with highly complex structures;
- (5) reversing and inverting processes;
- (6) finding related problems [2].

In this case, mathematical talent is related to the complex thinking process. Kiesswetter's model has been used to construct a specific test for mathematical giftedness (Hamburger F/Jr. *Mathematische Begabung- HTMB*). Its peculiarity is that the focus is not only on the result achieved by the subject but on his ability to use the six activities in problem solving mentioned above.

Finally, another important element to consider, is that "The ability to pose new problems has been identified as a key indicator of a student's future success in mathematics (Kilpatrick, 1987), of his creativity and depth of mathematical thinking (Kiesswetter 1985; Krutetskii 1976; Silver 1997)" [1].

Acknowledgements

The author sincerely thanks Massimo Caliaro and the WIN ONE Editor Graham Powell for their invaluable support.

References

- [1] J. Connelly (2010), *A Tradition of Excellence Transitions to the 21st Century: Hungarian Mathematics Education*, Columbia University.
- [2] Educational Studies in Mathematics 17 (1986), pp. 243-259, *Identification and fostering of mathematically gifted students*, D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- [3] H. Gardner (1983), *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Basic Books, New York.
- [4] F. J. Mönks (1992), pp. 191–202. *Development of gifted children: The issue of identification and programming*. In F. J. Mönks & W. A. M. Peters (Eds.), *Talent for the future*.
- [5] F. J. Mönks & R. Pflüger (2005), pp. 89-92, *Gifted Education in 21 European Countries: Inventory and Perspective*, Radboud University Nijmegen.
- [6] J. S. Renzulli (1978), 60(5), pp. 180–184, *What makes giftedness? Re-examining a definition*, Phi Delta Kappa.
- [7] J. Van Tassel-Baska and S. Wood (2001), *Myths about giftedness*. Retrieved from <http://www.tip.duke.edu/node/1024>
- [8] E. Winner (1996), *Gifted Children: Myths and Realities*, Basic Books, New York.

Organizing the 12th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness

By Dr.Manahel Thabet.

My commitment to the Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness began when Hamdan Awards for Distinguished Academic Performance contacted me in February 2012 and I assumed the roles of Chief Advisor to the Organizing Committee, Chairwoman of the Scientific Committee and Chairwoman of the Recommendation Committee.

The Organizing Committee first met in March and we decided on various aspects of the conference, including my design for the scientific program and youth summit.

As Chief Scientific Chairwoman for the conference, I designed all the topics to be discussed and reviewed all the papers with the help of the scientific committee members. I also designed the youth summit programs (scientific and non scientific) and one of the programs subsequently entered the Guinness Book of Records. During the conference I followed all the sessions and led a team of the best talent specialists as the chairwoman of the recommendation committee.

I proceeded to contact world experts in talent from all over the world. I invited several experts from the WIN, namely, Dr. Evangelos Katsioulis, Dr. Jonathan Wai, Graham Powell and Marco Ripà, and their participation in the conference was a success. I was very proud as the Vice President of the WIN to see Win members at top levels of expertise participating and sharing in the success of the conference.

I increased the participation until a record number of people were involved: 6,000 participants, all of them experts, teachers, researchers, decision makers, parents and educators. 325 papers were presented, from 42 countries.

Assisted by Graham Powell, I gained the collaboration of many societies from around the world, including The WIN, Mensa International and the European Council for High Ability. (ECHA)

We also developed a website with all the information necessary for people to review and book their involvement, not only as visitors, but as presenters as well. Dr. Christina Angelidou, from Mensa Cyprus, and Dr. Lianne Hoogeveen and Dr. Chris Fischer from ECHA, also attended.

Most importantly, keynote speakers agreed to participate, including Professor Howard Gardner, who during the first evening gave a two-hour presentation on Multiple Intelligences, the vigilance required to monitor the salient use of theories and what constitutes his Good Work Project, all explained to an eager assembly of 1000 people.

My main involvement during the conference week was to overlook the whole operation of the conference, including chairing the workshops committee. I also overlooked the operations room, scientific committee members' reports, recommendation committee reports, press interviews and speakers' performance. This was enjoyable in that the feedback was very positive, however, it was understandably stressful because I was the lone female present at times, translating and

interpreting (which was arduous) plus I had to write many questions myself, introduce events, plus manage many activities, including mediating all the keynote sessions.

The conference was successful, and that success was announced by the chairman of the APFG. He announced that this round (the 12th) of the APFG was the most successful conference ever in the 24 year history of the APFG. He said that 42 participating countries was a record-breaking number, and that more than 600 participants was also a record-breaking number.

The outcomes continued to be positive for months after the conference, especially the filming, the youtube presentations, the post-conference publication of various academic papers, all of which will come out soon.

The general feedback from attendees was extremely positive and the whole event paved the way for the next Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness in Beijing in 2014. The event succeeded in positioning the UAE, and especially Dubai, on the World's map of talent. I hope many more people from the WIN will actively participate in the next event.

Below is a summary of what I did for the conference.

Working Papers and Research

Full research review (more than 120 fully researchable and 235 summaries)

Review summaries of research and communication with researchers and the Scientific Committee

The preparation of schedules for workshops

Communicate with all participants in the conference keynote speakers and others (all research delivered in full)

Plan the Event

Work plan of action for the event

Action work plan for the sub-committees for the event (applied in the event of plan by the various committees)

Book

Communicate with ITP to book the work conference

Provide them with the scientific content of the article

Preparation and review of summaries of the Scientific Committee work for the conference book

Provide and review the names of speakers and times of workshops and lectures (with the team)

Preparation of CV content of the keynote speakers for the book

Review & switch language of American English to UK English for the book

Preparation and review of the content of the book with respect to the United Arab Emirates, Dubai

(The book was completed in record time.)

Forum

development and design curricula for children and youth

review and approve the curriculum

review and approve the summaries of the curriculum

communicate with institutions implementing curricula

participate in the meetings of children Forum

overseeing the preparation of certificates Forum

Review drafting certificates Forum

Participating in the selection mechanisms Forum

Review principles and Forum Rules

Review evaluation forms students

Review and approve forms of arbitration

Assess the DEMO for workshops and laboratories

(full plan implemented under the supervision of the distinguished Sister Mary Ghawi)

Management Conference workshops:

supervision of members of the Management Committee of workshops and assigning them tasks for the conference.

Prepare a work plan to run workshops and lectures.

Distribution for members of the Scientific Committee of Directors Meetings and workshops.

Design evaluation forms for members of the Scientific Committee for the management workshops

Satisfaction Survey Review and preparation

Participation and supervision in the preparation of a plan of volunteers and supervisors in the halls.

Train volunteers. Direct supervision on the functioning of workshops and lectures. Administration of sessions, keynote speakers, some workshops and forums.

Supervision of certificates, workshops and lectures (work was carried out by me and by the excellent team and outstanding Marwa, Safe, Fatima, Mary, Zainab and Vasudha)

Commission recommendations:

Formulation of the functions of the members of the Committee recommendations.

Drafting final recommendations.

Design evaluation forms for committee members. Management Committee recommendations.

Review reports daily during the conference recommendations (a statement recommendations was adopted and published)

Poems by Greg A.Grove.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

Einstein playing golf
 Debussy eating turnips
 Schoenberg playing Bach
 Zorro wearing tights
 King Kong surfing Maui
 Emerson reading CATCHER IN THE RYE.

BETWEEN YOU AND YOU.

Between you and You
 A flash of time at the speed of light
 A reality of thought bathed in Intelligence
 An experience with a chasm far deeper than the Grand Canyon
 An invisibility searching for visibility
 A substance morphed into transitional dimensions.

SEVENTY SHADES OF GRAY

Three score and ten
 The orchestration of walking through shadow
 Enchanting the life of the senses:
 A muting of vibrancy
 A heightening of contrast
 An awakening of impermanence Divine.

SAFE BETWEEN THE FLUFFY COVERS.

Safe beneath the fluffy covers
 Quilted memories, hues of gold –
 Then there slumbers deep inside us
 Wisdom of the days we fold.

THE SLEEPING, ROVING GENIUS AMONG US.

The sleeping, roving genius among us
 Strolls along the toilsome way
 Uncovering jewels of time and wisdom
 Some such wisdom for the day.

On the Epistemic Standing of Claims of the Nonexistent, by Phil Elauria.

As someone who has taken an interest in the philosophy of religion, I've come across the objection from both the theist and atheist sides saying something to the effect, "We cannot know that 'God' (or anything else for that matter) does *not* exist." This appears to be one of the major objections for why so many self-described agnostics think atheism is too strong a position to hold, even if they don't buy into any particular religious arguments or claims in favor of the existence of "God." [1]. It certainly was one of my own reasons for avoiding the label of "atheist" for some time. [For aesthetics, and ease of typing, I'll drop the quotation marks for God from this point on.]

It's often thought that in order to know that something doesn't exist, we would need to be omniscient, because there's always a possibility that the object in question exists somewhere beyond our knowledge base at any given moment. This has led to a lot of atheists falling back on the notion that we are only capable of talking about God's existence in the negative. That's to say, we can only not accept (or possibly reject) positive claims in favor of God's existence and that we cannot, in any reasonable manner, make knowledge claims that God does not exist.

What follows is an argument for what can be considered to be the equivalent of possessing knowledge of something not existing [2]:

We can reject, with certainty, claims of existence for some object or being that is purported to possess contradictory properties, features, characteristics, etc. that are considered to be necessary to identify the object or being as such.

Phrased a little more in the affirmative:

No claimed object or being can exist, or even be described coherently, if any of its supposed necessary properties violate non-contradiction [3].

I'll refer to the above as the Strong Knowledge of Non-existents.

So if we say that claimed object O *must* possess at least one contradictory property P in order for it to still be considered O, then we can reject the claim insofar as we can rely on non-contradiction as a guiding principle of thought to, among other things, have intelligible discourse. A little background for those not familiar with this type of discourse: formal (deductive) logic and mathematics are, when applicable, the highest form of certainty we can possibly have in that conclusions *necessarily* follow from the premises via logical and mathematical operators (e.g. 2+2 necessarily equals 4, etc.). Delving further into this is beyond the scope of this article.

Not only would making such a claim be false, but it would literally be nonsense. More specifically, its aim would be misguided because the speaker would falsely believe the claim to be coherent. This is due to the principle of logical explosion (*ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet*) which essentially states that when non-contradiction is violated, anything may follow (consequently, intelligibility will then be lost) [4]. There are some contemporary logicians who argue for certain exceptions to this. More specifically, they are proponents of Dialetheism and paraconsistent logic [5]. That is, they think that it's possible for there to be "true contradictions" such that their

admission does not infect the rest of logic to the point of triviality. However, if one wants to go down that route regarding their particular claim, e.g. "God exists and necessarily possesses contradictory property X", they bear the burden of showing how and why their claim qualifies for this type of exception, never mind the question of whether paraconsistent logic is a legitimate use of logic. Paraconsistent logic and Dialetheism seek to resolve certain apparent dilemmas that arise from the philosophy of logic, such as the Liar paradox [6]. Prima facie, appealing to Dialetheism and paraconsistent logic for existential claims that have not arisen out of similar paradoxes or dilemmas without further justification for making the appeal, smells of ad hoc rationalizations for agendas other than seeking intellectually honest conclusions of what follows from our best epistemic justifications for something being the case.

It's easy to speak in generalities, but how practical are these objections? A popular example in the philosophy of religion is the Problem of Evil [7]. The Problem of Evil (PoE) points to what appears to be a contradiction between a benevolent, all powerful God and the existence of evil in the world. If God is benevolent and capable of doing anything, why does God allow evil to persist in the world? Those who find this argument compelling see the properties described (benevolence, omnipotence) as irreconcilable. The point is not about whether the PoE is a good argument. Rather, it is intended to highlight how those who engage in the problem (and problems like it) are conceding my bigger point above, namely that possessing a contradiction in a given claim poses an issue for the individual making it. The fact that some apologists feel the need to defend against the (logical) PoE's thesis shows that they implicitly concede that *if* the PoE is a good argument, then they need to revise their relevant theistic idea, or ideas. They might do this by removing the idea that God is necessarily benevolent, throw away the entire idea of God altogether, etc. How one attempts to get around the dilemma is beside the point. Insofar as O (allegedly containing necessary contradictory property P) is the specific claim, we know O is false. If O is God, then the claim that "there is a God" is false. Indeed, the fact that there is apologetics concedes my point. For, if reason weren't important in the defense of theistic claims, then apologetics would be a waste of time at least, and an elaborate red herring constructed to mislead people from the fact that reason actually plays no role in coming to the conclusion about the existence of God.

Here is a final, non-theistic example, to illustrate the point about the universality of the implications of violating non-contradiction: suppose you say that an object X possesses the property of being a 2 dimensional circle-square. That is, X necessarily possesses the property of only being a circle and only being a square. It's obvious why this doesn't make sense. To only possess the property of being a circle is to necessarily not possess the necessary properties that constitute a square. It doesn't matter if the claim is that it's hiding on the opposite side of the sun. It doesn't matter if it is claimed to be located in another galaxy where we would never be able to physically get to it to confirm that it's not there. In short, this is about logical impossibility.

I should now point out that the above argument applies to specific existential claims that violate it and would not apply to logically possible existential claims. This is where we must agree (with no reluctance or hesitation on my part as a self-described atheist) that the logically possible is, well, possible. It's possible that a logically consistent God is hanging out behind Jupiter. It's possible that

(logically consistent) real unicorns exist in the next galaxy. If we're just talking about logical possibility, that's fine. Logical possibility brings up an infinite number of options that *may* be true, or *may* exist. Deduction, from a point of investigating the world, really plays a stronger role in weeding out areas of investigation.

However, what people are often trying to talk about are things that they think (or feel) have good reason for believing in. This is contrasted against competing ideas that are also possible about the world. What (non-omniscient) people are interested in when discussing or investigating (or trying to discuss or investigate) the world are *plausibility* and *likelihood*.

When we make claims about the world and feel the need to provide compelling reasons to convince others, we need to go beyond deductive argumentation. We make a combination of mathematical, deductive, inductive and/ or abductive inferences (among other things) in addition to going out and taking a look (making empirical investigation) to build a case for our conclusions. This process and the conclusions which follow don't ensure the higher degree of certainty or confidence that deductive or mathematical conclusions provide. This brings us to the weaker version of this argument that extends the reach of how we can have confidence of the nonexistence of certain claimed existent objects or beings beyond mere logical impossibility.

Enter science and fallibilism. The positive argument is as follows:

We can reject any claim involving the existence of some object or being to the extent that we can justifiably maintain confidence in a given scientific thesis that contradicts or refutes some necessary property of the object or being in question, which is to say, a property that the object or being must possess in order for us to continue to identify it as such.

A bit more in the affirmative:

We can say that no object or being exists, with confidence, to the extent that we are epistemically justified in accepting a given scientific thesis that refutes or contradicts properties that are said to be necessary to identify some claimed object or being as such.

I'll refer to the above as the Weak Knowledge of Non-existents.

This is a weaker claim because science is inherently fallible and subject to revision or even complete replacement given some "better" theory or (devastatingly enough) falsifying evidence. It also remains hand in hand with current epistemic, biological, technological (etc.) limitations.

Physical theories are thought to hold in spatiotemporal areas which may forever be beyond our ability to travel physically (e.g. the Standard Model is thought to hold in the galaxy closest to ours) and thus may refute existential claims that involve something being in those areas even if we're not capable of going there and taking a look. However, physical theories may possibly not hold (or rather, we may have reason to think they may not hold) under certain circumstances [8]. Note that logic is also revisable (it is argued), such as in the case of the arguments over whether paraconsistent logic ought to be considered legitimate logic (if successful) as well as in questions involving whether logic can be revised in light of empirical evidence[9]. W.V. Quine has argued

that logic ought to be one of the last things we revise (contrasted against things like ideas, concepts, theories, etc.). This normative stance was influenced by his “maxim of minimum mutilation.”[10]

The Weak Knowledge of Non-existents extends our epistemic reach of what cannot exist beyond logical impossibility because we are scientifically informed about the world and how it operates. Our confidence of what is false, outside of logical impossibility, is justified to the degree that we can reasonably accept science that refutes specific claims about the world and what it contains.

So, what might be a realistic application of this? A religiously motivated objection to evolutionary theory is a pretty obvious one, especially here in the US of A. What do I mean by “religiously motivated”? Broadly speaking, it’s the objection to scientific theory, in this case evolution, solely because it seems to be at odds with religious teachings. If, for example, it is accepted that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and some part of the text is interpreted such that it conflicts with evolutionary theory, then evolutionary theory must be wrong, or so it is reasoned. We’ll call this interpretation T. Insofar as T is a necessary feature for belief in God because, for example, the reason for accepting this particular version of God hinges on the Bible being inerrant, we can reject the existence claim with the level of confidence we are epistemically justified in placing in evolutionary theory (or the specific aspect of the theory that refutes T) due to the transitive relation between T and the belief in God being dependent upon the Bible being inerrant.

While this description is not representative of all objections to various aspects of evolutionary theory (some of which are legitimate because evolutionary biologists debate over aspects of evolution all the time) or representative of objections to the theory as a whole, it is certainly one of the kinds of objection which comes from those who object to it on religious grounds [11].

Considering these two in conjunction (Strong & Weak Knowledge of Non-existents), there’s actually quite a lot of existence claims that we can be confident of to some degree or another as being false, incoherent or misguided. The strong argument covers more of what necessarily cannot exist while the weak argument addresses the epistemological foundations of claims that aren’t ruled out through deductive or mathematical inference.

Insofar as we can consider a specific existence claim as false, it can be thought to be equivalent to the supposed object or being as not existing. If it is false that something exists, it follows that it is true that it does not exist since a negation of something existing is nonexistence. It is likely that there will be comments about God existing as concepts, beliefs, as a social phenomenon, as a fictional character, etc., and in those senses, it should be obvious that there’s no objection that they are the case; but existence in those senses are not controversial, and to be frank, vanilla (for the purpose of this discussion). It should be obvious that the beliefs that are of interest here are ones that are controversial.

Once we’re clear on this, we can move on to looking for epistemic justifications to build cases for existence and truth claims about the world, reality, etc. Such cases must show that they are more than mere possibilities for others to spend the limited resources we each have in order to take

them seriously since, until a compelling case is made, any (logically consistent) claim remains on par with every other possibility and we have no better reason to investigate it than any other.

References/ footnotes:

[1] This statement presupposes that “agnosticism” and “atheism” are mutually exclusive. For the sake of the discussion, I’ve granted that assumption. For an in-depth argument that highlights why they can be viewed as overlapping, see P. Elauria, “Atheism” as a Logical Negation of “Theism.” WIN ONE, Issue 8, p.18, June 2012.

[2] One may be tempted to object to this statement as being contradictory because it seems to reference an existing object in order to discuss its non-existence. The context in which the statement is being made should be taken to be merely utilizing a linguistic “quirk” for expediency (there goes that) in order to move on to one of the main points of this argument. The evolution of linguistic social conventions doesn’t ensure that the literal or superficial interpretations of a given statement will necessarily be intended. This is exemplified in the use of idioms and through much of poetry. If, for example we can say “unicorns” don’t exist, I’m assuming the reader understands that I’m essentially saying something to the effect that “unicorn” is incoherent, or that the concept does not have a living, physical correlate in the world, etc. and that I’m not saying that there is a unicorn and that it doesn’t exist.

[3] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contradiction/>

[4] [5]: For more information, see:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/logic-paraconsistent/>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dialetheism/>

[6] <http://www.iep.utm.edu/par-liar/>

[7] <http://www.iep.utm.edu/evil-log/>

[8] Indications of a spatial variation of the fine structure constant: <http://arxiv.org/abs/1008.3907>

[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Is_logic_empirical%3F

Quine: Two Dogmas of Empiricism: <http://www.ditext.com/quine/quine.html>

[10] Quine (1986). Philosophy of Logic. Chapter on Deviant Logics. Pages 85, 86.

[11] For this reference, I’m just going to post a link to the Creation Museum and popular religious leader, Kent Hovind’s blog:

<http://creationmuseum.org/>

<http://www.kenthovindblog.com/>

Finally, a puzzle devised by Alan Wing-lun...

3D Lego Griddler 'Chasing Nessie' Layer 4

[illegible]

3D Lego Griddler
'Chasing Nessie'
 Layer 6

	Columns
Rows	0 0 0 0 0 4 5 4 3 5 4 3 4 0 0 0 0 0

