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### IS KANT A LIBERAL THINKER?

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Keywords	Abstract
Kant, Autonomy, Liberal , Sovereignty, Authoritarianism.	Autonomy means that a person is free to work according to their own reason and understanding. To be a moral being, one should perform those actions that are not influenced by personal feelings and desires. Reason dictates that we should work on those maxims that can be universally acceptable. The essence of his ethics is the establishment of a 'kingdom of ends' by the performance of moral duty by individuals, and the essence of his political philosophy is the establishment of an ideal republican government. The principles he has given for the attainment of those ends are primarily liberal in approach. He has accepted the freedom and autonomy of the individual, he has admitted the priority of right or the moral principles over good, he has given a non-consequentialist theory, and he has promoted the maturity of an individual as an enlightened being. All these points are evidence to establish his position as a liberal. However, his ideas on the sovereignty of the state move towards authoritarianism and against the autonomy of the individual. This has been a problematic issue for Kant to maintain the autonomy of the individual and, at the same time, the sovereign authority of the state. In this process, he sometimes seems to be a true liberal, yet at other times an authoritarian. This paper is an attempt to find out whether he could be said to be a liberal thinker despite presenting the notion of the state, which is authoritarian.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) has played a pivotal role in the development of the central concepts of contractarian liberalism. Some works by Kant have been considered to be



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milestones in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. His three critiques—*Critique of Pure Reason* (1998), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1956), and *Critique of Judgement* (2000); *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1996a), *Metaphysics of Morals* (1996b), and many essays like “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1991a), “Perpetual Peace” (1991b), “Theory and Practice,” (1996c) etc.—have played the central role in Kantian philosophy. Autonomy is the central concept in Kant’s moral philosophy. Autonomy means that a person is free to work according to their own reason and understanding. It is the “sole principle of all moral laws and of the duties conforming to them.” Kant further opines that “the sole principle of morality consists in independence from all material of the law (i.e., a desired object) and in the accompanying determination of choice by the mere form of giving universal law which a maxim must be capable of having” (Kant, 1956, p. 33). Personal inclinations and desires determine our actions, and in that case, we cannot expect them to be universally acceptable. To be a moral being, one should perform those actions that are not influenced by personal feelings and desires. Kant presents the famous principle of universalizability and asserts that if we have to become an autonomous being, we will have to work not according to our inclinations but according to our reason. Reason dictates that we should work on those maxims that can be universally acceptable.

The essence of his ethics is the establishment of a ‘kingdom of ends’ by the performance of moral duty by individuals, and the essence of his political philosophy is the establishment of an ideal republican government. The principles he has given for the attainment of those ends are primarily liberal in approach. He has accepted the freedom and autonomy of the individual, he has admitted the priority of right or the moral principles over good, he has given a non-consequentialist theory, and he has promoted the maturity of an individual as an enlightened being. All these points are evidence to establish his position as a liberal.

However, his ideas on the sovereignty of the state move towards authoritarianism and against the autonomy of the individual. This has been a problematic issue for Kant to maintain the autonomy of the individual and, at the same time, the sovereign authority of the state. In this process, he sometimes seems to be a true liberal, yet at other times an authoritarian. This paper is an attempt to find out whether he could be said to be a liberal thinker despite presenting the notion of the state, which is authoritarian.

## 2. AUTONOMY OF AN INDIVIDUAL AND THE END OF ACTIONS

The concept of autonomy is linked with and can be defined in terms of the freedom of will. Kant, in the third section of the *Groundwork*, has mentioned the idea that autonomy is nothing other than “freedom of will,” because only when we act according to the laws of our will can we become autonomous. The very fact that we can exercise our freedom of will makes us autonomous beings. Sedgwick has stated that “freedom of will in the positive sense is, as Kant insists here, nothing other than autonomy.” (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 170)



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Guyer has mentioned that in Kantian ethics, the consequence of an action is not the fulfilment of one's desires but the achievement of the ultimate end, i.e. 'Kingdom of Ends.' Guyer says, "To be sure, his theory gives no intrinsic value to state of affairs or consequences merely because they are desired as objects of inclination, but it greatly values the realization of our freely chosen ends as an expression of our respect for the value of our capacity of free choice itself. The realm of ends as the systematic union of both of human beings as ends in themselves and of their freely chosen particular ends would be nothing other than the consequence of everyone's acting on the categorical imperative; and while the idea of humanity as an end in itself may best express the ultimate *source* of value in Kant's moral theory, the idea of all humanity as a kingdom of ends may best express the ultimate *consequences* of acknowledging this value, and thus give us our clearest idea of the *goal* of morality." (Guyer, 2008, p. 205)

Kant does not give value to the consequences of our actions; he is only concerned with the motive behind the action. According to Kant, no one should interfere with an individual's autonomy. He or she belongs to "a kingdom of ends." The ultimate goal of our lives should be to establish the "kingdom of ends," which is of unconditional value and the highest good. It is the ultimate end of morality and the attainment of freedom. Kant rejects the idea that the natural process may bring us to any kind of natural destination. Guyer has said, "The final end of morality must be a systematic union of humans and their purposes that can only be realized *within* nature". (Ibid., p. 358)

### 3. ENLIGHTENMENT

In his essay 'What is Enlightenment?', Kant has defined enlightenment as "man's (an individual's) emergence from his self-incurred immaturity" (Kant, 1991a, p. 54). Kant has a firm belief that rationality is the indication of the fact that one is mature enough to guide their actions and to tackle their problems. As a result, a person gains autonomy and mastery over their ideas and behaviors. Therefore, it is not in their nature to obey orders from others or to rely on the monitoring of others. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware that one must take care to ensure that their interests do not collide with those of others. And this is the duty of the state to restrict anyone who hinders the rights and free actions of others: "In entering a civil union the individual's intention is to preserve for himself the right to decide what is good for him, whilst requiring the State to guard against the harmful effects that this pursuit of his own welfare may have on the welfare of others." (Williams, 1983, p. 130)

The importance of the notion of enlightenment in his philosophy surfaces strongly in his political view: "The only qualification required by a citizen (apart, of course from the natural one that he is not a woman, nor a child) is that he must be his own master (*sui iuris*) and must have some property (which can include any skill, trade, fine art or science) to support himself." (Kant, 1991a, p. 78) His political thought intensifies this idea, stating that only those who are



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in control of their own activities and do not submit to others can legitimately claim to be citizens. What kind of rights and autonomy are enjoyed by the citizens in the Kantian world can be understood when we engage with his thoughts on the nature of the state.

#### 4. THE STATE AND ITS SOVEREIGNTY

Kant contends that the sovereign is the highest authority, and once it's instituted, no one can question the integrity of its rules and laws because the formation of the sovereign is the result of the free will of individuals. To understand how he forms this view of the sovereign, one must engage with his ideas on the social contract theory to trace the formation of the state. Although Kant's social contract theory is similar to that of John Locke and Rousseau, he disagrees with them when describing the state of nature. While Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau have accepted that there was a state of nature in which the individuals possessed natural rights, and for the safety of their property rights and life, they proceeded to construct a civil society; Kant, on the contrary, contends that to enjoy natural rights, freedom of will, and property rights, individuals moved towards the formation of civil society. According to Kant, the state of nature is merely a concept rather than a historical reality. It is "only an idea of reason, which, however, has its undoubtedly practical reality" (Guyer, 2008, p. 280). For Kant, it is necessary from the ethical and political point of view. Though we cannot be certain about the facts of history, we have to admit its reality, based on which we would be able to accept the authority of the sovereign state as the legislative body that has been constructed by the common will of the people. Kant has mentioned that in the original contract, "everyone within a *people* gives up his external freedom in order to take it up again immediately as a member of a commonwealth that is, of a people considered as a state". (Kant, 1996b, p. 93)

It is only because of the belief that the original contract and the state's formation embody the general will of the people that it can be expected to be a just and legitimate state. The prior consent of the people is mandatory for the formation of the state. But Kant accepts that the idea of a 'social contract' is only moral and not factual, which becomes "part of an *a priori* justification of the State" (Williams 1983, 168-9). According to Kant, this contract is "based on a coalition of the wills of all private individuals in a nation to form a common, public will for the purposes of rightful legislation" (Kant, 1991b, p. 79).

He points out that though the state of nature is a society in itself, but it's not civil, as there are no rules or laws to regulate lives and to protect their properties. Fear and uncertainty characterize the state of nature, according to Kant. People are free and unrestrained to harm anyone, and hence, this state becomes very unsafe for their lives and property. In order to protect their interests, people are therefore forced to make a social compact and establish a civil society. Kant further claims that to form a civil society and the state for the equal and fair distribution of property is 'our primary political responsibility' (Guyer, 2008, p. 274). In this state, all individuals are under the obligation of laws that the state will make to safeguard their



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rights. So, people are obligated to obey those laws, and the state is responsible for preserving the autonomy and the rights of its people.

It becomes crucial that Kant discuss the particular kind of administration and sovereignty that will be suitable to maintain both the state's power and the individual's autonomy. Kant suggests that the republican system of government is the only one that is suitable. He outlines two types of government and three types of sovereignty, assessing each in light of his ideal state. Autocracy, aristocracy, and democracy are the three types of sovereignty. racy (Kant, 1991b, p. 100). He contends that the ideal form of sovereignty is one in which the ruling power is held by a small number of people; from this vantage point, autocracy is ideal, as just one person has the power. In Kant's view, democracy cannot be an appropriate form of sovereignty because in a democracy, the majority destroys the authority of the minority. Another point is that, according to Kant, "the smaller the number of ruling persons in a state and the greater their powers of representation, the more the constitution will approximate to its republican potentiality" (Ibid., p. 101) since "it is more difficult in an aristocracy than in a monarchy to reach this one and only perfectly lawful kind of constitution, while it is possible in a democracy only by means of violent revolution" (Ibid., p. 101). If the number of ruling persons is the least, the effect of private interests will also be less. Hence, according to Kant, autocracy is the best form of sovereignty.

Kant's primary concern is with the form of government and not with the form of sovereign. He describes two forms of government: republican and despotic (Ibid., 101). Because both the legislative and executive branches of government remain in the hands of the ruler, despotic government is undesirable because it is repressive and tyrannical to the populace. So, it can never be admitted as a form of government that can take proper care of the autonomy of the individuals.

He defines republican government as "the only constitution which can be derived from the idea of an original contract, upon which all rightful legislation of a people must be founded" (Kant, 1991b, pp. 99-100). Kant has presented three principles on which a republican constitution has been founded (Ibid., p. 99):

1. The principle of *freedom* for all members of society (as men)
2. The principle of the *dependence* of everyone upon a single common legislation (as subjects)
3. The principle of legal *equality* for everyone (as citizens).

According to Kant, the republican government with the autocratic form of sovereign can be said to be the best form of constitution. In a representative government, the state holds the authority and the right to make the laws, and after that, the state itself, with all the citizens, becomes the subject of those laws. It is the duty of every individual and the state itself to follow those laws. But these laws do not undermine the autonomy of the individuals, as these





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laws have been made by the state, which is based on their general will. In this government, people participate in the legislation of the laws through their representatives. Hence, this makes the possibility of conflict between the people's will and the sovereign authority impossible.

## 5. AGAINST THE RIGHT TO REBELLION

Central liberal ideas can be traced back to Kant. However, we should also keep in mind that several aspects of his political philosophy may make him seem anti-liberal. One of them is his view on the condition of a civil society after its formation and the rule of government. His notion of the right to rebellion also does not support the liberal approach. According to Kant, once a civil society and a government have been formed, no one can rebel against their authority. The government becomes the highest authority. Kant denies any authority to people to rebel against the authority of the legislature. Hence, he denies such a right to the people and asserts, "Since a people must be regarded as already united under a general legislative will in order to judge with rightful force about the supreme authority, it cannot and may not judge otherwise than as the present head of state wills it to." (Kant, 1996a, p. 95)

According to Kant, after the formation of the state, it is the duty of the state to protect the rights and liberty of its citizens, but at the same time, it is the duty of its citizens to respect and obey its laws and show loyalty towards them. The state should maintain its own authority and autonomy while preserving the liberty and autonomy of every individual. Kant has given another reason for his position regarding the rebellion of the people. He asserts that people cannot adjudicate the actions of the head of the state. This will become self-contradictory, as this will, in a way, make people act as the head of the 'head of state.' Kant argues:

"... The people, under an already existing civil constitution has no longer any right to judge how the constitution should be administered. For if we suppose that it does have this right to judge, and that it disagrees with the judgement of the actual head of state, who is to decide which side is right? Neither can act as judge of his own cause. Thus there would have to be another head above the head of state to mediate between the latter and the people, which is self-contradictory." (Ibid., p. 81)

Kant further explicates that even if people rebel against the dysfunctional legislature for not adhering to the 'original social contract', it would create chaos and 'anarchy' 'with all the horrors' (Guyer, 2008, p. 288). They will again return to their prior condition of 'complete lawlessness,' and "even if the actual contract of the people with the ruler has been violated, the people cannot reach at once as a commonwealth, but only as a mob" (Ibid., p. 288). Hence, according to Kant, it is the primary duty of the people to form a state and, after its formation, to maintain it; otherwise, they will again return to their state of nature, which is full of terror, threats, theft, and injustice. In any case, the present state would be a thousand times better than a state with no sovereign at all.



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After considering the injustice that may occur because of the improper function of the state and while adhering to the earlier position that people cannot have the right to revolution by ‘combining at will,’ Kant suggests, “A change in a (defective) constitution, which may certainly be necessary at times, can therefore be carried out only through *reform* by the sovereign itself, but not by the people, and therefore not by *revolution*, and when such a change takes place this reform can affect only the *executive authority*, not the legislative. . .” (Kant, 1996a, p. 98). In this way, all that people can do is to select the proper representatives who will have the right to restrict and regulate the executive according to the laws, and not the people themselves. Kant has also mentioned the ‘freedom of expression’ as the right of the people against the government. Though he admitted the obligation and dedication towards the government, he says that the citizens can inform the government about its unfairness, wrong conduct, and grievances with the help of this freedom of expression, and the state has the responsibility to respond and be loyal towards the expressed opinions of its citizens.

Kant has tried to maintain the commonwealth, the state that is a result of the rational choice of the people, and now he intends to maintain that choice. He suggests that the governments be more ‘republican’ because in a republican government, the possibility of injustice towards the citizen would be nullified. If they rule in the spirit of a republican government, the question of any revolution will not arise, and people will not be forced to think about such revolutions.

Against the arguments of Kant, Guyer has made the following point:

“But sometimes, of course, new regimes are very quickly accepted, and anarchy does not really result from a revolution. This point aside, we might also suppose that while in a state of anarchy it is entirely accidental whether justice obtains or not, that the probability of injustice is always more or less 50 percent, in a truly *malicious* regime, intentionally aimed at doing injustice to some or many of the citizens – such as Nazi Germany or the Stalinist Soviet Union – the probability of such an injustice is much higher . . . In that case we might well think that the subjects of such a regime have a moral right or even a moral duty to overthrow it even at the risk of anarchy, although of course they cannot legally do that through the regime’s own constitution.” (Guyer, 2008, p. 288)

In reply to the point that Guyer has made against the view of Kant, it can be said that though the possibility of injustice is only 50 percent in the state of anarchy, this act of transformation may be more harmful. The process of transformation of power or destruction of power of the state results in a disaster in which many innocent people are killed, and much destruction takes place. So, it could be argued that the points Kant has made seem to be right, that, in any case, ‘the present state would be a thousand times better than no sovereign at all’. Citizens can also oppose the unjust action of a sovereign through representatives or by freedom of expression, which would be peaceful and would have a better chance for a reformation.



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People make decisions based on their own reasoning, which can be separated into two categories according to how it is used. The public use of reason occurs when we use reason to openly communicate our thoughts and opinions through essays or literary works. On the other hand, we utilize reason privately when we apply it to our daily lives, our homes, and our jobs. Kant elaborates these two applications of reason: "By the public use of one's own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a *man of learning* addressing the entire *reading public*. What I term the private use of reason is that which a person may make of it in a particular *civil* post or office with which he is entrusted." (Kant, 1996a, p. 55)

Kant has given the right of expression, which belongs to 'our public use of reason'. Hence, in a civil society, we are free to use our public reason, but Kant limits the use of private reason because he is against the right of revolution. He argues that we should not undermine the civil order by criticizing their posts or jobs in our everyday life: "The public use of man's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment." (Ibid., p. 55)

The state's acts cannot be directly interfered with by an individual. The state should embrace "the right of expression" as people's public use of reason and change itself to allow people to freely express their opinions. The people are not passive members of the state; they have the right to freely express the unfairness and injustice done by the state. Only in this way can the state become an ideal commonwealth by hearing and accepting the call for reform by the citizens.

But again, this stand has been under criticism by Williams. He problematizes Kant's philosophy by saying that this kind of freedom of expression can be possible only in a state that works in accordance with the good of its citizens, but this type of freedom is not given by the ruler in a state that is governed by a tyrant or a dictator, where it is most needed. (Williams 1983, p. 156)

Williams' exposition seems to be valid because in a tyrannical state, people do not possess any right or opportunity to express their views or to inform the government about the tyranny. But, having said that, one should be mindful of the fact that Kant is elaborating the conditions for a republican government that has been created by the social contract of the rational people. He already claimed that all other forms of government, except the republican, will not be able to secure the autonomy of the individual. Hence, this criticism by Williams becomes inadequate. Kant has already asserted that only a republican government can actualize the demands of an ideal state.

Marcuse has criticised the view of Kant by saying that 'we are not free to choose whatever course of action our conscience dictates in civil society since it is the State which must have the last word about what takes place in society.' (Ibid., p. 239) This means that after making





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civil society and choosing the government, individuals become slaves of the sovereign. In response to this critique, it could be said that Kant appealed for faith and cooperation for the success of governance. In Kant's postulation, following the rules and laws of the sovereign itself becomes the condition of the actualization of freedom. The obedience of laws is essential for every individual; hence, they should accept it willingly and not forcefully. People should have faith in those laws. Both the sovereign and the citizens will have to cooperate to maintain this kind of republican government.

Williams (1983, pp. 200-1) has also noted that Kant's perspective on the social contract and civil society places us in a "voluntary-involuntary" position. First, he argues that since the state of nature is anarchy, we have no choice but to join the civil society; second, he maintains that once we have formed the civil society in accordance with our free will and entered into the social contract, it is our duty to obey the laws of the state, after which we are powerless to oppose the state's unfair actions. In other words, in a civil society, citizens have no rights but only obligations to the state, and the state has no duties but rights over its citizens.

Now, it might be stated that the liberal approach of Kantian ethics, which has always viewed people as a goal in and of themselves rather than a means, appears to be at odds with the unconditional submission to state regulations. Perhaps the main issue with Kant's political philosophy is this. In his essay *Theory and Practice*, he tried to reconcile these two quite incompatible and opposing standpoints, where he gives the highest authority to the legislature and, at the same time, struggles to place an individual as a member of the kingdom of ends and not as a means. We may say that while Kant gives proper place to the freedom of an individual, he admits the sovereign authority of the state. It can therefore be said that "in principle Kant is a liberal, yet in practice he is often conservative and authoritarian". (Ibid., p. 128)

Williams' criticism could be responded to by referring to the notions of 'duties of right' and 'duties of virtue'. These duties have been derived from two doctrines: the Doctrine of Right and the Doctrine of Virtue.

Kant has mentioned the word *Rechtslehre*, in his work *Metaphysics*. The exact meaning of this word cannot be found, yet it has been translated as 'Doctrine of Right' that 'refers to the rights and obligations that everyone ought to have under an ideal legal and political system, what Kant's predecessors called "natural right" (*Naturrecht*) (Guyer, 2008, p. 262). Kant has defined 'Right' in these words: "Right is the sum of the conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom" (Kant, 1996a, p. 24). In other words, though choices of individuals may be different, in order to be 'right,' the said choice should not violate the choice and freedom of others and should be compatible with their freedom, and it should also be in accordance with the moral universal law. Kant has clarified by stating that "an action is right if it can coexist with everyone's



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freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law." (Ibid., p. 24)

In the preservation of freedom, it should also be noticed that a person's freedom, which becomes a hindrance for others' practice of freedom, should be hindered, and that act of hindrance would also be for the preservation of freedom. Therefore, in a criminal act or those acts that impair the freedom of others, the free choice of that man, who commits these acts of violence, leads him towards the 'hindrance of his freedom' of action. Guyer has rightly pointed out: "once someone does choose to go ahead and commit a crime and then suffers the sanction for it, that sanction will deprive him of his *future* freedom in whole or part; but he will have brought that upon his own head, that is, he will in effect have freely chosen to risk giving up his future freedom for the sake of some act that he wanted to perform now." (Guyer, 2008, p. 265)

Kant gives the justification for this kind of coercion and enforcement of law against the freedom of the will of an individual. He clarifies that every individual has a responsibility to act in a way that protects both themselves and other people. However, people are frequently swayed by their own enjoyment, which restricts their ability to exercise their right to free choice. In that situation, interfering with one person's freedom in order to safeguard the freedom of others becomes essential. The external use of freedom, including the role of the state, is the focus of the concept of right. The law has the authority to enforce it.

The internal use of freedom, which includes adherence to moral laws, is the focus of the virtue doctrine. To define virtue, Kant states:

"Virtue is . . . the moral strength of a *human being's* will in fulfilling his *duty*, moral *constraint* through his own lawgiving reason, insofar as this constitutes itself an authority *executive* the law – Virtue itself, or possession of it, is not a duty (for then one would have to be put under obligation to duties); rather, it commands and accompanies its command with a moral constraint (a constraint possible in accordance with laws of inner freedom)." (Kant, 1996a, p. 164)

The doctrine of virtue can only be enforced by one's own sense of morality. It differs greatly from the doctrine of right. While we "begin with the end and seek out the maxim of actions in conformity with duty" in the doctrine of right, we "begin with the maxim of actions in conformity with duty and seek out the end that is also a duty" in the doctrine of virtue (Ibid., p. 147). Therefore, the idea of a purpose that is a duty in and of itself is central to the doctrine of virtue.

Maintaining morality and a person's standing as an end in and of themselves, rather than as a means, is the goal of both doctrines. The purpose of the state's coercive laws is to uphold order so that the acquisition of another person's latitude does not compromise an individual's



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morality and freedom. Furthermore, the moral law is directly respected by the doctrine of virtue.

Kant explains that there are two kinds of duties: one is the duty of ethics, and another is the duty of right. The former is not coerced by the state; rather, it stems from our respect for the moral laws, which is why it has been called the "duty of ethics," since our own reason compels us to follow them rather than any outside authority. In contrast, the latter is related to the legal and political obligations and can be coerced by the state to maintain the law and order of society and is judicial in nature.

These two duties can be defined in terms of external duty (which is related to juridical laws) and internal duty (which is related to ethical laws). Kant has stated, "In the case of internal duty it is my conscience which legislates, whereas in the case of external duty it is the State which legislates and it is my conscience which accepts" (Williams, 1983, p. 57). The duty of right becomes inescapable for us, as it can be coerced by the state, but the duty of virtue is voluntary.

The doctrine of virtue appears to be too broad to be easily comprehended. Therefore, Kant establishes that our duties of virtue should be to advance one's own perfection and the pleasure of others in order to identify the aims, which are also duties, of the doctrine of virtue. Since happiness is a goal that every human being holds due to their innate inclinations, it cannot be considered a duty. There is no need to put an end to everyone's desire to achieve and realize their own happiness. Similarly, it is paradoxical to make someone else's perfection one's own, as doing so would deprive the person in question of the opportunity to pursue their own goals. end. Hence, according to Kant, it is one's duty to make *one's own perfection and the happiness of others* their ends.

These are two duties that Kant has mentioned to differentiate between their forms. It is useful to understand how Kant has applied his ethical position in the area of political philosophy. He explains that while being under the obligation of the state, we have to follow our duties of right to become a good citizen, the negligence of which may result in coercion. Therefore, Kant introduced the concepts of "duties of right" and "duties of virtue" in order to uphold the state's authority while simultaneously ensuring individual autonomy. These concepts suggest that it is our responsibility to uphold moral laws, exercise our freedom without causing harm to others, adhere to state regulations, view each person as an end in and of themselves, and advance both our own and other people's happiness. All these duties are inescapable for the establishment of a successful republican government that can cater to and attend to the highest political good. Kant has tried to show the way in which we can achieve the highest moral and political good by following these two duties. He makes it clear that achieving the people's common good is the sovereign's main goal. In order to achieve the highest moral and political good, it should



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operate in this manner. In this way, the person's freedom will never be diminished or destroyed.

## 6. THE HIGHEST GOOD

Although there is no intrinsic distinction between the notions of the highest good, there are two levels at which the highest good can be attained. These two levels can be described as the highest political good and the highest moral good.

Socially, we act according to the law that we should not harm the freedom of others and always act in a way that humanity remains as an end. In this way, to establish a 'kingdom of ends' becomes the highest good. The establishment of autonomy or free will, on the other hand, becomes the object of the highest good when we act morally in accordance with our freedom of choice. At the moral level, the utmost good can be attained within oneself, but at the social level, it can be attained within a commonwealth. The process of "perpetual peace" is the only way to actualize the "Kingdom of Ends" at the social and political level. The end of politics is possible if the state fulfills its obligation by defending people's freedom, equality, and independence, and each person fulfills their obligation by abiding by the state's laws and carrying out their legal and moral responsibilities. The "kingdom of ends" is the highest moral good, and "perpetual peace" is the highest political good. And Kant holds, "The highest political good and the highest moral good can, he thinks, only be achieved simultaneously". (Williams, 1983, p. 268).

## 7. CONCLUSION

The discussion of Kantian ethics and political philosophy prompts the thought that he is trying to establish the autonomy of individuals firmly. It is undeniable that Kant has presented several ideas that represent his liberal approach, like the rationality and autonomy of the individual and the concept of enlightenment. However, his concept of the state seems to place him in the category of authoritarian thinkers (for considering the absolute authority of the state). His notion of perpetual peace leads him towards a cosmopolitan approach. Kant has at every step tried to reconcile all these approaches with the liberalist stance. As Williams has rightly said: "In the theory of the State, Kant attempts to combine the freedom and consent of Rousseau's *Social Contract* with the domination and absolute authority of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. He sets out from liberal, individualistic premises, but because of his fear of the power of unrestrained egoism and his general distrust of the people *en masse*, he concludes by giving his support to conservative and authoritarian principles." (Ibid., p. 161)

Though Kant gives a proper and important place to the role of the state, yet "he holds firmly to the liberal view that the state exists for the sake of individual freedom" (Ibid., p. 92). He does not subsume the individual under the state. His notion of social contract and the assertion that one can only enjoy their natural rights in a civil society, his description of different kinds of



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rights and duties, and his ideal of republican government have evoked many discussions on liberalism. Kant has provided a strong base for the development of central liberal ideas. His ethics and political philosophy have contributed much to the realization of rationality, autonomy, and self-dependency of an individual, which is the foundational idea of liberalism. The contradictions that prevail in Kant's thought can be resolved by admitting to the fact that most of the views that Kant has presented are only the idea of reason, and in that sense, they do not belong to the empirical world, and they represent the ideal notions, as Kant himself has admitted at many places. He has made an effort to convey these ideas in their perfect form so that we can learn how to approach them. He attempts to demonstrate how a person, a state, and all nations ought to conduct themselves. Practically speaking, the concepts of public and private reason, duties of rights and virtues, and the exposition of the highest political and moral good provide us with enough evidence to conclude that, even though he established a powerful sovereign, his views have been liberal. The very existence of the state is the result of the rational and common will of the people, and, therefore, they have a duty to uphold the existence of the state, for which they will have to obey laws laid by it. Hence, this cannot be said to be contrary to the notion of autonomy as presented by Kant.

## **8. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION**

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## **9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

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