

**KANT'S PROLEPTIC PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY:  
THE WORLD WELL-HOPED**

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to examine several proleptic bases running through Immanuel Kant's philosophy of history. The approach that I take is broad and wide-ranging, and while I sacrifice concentrated focus on any one particular area of Kant's philosophy, I cast my nets in ways that remain problem centered and exegetical by drawing from both the primary literature as well as classic and contemporary research. While I try to answer several worrisome concerns in the secondary literature pertaining to Kant's proleptic philosophy of history, I also attempt to stay close to the primary texts by providing references and citations to key claims and passages which reinforce Kant's forceful portrait of the *poietic* power of human reason to create a world hospitable to its rational ends. Consequently, rather than concentrating on any one aspect of Kant's proleptic philosophy, I set out to (i) investigate seemingly untenable problems with his characterization of reason in history, (ii) to counter what I take as a misreading, if not a misattribution of Kant's philosophy as being prophetic, rather than proleptic, (iii) to offer an original reflection on Kant's use of a famous stoic phrase in two of his political essays, and (iv) to attempt a close exegesis toward tying notions of teleology and hope with that of need.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I should very much like to acknowledge my gratitude to the late Professor Charles Dyke for his uplifting encouragement and generous support of my academic talents. I had the pleasure of taking three courses with Chuck, on literature, on science, and on history. This last course led me to produce a paper on Kant's proleptic philosophy of history, which eventually became the basis for my dissertation. I had even more pleasure getting to know him a bit. Chuck was a ubiquitous presence in the department, seen teaching, working in his office, and roaming the halls on what seemed like every day of the week. I look back

fondly at our encounters, which often led to delightful talks in his office to better shape our ideas on topics ranging from the literature of Borges, to the science of emergence, to the architecture of gothic cathedrals. Permeating all of these talks, however, I never lost sight of Chuck's charitable spirit because he also offered personal reflections to help me understand a very complicated time in my life in trying to balance personal, professional, and academic responsibilities.

Professor Lewis Gordon was a sight to behold: dynamic, passionate, and filled with an intellectual energy that, apropos to his expertise in existentialism, reminded me of Kierkegaard's remark about Goethe's take on Hamlet, namely, that the prince's soul in relation to his body was like an acorn planted in a flower pot, with the result that it was bound burst out of its container. Such was Lewis's soul in class, building up, pouring forth, unable to restrain its palpable concerns with human existence, the agon-y (struggle) of history, and, always, its willful defiance to acquiesce to mere historical facts. Lewis was also a very perceptive and sympathetic teacher, actively so in his mentorship of students. Many times did Lewis offer me his help, in and out of the classroom. He is, in my eyes, a gleaming mensch.

Taking courses with Professor Joseph Margolis was like sitting in the presence of the mythical sphinx, spinning riddles, couching conundrums, and devouring philosophy. Joe opened my eyes to a way in which an historical orientation to philosophy can be profitably combined with analytic and argumentative precision. Joe is also extremely kindhearted, relating experiences that were somewhat similar to my own challenges in trying to improve my abilities in a discipline I loved while keeping to my promise of not doing so at the expense of my wife and young daughter. I am very proud and happy that a

paper I wrote for Joe's class on philosophy in literature, which examined the notion of truth in the literature of Jorge Luis Borges, is soon to be published in November as a chapter in a compendium being put out by Palgrave Macmillan.

I owe to professor Professor Kristin Gjesdal, with whom I took two classes on the philosophy of history, great thanks for her always thorough instruction on modern German philosophy, and for introducing me to Yirmiyahu Yovel's commentary on Kant's philosophy of history. My interest in Yovel's identification of Kant's "historical antinomy" was stirred in preparing for her class, and grew to comprise the second chapter of my dissertation, which also made its way to publication in modified form in a 2017 issue of the *Southwest Philosophy Review*. I am also sincerely grateful to Kristin for extending to me in her capacity as the department's graduate director repeated consideration when, for many external reasons, I was not able to keep to timely deadlines in my dissertation planning and writing.

Most important to the completion of this dissertation and to the alleviation of stress and anxiety related to its production, I cannot fully convey my appreciation for the sustained support of my advisor, Professor Espen Hammer. Upon meeting Espen and taking two of his classes, I felt that we shared similar intellectual interests. As an undergrad, I was introduced to the thought of Hans Blumenberg by Frank Farrell, who took a famed graduate course on the German philosopher at Yale with Karsten Harries. The course was a revelation for me, and I was fortunate to produce an essay that would eventually be published in the *Yale Philosophy Review*, a select undergraduate publication which was sometimes cited in professional publications. My first class with Espen, as it would turn out, was on the topic of secularization and modernity, which focused heavily on

Blumenberg's monumental *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. This instantly made me feel very at-home studying philosophy at Temple, and also convinced me to approach Espen to advise my dissertation work. Unfortunately, my production in this area met many obstacles and disappointments. Throughout all this, however, Espen has been nothing but forgiving to a such a compassionate degree that I am embarrassed to have tested its limits. I hope to incorporate Espen's example in my own interaction with students, always recalling my failures with humility and working to encourage the ends of my students with similar patience and understanding.

Outside of my graduate experience at Temple, I should like to thank my philosophy professors at Stony Brook University, from which I received my M.A., most notably Professors Allegra de Laurentiis, Edward Casey, and Eva Kittay, all of whom offered outstanding instruction and generosity. At Purchase College, I received a grounding in philosophy that keeps serving me to this day, especially, from Professors Frank B. Farrell and Casey Haskins. Both of whom still fill me with wonder and inspiration.

On a closing note, I wish to thank my wife, Miraline, and daughter, Sofía, for their sustaining love. I recall writing a fourth-grade assignment in which I stated that I could never properly repay my parents for all they have done and sacrificed for me. My father was a construction laborer and my mother worked in a hospital kitchen. Individually and in unison, they would always implore, "José, think!" I find myself, so many years later, still inclined to obey. Hence, I wish to dedicate my dissertation to my mother, María Teresa Fernández, and to the memory of my father, José A. Fernández.

*Optimis Parentibus: Omnia mutantur, nihil interit.*  
A Mis Padres Excelentes: Todo cambia, nada se pierde

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF KANT'S TEXTS

All abbreviated references to Kant's works will refer to original language editions. All references to Kant will be from the Academy Edition. Numbers given after the abbreviation but before the colon refer to volume numbers; numbers given after the colon refer to page numbers.

ANG	<i>Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens</i>
ApH	<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.</i>
Auf	An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?
BZB	<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime.</i>
GMS	<i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals.</i>
IaG	Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent.
KrV	<i>Critique of Pure Reason.</i>
KpV	<i>Critique of Practical Reason.</i>
KdU	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment.</i>
MAM	Conjectural Beginning of Human History.
MS	<i>The Metaphysics of Morals.</i>
OPA	<i>The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God</i>
Prol	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>
SdF	<i>The Contest of the Faculties</i> , Part 2: "The Question Renewed: Is Humankind Continually Improving?"
TP	On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice (Theory and Practice)
TPP	On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy
VL	<i>Logic.</i>
ZeF	Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCING HOW HOPE IN KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY REQUIRES BROAD EXPLICATION, AND *PRECÍS* OF SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS

Hope cherishes the soul of him who lives in justice and holiness, and is the nurse of his age and the companion of his journey; hope which is mightiest to sway the restless soul of man (attributed to Pindar: Plato, *Republic*, 331a).

Hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper  
(Francis Bacon, *Apophthegms*, §95).

Pandora brought the box containing the evils and opened it. ...Then all the evils, living winged creatures, flew out. ...A single evil had not yet slipped out of the box: then, by the will of Zeus, Pandora shut the lid, and thus it remained within...Now man has the box of good fortune...it stands at his service, he reaches for it when he desires to do so; for he does not know that the box Pandora brought was the box of evil and regards the evil that has remained behind as the greatest piece of good fortune – it is hope. For what Zeus wanted was that man, though never so tormented by the other evils, should nonetheless not throw away but continue to let himself be tormented. To that end he gives men hope: it is in truth the worst of all evils, because it protracts the torment of men (Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*: §71).

Voltaire said that Heaven has given us two things as a counterweight against the many burdens of life: **hope** and **sleep** (Kant, *KdU* 5: 334)

#### 1.1 'Hope' in Kant's Philosophy of History Requires Broad Explication

The aim of this dissertation is to examine several proleptic bases running through Immanuel Kant's philosophy of history. As with many of his other works, for example, on art, on knowledge, on morality, and on religion, Kant's writings on history point his readers forward with reasonable anticipation that the human species is capable of achieving its unique destinal purpose. Kant's forward-looking viewpoint (*Absicht*) posits

the rational justifications for this possibility, thus providing a hopeful foundation from which to motivate the implementation of means for this end, e.g., for the establishment of “a perfectly just civil constitution” (IaG 8: 22) as a necessary state of affairs (*Zustand*) or condition that is needed for the human species to fully develop its rational ends.<sup>1</sup> Hope, however, does not spring from unflinching confidence, and Kant is careful to avoid making the kind of auguries and prophetic pronouncements that earned Tiresias and other diviners their just *contrapasso* in Canto XX of Dante’s hopeless *Inferno*.<sup>2</sup> While hope for a better future must be shown to be plausible, it is never certain.

Nevertheless, it is from this lack of certitude that Kant is able to develop a proleptic philosophy insofar as it posits both a teleological and conceptual schema showing that human beings possess a capacity toward rational improvement, they are justified in hoping that future states of affairs can be better than the affairs of the present, even though there can be no certain knowledge for this warrant. Moreover, the satisfaction of hope renders that same hope obsolete; its completion cancels out its present utility. Subsequently, Kant’s project is not to give evidence of the fulfilment of

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<sup>1</sup> Although rare among Kant specialists, some commentators on Kant’s political thought mistake *Zustand* to mean State (*Staat*) or national state. For example, to suggest a cosmopolitan state as representing a “cosmopolitan world republic.” Rather, Kant uses the term to connote a condition or constitution that is required for the sake of continual human progress. For example, as related in *Idea: (einen weltbürgerlichen Zustand der öffentlichen Staatssicherheit einzuführen, der nicht ohne alle Gefahr sei, damit die Kräfte der Menschheit nicht einschlafen)*: “A cosmopolitan condition of public security is thus introduced, which is not completely free of *danger*, so that humankind’s powers do not fall into slumber” (IaG 8: 22). A cosmopolitan “state” is not, for Kant, a condition of political nirvana completely free from strife. Cosmopolitan law and right are means toward a greater end – perpetual special perfectibility.

<sup>2</sup> In Canto XX of *Inferno*, which takes place in the Fourth Bolgia of the Eighth Circle of Hell, Dante paints a memorable portrait of the just punishments of fortune tellers and diviners, who, having claimed in life the ability to see into the future, are in death condemned to walk forward with their heads on backwards and thus unable to see where they are going. See Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, tr. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 203-207.

hope, but rather to show how to continually renew the raising of hope in an endlessly deferred project toward realization. The actualization and certain knowledge of a future goal disabuses one with the need to hope for that end. With concrete certitude, prolepsis is nullified. For example, in the realm of freedom (GMS 4: 459), if human beings knew that following the moral law would lead to their happiness, the purity of the will would be compromised, as they would not choose to obey the moral law for its own sake alone. Similarly, if human beings had certain knowledge of God, Kant states that hope would be reduced to a mere calculus of felicity:

In his every action the human being would represent God to himself as a rewarder or avenger; this image would force itself involuntarily on his soul, and his hope for reward and fear of punishment would take the place of moral motives; the human being would be virtuous from sensible impulses.<sup>3</sup>

Human beings would surely prefer to feel a sense of certainty over future states, perhaps serving to hasten (or, if negative, delay) efforts for its arrival; but without this Promethean sense,<sup>4</sup> hope must take the place of knowledge. However, although hope cannot be secured by knowledge, it still must have an object and so is tied to a postulate which can serve as a rational basis for the belief in the possibility that the object of one's hope can be fulfilled.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Religion (1817)* in *Religion and Rational Theology*, eds. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 416, (28: 1084).

<sup>4</sup> Prometheus, the name of the mythological titan, means 'foresight;' his brother, Epimetheus, is named for 'hindsight.'

<sup>5</sup> Lewis White Beck suggests that the postulate of the immortality of the soul is based on a kind of Pascalian wager: "If we assume that the moral condition with which life ends is unchanged on entry into another life, it is wise to act as if there is a future life. The moral disposition may inevitably engender the belief in it. But it is not a duty to believe in it; and, if my analysis is correct, Kant has given no very good reason why one should believe in it." Beck asks, what, then, is left of the postulate? His answer is, "Only a hope." Similarly, the postulate of God, who confers happiness in a next life, is nothing but a hope that God

Yet, and because of this uncertainty, Kant joins the ranks of eighteenth century thinkers who, as explicated by J.B. Bury, endeavored to “turn the light of reason on the nature of man and the roots of society.”<sup>6</sup> Kant’s philosophy is usually noted by commentators for its optimism, a belief that even though human beings face serious challenges in achieving their species-specific purpose, there still resides within humanity a faculty and power to satisfy its unique aim. Reason is the highest faculty proper to human beings, the only capacity available to underwrite hope toward the better, but even though Kant claims in *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective* that “In man (as the sole rational creature on earth) those natural capacities directed toward the use of reason are to be completely developed only in the species” (IaG 8: 18), he also points out in *Conjectural Beginning to Human History* how human beings, “first used reason by misusing it” (MAM 8: 123).

Kant’s vision *is* optimistic, but not blindly because he notes how the misuse of reason provides challenges to hope, and also because there is no lack of empirical instances in society of willful maxims that have deviated from the moral law to dampen hope (Rel 6: 32). Because of these real pitfalls, hope requires constant reinforcement. Rather than acquiesce to resignation, Kant believes that the fate of mankind cannot afford to abandon hope any more than it can reason; moreover, since human beings can only

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exists to grant that state. Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary of Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 270. It should be noted that Beck exhibits skepticism not only with Kant’s notion of the postulates of pure practical reason, but also with his conception of a duty to promote the highest good (242)

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into Its Origin and Growth* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), 128. Similarly, as Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 4, puts it: “No single idea has been more important than, perhaps as important as, the idea of progress in Western civilization for nearly three thousand years.” Bury and Nisbet cast their nets broadly to include perspectives on social progress from antiquity and modernity. For a more contemporary account of the rationalist and progressivist spirits in eighteenth century German accounts of history, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 1-26.

work to approximate toward, but never truly arrive at, their proper rational ends, the grounds for hope must always endure.

Moreover, hope is a subject which Kant believes deserves serious examination. Robert Louden writes that until Kant raised the question of what human beings can justifiably hope, the issue had been mostly explored by theologians, and that even after Kant, “hope did not exactly flourish as a philosophical topic.”<sup>7</sup> However, even though hope is a *sine qua non* rational standpoint permeating Kant’s critical and historical works, there are challenges in attempting to explain its place therein. Working through Kant’s writings has been described as putting on Daedalian wings “seeking to rise above his labyrinthian system and to perceive its plan from on high.”<sup>8</sup> The metaphor is apt in depicting the wide scope one has to take in order to appreciate the grandeur of Kant’s philosophy, until one realizes that Daedalus fashioned his wings as a means to escape confinement. In my engagement with Kant’s works, the challenges presented in explicating his thoughts are set up not as ways out of the warren passages of Kant’s thought, but rather as ways to go deeper into its labyrinthian architectonic.

One of these challenges is that even though Kant believes that the topic of hope is worthy of serious study, there is not any single systematic account put forward by Kant to show how hope can be uniformly understood through his vast corpus. William James Booth states that Kant’s idea of hope “is too general and amorphous for our purposes. It

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<sup>7</sup> See Robert Louden, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Elude Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 214.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Mazlish, *The Riddle of History: The Great Speculators from Vico to Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 122.

needs to be further divided into a theodicy, a justification for providence, and a philanthropic component.”<sup>9</sup> In later chapters, I take up these components in various, hopefully unique and creative ways, hoping myself not only to explicate their complexities, but also by framing them around certain puzzles within, and contentious readings around, Kant’s philosophy of history. So, for example, with regard to Booth’s three distinctions, the theodical and philanthropic components of hope can be related to the highest good as both a promise (that happiness will be apportioned to worthiness) and a demand (that human actions obey the moral law).<sup>10</sup> The component which deals with the justification of providence is just another way of saying that if human beings are able to discern a certain providential plan of nature, this would provide hope that the human species,

is represented at a remote point in the distant future where it is finally working itself toward the condition in which all the seeds that nature has planted within it can be fully developed and its vocation here on earth can be realized (something that one cannot reasonably hope for without presupposing a plan of nature) (IaG 8: 30).

The justification of providence is a justification of hope in nature’s plan for the human species.

Lastly, the philanthropic component is shown in how a love of humanity, and what is most worthy of humanity, is motivated by purity. Perhaps most famously, Kant claims in the *Critique* that “[A]ll **hope** concerns happiness” (KrV A805/B833) insofar as

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<sup>9</sup> James William Booth, *Interpreting the World: Kant’s Philosophy of History and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 111.

<sup>10</sup> KpV 5: 110. See Christopher Insole, “The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good,” *Philosophy* Vol. 83, No. 325 (July 2008), 333-51, for the view that Kant is not only concerned with the shape of our duties and motivations, but the shape of the universe within which these emerge.

one is worthy of it, i.e., the hope that one's happiness is proportioned to one's virtue. And in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant sketches a maieutic vignette<sup>11</sup> between a teacher and student to lead the latter to the idea that "if we do not make ourselves *unworthy of happiness*, by violating our duty, we can also hope to *share* in happiness (MS 6: 482).

The notion of duty attaches to Kant's beliefs that human beings have the capacity act from no other motive than what is right, and that this is a real possibility:

It is therefore obviously inconsistent, after having acknowledged the authority of this concept of duty, to want to say that one *cannot* carry out one's moral duties. For if this were so, the concept of duty would altogether disappear from the realm of morality (*ultra posse nemo obligatur* [no one is obliged beyond what is possible]) (Zef 8: 370)

Hope is here bolstered by a duty to contribute toward a better world, an obligation that is not free from torrents of skepticism, but Kant writes nonetheless that:

However many doubts about my hopes may be given by history that, if they were sufficient proof, could move me to give up on a seemingly futile task, I can nonetheless, as long as this cannot be made entirely certain, not exchange my duty (as the *liquidum*) for the prudential rule not to work toward the unattainable (as the *illiquidum*, since it is mere hypothesis). And however uncertain I am and may remain about whether improvement is to be hoped for the human race, this uncertainty cannot detract from my maxim and thus from the necessary supposition for practical purposes, that it is practicable. This hope for better times, without which a serious desire to do something that promotes the general good would never have warmed the human heart, has always had an influence on the work of the well-thinking (TP 8: 309).

As I will show in later chapters, the hope for better times is the mainstay of Kant's proleptic philosophy of history. Hope is supposed to imbue great expectations,

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Guyer, *Virtues of Freedom: Select Essays on Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 265, suggests that Kant's sketch is modeled on a Socratic dialogue much like Plato's *Meno*. The art of maieutic is described by Plato, *Theaetetus* in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 165, which relates that Socrates practices his mother's, Phaenarete's, art of assisting in births (149a): for Phaenarete, the art is helping to deliver other women's babies; for Socrates, the art is helping other men give birth to ideas. Apropos of Guyer's title, Phaenarete means "She who brings virtue to light."

and such anticipations appear, for example, (i) in how rational ideas can serve as models from which to take action working toward a vision of what ought to be, (ii) in how by trying to discern a pattern to history, and (iii) in putting aside the absurdity of prophetic pronouncements, one can draw hope that human beings will better off in times to come – topics that will receive close attention in chapters two and three, respectively, of this dissertation.

Moreover, Kant’s philosophy is famously dualistic; presenting what is to be expected in the domain of nature and the domain of freedom; the awe that fills the mind from the starry heavens above as well as from the moral law within; actions from heteronomous inclination and autonomous duty; feelings of determinate concepts of pleasure and indeterminate concepts of beauty;<sup>12</sup> and human membership in the knowable world of phenomena and in the unknowable world of noumena. Hope attaches to all of these pairs, but in ways which requires sustained examination across Kant’s works to mark its distinct presence throughout.

Subsequently, partly because of this absence in the primary literature to codify

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<sup>12</sup> The stirring of hope as expressed in the third *Critique* seems neglected in the literature, but it can be shown in the anticipation of obtaining the object of common agreement on taste: “It is possible to argue about taste (but not to dispute). But this proposition implies the opposite of the first proposition above [i.e., *de gustibus non est disputandum*]. For wherever it is supposed to be possible to argue, **there must be hope of coming to mutual agreement**; hence one must be able to count on grounds for the judgment that do not have merely private validity and thus are not merely subjective, which is nevertheless completely opposed to the fundamental principle, Everyone has his own taste (KdU 5: 338, my bold emphasis). Perhaps the most sustained effort to blend aesthetic and political judgment in the idiom of hope is the belief that the *sensus communis* can serve as ground not only for a shared aesthetic agreement of taste but also as the political basis for a shared sense of humanity. See Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Roy T. Tsao, “Arendt’s Augustine” in *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt*, eds. Seyla Benhabib, Roy T. Tsao, and Peter J. Verovšek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 48, states, “If there is hope for us to hold on to a sense of our common humanity, it must be an idea of humanity that extends not just to the decent and the innocent, the admirable and the diligent, but also to the backward and the compromised, the brutal and the misguided.”

hope, and partly because of the ubiquitous presence of hope across these works, the result is instructive, but mostly piecemeal, efforts by commentators to provide insights into how hope is tied to happiness (for example, as stated in the first *Critique*), to the advent of the highest good (for example, as argued in the second *Critique*), and to how it is that history allows us to hope that the human species is steadily, albeit, slowly progressing toward its rational vocation (for example, in *Idea*). The topic of hope within Kant's philosophy seems to be taken up most when examining his idea of a hope for a future and secular world in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*,<sup>13</sup> in which Kant makes good on his intention to treat the question, What may I hope? (*Was darf ich hoffen?*):

The plan I prescribed for myself a long time ago calls for an examination of the field of pure philosophy with a view to solving three problems: (i) What can I know? (metaphysics). (2) What ought I to do? (moral philosophy). (3) What may I hope? (philosophy of religion). A fourth question ought to follow, finally: What is man? (anthropology, a subject on which I have lectured for over twenty years). With the enclosed work, *Religion within the Limits [of Reason Alone]*, I have tried to complete the third part of my plan.<sup>14</sup>

However, though these accounts of hope are found variously in Kant's writings, as I myself aim to show in this dissertation, not only must students of Kant's philosophy read through and note its relational appearances within these works, but also that these many iterations of hope, anticipation, and expectation can be subsumed within the historical aim to work toward the betterment of human society. The objects of hope serve to move

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Sidney Axinn, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant's View of Religion* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994); Onora O'Neill, "Kant on Reason and Religion" in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 18 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997); Michael Despland, *Kant on History and Religion*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973); and Emil. L. Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling and Historicity*, ed. John Burbidge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> See Immanuel Kant, "Letter to C.F. Stäudlin, May 4, 1793" in *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, ed. and trans., Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970 [1967]), 205.

human actions, in pure and impure ways, so in a great sense, as I allude to in the title of this dissertation, hope for the advent of a better world is a world well-hoped.

However, while the betterment of human society is always paramount in Kant's philosophy, far from placing faith in blind hope for the progress, Kant was acutely cognizant of the dismal evidence before his eyes. Although he believed that mankind can and ought to progress, he recognized the all too human failings and foibles of unsociable inclinations. Human beings exhibit aggression, enmity, revenge, calumny, recalcitrance, and an idleness that cannot be wiped clean from their nature, which poses enduring obstacles for humanity's moral development. Kant categorically believes that human beings can sing using the sweet voice of reasoned reflection, but he is not deaf to the clamorous din contravening the moral law, which threatens to drown out the realization of rational ideals.

In contradistinction to other Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire, who likewise believed in the corrigibility of mankind, Kant did not believe that humanity can be improved if it were rid of its vices. Voltaire proposed in his 1756 *Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations* that mankind would be able to progress and flourish if it could free itself from conflicts, quarrels, biases, and fraud:

All history, then, is little else than a long succession of useless cruelties; and if there happens any great revolution, it will bury the remembrance of all past disputes, wars, and fraudulent treatise, which have produced so many transitory miseries....history in general is a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes, among which we have now and then met with a few virtues, and some happy times; as we sometimes see a few scattered huts in a barren desert.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Voltaire, *Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations* in *The Portable Voltaire*, ed., Ben Ray Redman (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 549.

Subsequently, Voltaire, who famously satirized Leibnizian theodicy through the character of Dr. Pangloss in his *Candide, or Optimism*, finds that until mankind is able to remove its human stain, all hope for a better world is lost in constant shockwaves of calamities and disasters. As I will show in later chapters, this is not the case with Kant, who, far from spouting optimist shibboleths, sees in the thousand natural shocks the flesh is heir to an impetus toward improvement, a painful human affliction from which we can also garner hope for healthy progress.

Similarly, Kant stands in sharp contrast to Jean Jacques Rousseau, who argued in the *Second Discourse* that the dawn of civilization had led inexorably to human regress from an original state of innocence, and offered a curative prescription to social ills, “continually of need, avarice, oppression, desires, and pride” by eliminating all economic, social, and political inequalities. Until this corrective is enacted, Rousseau, reputed to be one of Kant’s inspirations,<sup>16</sup> found little reason to hold out for historical hope:

There is, I feel, an age at which an individual man would want to stop. You will seek the age at which you would want your species to have stopped. Dissatisfied with your present state for reasons that portend even greater grounds for dissatisfaction for your unhappy posterity, perhaps you would like to be able to go backwards in time. This feeling should be a hymn in praise of your first ancestors, the criticism of your contemporaries, and the dread of those who have the unhappiness of living after you.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132, 272. See also, Karl Ameriks, *Kant’s Elliptical Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 29-45.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality in Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 39.

It seems counterintuitive to posit that the vices identified by Voltaire and Rousseau provide Kant with a means to furnish hope for the future. As Frank E. Manuel notes,

Offhand it seems contrary to commonsense that the vices of tyrants, the sacking of cities, the egotistical striving for power, the warring for possession among states, could a rational purpose. Manifest history showed no examples of deliberate ethical acts; to the observer it was nothing more than a succession of unrelated cruelties without purpose, mere sound and fury.<sup>18</sup>

Manuel is commenting on Kant's belief that antagonistic human characteristics can lead to social progress, the famous "unsociable sociability" (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*) from the fourth proposition of *Idea*, which nature, in Her wisdom, has implanted in human beings as an stimulus to improvement. Unsociable sociability can be understood as shorthand for nothing more than the notion that base nature motives the uprightly social. This account stands not only in opposition to Rousseau's impressionistic characterization of original human innocence, but also to Johann Gottfried von Herder's 1774 spiritually-based depiction of the same harmonious beginnings to human life, i.e., à la that of a content shepherd:

*The shepherd's life in the fairest clime of the world where freely-willing nature so anticipates, or comes to the aid of, the simplest needs; the peaceful and at the same time nomadic mode of life of the fatherly patriarchal hut with everything that it gives and hides from the eye.*<sup>19</sup>

Herder thus offers a salubrious picture of human sociability; an account to which Kant addresses in this seeming snark in the 1784 *Idea*:

Without those characteristics of unsociability, which are indeed quite unattractive in themselves, and which give rise to the resistance that each person necessarily encounters in his selfish presumptuousness, human

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<sup>18</sup> Frank E. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris: Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Comte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 169.

<sup>19</sup> Johann Gottfried von Herder, *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 275.

beings would live the Arcadian life of shepherds, in full harmony, contentment, and mutual love. But all human talents would thus lie eternally dormant, and human beings, as good-natured as the sheep that they put out to pasture, would thus give their own lives hardly more worth than that of their domesticated animals (IaG 8: 21).

Kant, the hopeful believer in progress, continues to discount the happy state of a pastoral life by reiterating this unsociable drive in the 1795 *Toward Perpetual Peace*, in which nature's "guarantee" of future peace is assured through the mechanism of violent human inclinations such as war. This all too routine observance of hostile tendencies would play into Voltaire's and Rousseau's dismal appraisals for social progress, but although Kant writes that one should "cast the veil of philanthropy over the faults of others, not merely by softening but also by silencing our judgments" (MS 6: 466), he still finds it hard to suppress disgust when contemplating human actions:

One cannot but feel a certain disinclination when one observes their activity as carried out on the great stage of the world and finds it ultimately, despite the occasional semblance of wisdom to be seen in individual actions, all to be made up, by and large, of foolishness, childish vanity, and, often enough, even of childish wickedness and destructiveness (IaG 8: 17-18).

This repugnance suggests that, as best we know, of all the species to have existed on our planet, or perhaps even in the universe, only the human species, endowed with the faculty of reason, with membership in the world of understanding, and thus capable of autonomous action, is assigned blameworthy, or praiseworthy, moral judgment.

However, even though the sickening parade of human inclinations on the world stage cannot provide the proleptic progressist vision which Kant values and believes is so necessary to human development, he also considers that the "after-pains" of such tendencies "can force the political diviner to admit an imminent change in the

human race for the better, one which is already in sight.”<sup>20</sup> In this way, Kant views selfish inclination and desire as providing agitating motives for improvement. As observed by R.G. Collingwood,

[I]f history is the process in which man *becomes* rational, he cannot *be* rational at the beginning of it; therefore the force which serves as mainspring of the process cannot be human reason but must be the opposite of reason, that is, passion: intellectual ignorance and moral baseness.<sup>21</sup>

Sharon Anderson-Gold identifies several commentators who view the middle propositions in *Idea* as problematic and less sanguine, thus casting a shadow over how much hope history is capable of conveying to the lives of the here and now.<sup>22</sup> Among the commentators Anderson-Gold identifies is Hannah Arendt, whose posthumously published lectures on Kant’s political philosophy put forward concerns that Kant’s notion of historical progress seems to impugn the dignity of past generations;<sup>23</sup> specifically drawing from Kant claim in the Third Proposition:

What is disconcerting here, however, is that previous generations seem to have pursued their arduous endeavors only for the sake of the later ones, in order to prepare for them a level from which they can raise even higher the structure that nature intended; and that nevertheless only the later generations should have the fortune to dwell in the building which was the work of a long series of earlier generations (albeit without this being their intention), without themselves being able to share in the fortune that they themselves had worked toward (IaG 8: 20).

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<sup>20</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Contest of the Faculties, Part 2” in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), SdF 7: 94, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 101-02.

<sup>22</sup> See Sharon Anderson-Gold’s chapter “Purposiveness and Political Progress” in *Unnecessary Evil: History and Moral Progress in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1982]), p. 77. Herder was the first to formulate this kind of objection to Kant’s philosophy of history. See, e.g., Allen Wood, “The History of Human Nature” in *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Arendt's main critique is that Kant's philosophy of progress contradicts the account of dignity he develops in his work on morality. She argues that if we regard generations of human beings, past, present, and future as somehow less advantaged in enjoying the fruits of human freedom than those who will eventually supplant them to reap the rewards of their toilsome labor. According to this view, belief in progress is not merely unfair to the moral estimation of previous generations, but rather to the dignity of all generations of human beings, *ad infinitum*.

Subsequently, Kant's hopeful notion of progress, especially in its infinite account where it is the species which get to complete the develop all of its capacities, seems to wipe away particular instances of human dignity from the historical scene because, as Arendt concludes, "there is no point at which we might stand still and look back with the backward glance of the historian."<sup>24</sup> In light of such concerns, Kant's philosophy of history takes on the appearance of an asymmetrical grand narrative which places moral pride of place to a perpetually deferred nowhere land.

Anderson-Gold attempts to answer Arendt's concerns by arguing that the "toilsome labor" of past individuals as described is itself taken up by present generations whose toil is no less, and, in some respects, more challenging than that of earlier generations. Not only that, but because of increases in modern life's complexity and demands, such challenges might well become increasingly severe and demanding (Anderson-Gold, pp. 102, 110). My reading of this problem is sympathetic to Anderson-Gold's answer of Arendt's worries not only because it helps to allay concerns over a diachronic divide that risks sundering hope and dignity from the historical landscape, but,

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<sup>24</sup> Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

more importantly, to how such a stance recognizes world-making as a coming together of moral dignity and human action toward the fulfilment of happiness.

My view is that Arendt's charge that progress is hostile to human dignity can be put to rest without recourse to Kant's political writings; it does not make sense on moral grounds. For example, note that for Kant, every rational being is an autonomous agent and not merely an instrumental means toward the satisfaction of another person's ends because, as he states, each human being is "an end in itself" (GMS 4: 428-29). Dignity (*Würde*), which is inextricably attached to autonomy, has intrinsic value: it is absolute and unconditional (GMS 4: 434). Subsequently, every autonomous being is *ipso facto* a member of rational humanity, and is to be recognized as the bearer of dignity and *respect* (GMS 4: 436). According to Kant, all human beings have dignity in virtue of their humanity, and a fundamental violation of human dignity is to have made use of another for one's own purposes.

Consequently, while Kant indeed writes that "earlier generations seem to carry through their toilsome labor only for the sake of the later," later generations do not *use* earlier ones as a means to an end.<sup>25</sup> Later generations do not violate the dignity of prior generation by instrumentalizing their contributions, neither in action nor in mind. Moreover, since all rational human beings possess the same capacity for autonomous action, all human beings are bearers of equal dignity, and hope is attached insofar as it is possible for human actions to be motivated by respect for morality, which encompasses all. "Toilsome labor," performed from a standpoint that can benefit others even if not

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<sup>25</sup> Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 389, n.4, notes: "Those who charge that Kant's philosophy of history violates FH [i.e., the formula of humanity] do not trouble to reply to the obvious objection that it involves an elementary fallacy of the form: 'x is being treated as a means, therefore x is being treated *merely* as a means.'"

benefitting oneself, is a sign for future historical hope, which is the exact stance from a cosmopolitan point of view, “a view to the well-being of the human race as a whole and insofar as it is conceived as progressing toward its well-being in the series of generations of all future times” (TP 8: 277).

Anderson-Gold’s notion of intergenerational burdensome participation in history preserves the idea that dignity is not lost on past, present, and future generations because it is recognized and conferred by the involvement of autonomous human agents engaged in the activity of world-making according to moral maxims. Subsequently, history is judged as a process whereby shared membership in humanity requires labor toward its ongoing moral development. However, because the burden of toilsome labor is always incomplete, history also becomes a product against which autonomous agents work to improve, even when realizing that it is an endless task.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequently, as the preceding examples and problems show, the hopeful bases of Kant’s philosophy is as wide as it is deep. While I have shown that this topic requires broad explication to grasp its cohesiveness with Kant’s works, to attempt to explain its comprehensive range would require a work that exceeds the scope and capabilities of this dissertation. However, I do believe that I can offer within these pages fresh insight into Kant’s proleptic philosophy by focusing on his philosophy of history, which I am happy to say has received new and energized reengagement in the critical literature, and which

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<sup>26</sup> This is what I take Robert Louden to mean when he writes: “And even though earlier generations cannot live in the house that they have helped build, by helping to build it they do participate in promoting an ideal .... Each generation struggles so that future generations will have a better life. This participation in the promotion of an ideal is all that any human individual or group at any time can experience. But it does connect everyone directly to the final end of the species.” See Robert Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 58.

also requires extensive attention to Kant's rich body of work, which I hope to adumbrate in the following précis of this dissertations chapters.

## 1.2 *Précis of the Subsequent Chapters*

As I have state above, the aim of this dissertation is to examine and helpfully elucidate Kant's proleptic philosophy of history by pursuing lines of thought across both his critical and historical body of work. A key motivation for this goal stems from noticing certain repetitive explications of Kant's philosophy across, among other subjects, history, biology, religion, teleology, culture, and education, which, as precise and careful in their detail, all seem to converge on key Kantian ideas of purpose and morality. Rather than concentrating on any one aspect of Kant's proleptic philosophy, I set out to (i) investigate seemingly untenable problems with his characterization of reason in history, (ii) to counter what I take as a misreading, if not misattributions of Kant's proleptic, and not prophetic, thoughts on historical progress, (iii) to offer an original reflection on Kant's use of a famous stoic phrase in two of his political essays, and (iv) to an attempt a close exegesis toward tying notions of teleology and hope with that of need.

I have already given examples of how Kant's philosophy of history is indeed tied to hope for a better future, hope that human beings can attune their present actions to doing good in the world, and hope that past events can be *interpreted as signs* of progress already made. Kant's idea of hope is viewed in these pages as both taken from and given to a proleptic vision of humanity's relation to the world as carrying a central concern for the highest aim of human endeavors – a hope which is justified only if human beings

work to satisfy its principle object, namely, the ongoing construction of a moral world.

Commentators on the role of hope in Kant's philosophy usually turn to close exegeses of *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, for in that work hope is shown to have a rational basis, one that necessarily has to be adopted in order to bring forth an ethical community capable of combating evil. In various chapters, I turn to the *Religion* for corroborative support for other works and passages, but I wish to look more broadly into how proleptic anticipation is situated in the historical writings. As stated in the previous section, Kant's proleptic philosophy runs across his writings, which requires an investigation into a prolific array of ideas. Although a focused investigation into the ways ideas of hope manifest throughout Kant's work can be daunting exercise, in my view, it is incumbent on Kant's reader, even if only for the purposes of producing a modest study such as the present work, to attempt to overcome what seems like isolated or fragmented passages by trying to connect these ideas to Kant's belief that historical progress toward the better is a realizable possibility if human beings freely choose to work toward the goal of humanity's highest value, i.e., the establishment and maintenance of its moral vocation.

Ultimately, the present work takes as its task a reflection of Kant's philosophy of history as was advised by Kant himself in the *Idea* essay, specifically, as answering a call to consider and reconsider the fundamentally incomplete and ongoing project of history. I take as Kant's legacy to future thinkers a summons to have them constantly work toward improvement in *ideas*, to grasp more informed and comprehensive totalities, to ask whether we should continue the project of self-critique, to inquire whether there is a teleological conception to history, and, what is most important to my study, to question

what is lost if we abandon such models and ventures, which I see as the loss of hope itself, something which is necessary if human beings are ever to create a world of worth living in.

My dissertation, aware of its limitations, nonetheless casts its nets as widely as its author can, drawing from Kant's rich proleptic vision of history throughout a rich and rewarding body of texts, and is charged with articulating these diverse elements of Kant's thought in anticipation of articulating rich and subtle reflections on what he takes as necessary for the formation of a just social world. Commentators have made reference to the fact that the texts which gather Kant's writings on history and politics are relatively few and often quite brief; however, as I will show, though few in number, they each have meaningfully tangential relationships to his better known critical works. Contemporary Kant scholarship has shown a refreshing willingness to engage Kant's thoughts across to a broad range of topics, and my dissertation aims to be situated amid enduring philosophical discussions over the role of history in Kant's philosophy. The approach that I take in the chapters ahead is both problem centered and exegetical, and draws from both the primary literature as well as classic and contemporary research in philosophy and history to offer broad coverage of Kant scholarship. While I try to answer concerns in the secondary literature pertaining to Kant's proleptic philosophy of history, I also attempt to stay close to the primary texts by providing references and citations to key claims and passages which reinforce Kant's forceful portrait of the *poietic* power of human reason to create a world hospitable to its rational ends.

In important ways, my dissertation takes another motivational lead from Barbara

Herman's understanding of Kant's philosophy of history as putting forward a proleptic vision that can succeed in motivating human action to build a better, more rational world, what she calls "the proleptic effect" of Kant's philosophy. In the course of writing this dissertation, I have tried offer and connect ideas to how Kant's philosophy of history is indeed proleptic, which, as we have seen, given how the notion of hope is framed within the critical and historical works, this has presented me with formidable interpretive challenges, not least of which come from Kant's own language, but also from the assortment of comments from influential interpreters of Kant's work.

In order to safeguard hermeneutic competence, the reader will note that I not only draw broadly from Kant's writings on history and politics, but also from his work on aesthetics, anthropology, ethics, religion, and science. The reader will also note how my dissertation adopts, implements, and, in some cases, challenges interpretations of Kant's philosophy of history for the sake of situating my own thought on Kant within important and interesting discussions. I believe that at a minimum, my dissertation shows that there are many sides to Kant's proleptic philosophy of history, and to offer as competent an account of its varied topics as is within its limited power. Ultimately, my work here views itself as in a flowing, organic relation with past and current scholarship; a relation that tries to offer a synergistic view of Kant's hopeful vision of history. Toward this end, I set about fulfilling the goals of this dissertation along five chapters and a conclusion.

### 1.3 *Subsequent Dissertation Chapters*

In Chapter Two, within the context of Kant's overall proleptic philosophy of

history, I attempt to address a problem that was raised and coined by Yirmiyahu Yovel as “the historical antinomy” by trying to reframe his main concern that Kant cannot provide a bridge between reason and empirical history. In order to accomplish this aim, I begin by drawing from Kant’s *Idea* essay to eventually put forward an answer that draws from the faculty of reason (*Vernunftvermögen*) in its providing human beings with a guiding principle in the form the “ideas of reason” (*Vernunftideen*) in a mode that can serve to *unify* reason and empirical history in a single process. Subsequently, I attempt to identify the “idea” behind the *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*. In this chapter, I support what I take as a plausible answer to Yovel’s problem with (i) a broad catalogue and exegesis of how the faculty of reason is one thing with two, noncontradictory aspects, (ii) a reading of Kant’s use of “guiding thread” along five different interpretive lines, and (iii) that when the faculty of reason turns to consider history, it attempts to piece together its empirical components under regulating principles that can formulate a rational conception of the whole, which is needed for our comprehension of universal history as an *idea* from which we can draw motivation to act in anticipation of a better world. Consequently, I attempt to show how in the sense of their regulative use, the ideas of reason are very much already reconciled within empirical history.

In Chapter Three, I examine the proleptic basis for Kant’s philosophy of history by raising questions over Arthur Danto’s use of Kant’s *Idea* essay to launch his concerns with what he calls “substantive philosophers of history,” who all share the characteristic of offering “prophetic” accounts of the historical future. Danto’s use of Kant’s writing serves to launch his critique of other philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, who offer what

he takes to be closed-ended views of the historical future. My engagement with Danto's admittedly brief use of Kant in his theory tries to show how he underestimates the kinds of uncertainty and openness that appear not only in Kant's historical essays, but also across a supporting and complimentary body of work. Ultimately, in this chapter I argue that Kant's does look toward the future, he does believe that there are grounds for optimism, but that his standpoint is better viewed as *proleptic* than prophetic, and thus that Danto is wrong to begin his critique using an example from Kant's philosophy of history..

In Chapter Four, I attempt to connect the relation between hope, happiness, and history by again turning to his systematic and historical works, from which I aim to show are necessary to offering a more nuanced and complimentary understanding of Kant's proleptic vision of historical progress. Here I raise concerns over how hope is viewed in Kant's philosophy of history as merely an abstract possibility tied to a yearning for the future. In contrast, I try to demonstrate how Kant views hope not only as a possibility, but also, in keeping with the notion of prolepsis, *which is both a taking and a giving*, hope is very much emanating from the past and present, from which we can draw rational inferences, in the form of signs, toward the future. Moreover, I try to show the connection between hope, happiness, and the highest good in the world, a future this-world, by ultimately demonstrating how the highest good in history is conceived as the kind of world that is brought into being by moral agents promoting not only their own happiness, but also by incorporating into their own happiness the happiness of all others. In this way, the highest good, happiness, and history are linked in the mutual ends brought about by virtuous agents in this world.

In Chapter Five, I attempt to offer an original reading of Kant's use of Seneca's phrase, "*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*" as it appears in two of the socio-political essays. I view the phrase as much more than a literary *aperçu*, and, given its repeated use and important placement in the two essays, my interest in understanding Kant's repeated placement of this phrase finds it curious that it seems to be overlooked in the literature. Consequently, I attempt to situate the phrase within the context of Kant's philosophy of history to limit the scope of the so-called "cunning" or "ruse" of nature thesis, which views that nature itself, even without the rational will can itself bring about historical progress.

By examining what I take to be Kant's strategic use of the phrase in his historical essays, I make a distinction by what he means by fate and providence, tying the former to human mechanism and the latter to teleology. Ultimately, I argue that a too strong interpretation of the "cunning of nature" thesis would seem to infringe on Kant's proleptic view of history by removing the essential role of reason in ushering in progress. Reason, as the chief capacity to emerge out of a unique human telos, can indeed use the mechanism of nature, e.g., in the form of selfish inclinations, but it is only through itself, as the essential element put in place the "plan" of providence, that Kant views as the artistic hand from which the ends of peace and humanity can only be fashioned. I argue that if indeed nature has intended that human beings should arrive at their perfection solely through mechanism, without the need for rational recourse, it would have been unnecessary for the will to have been left free, which runs counter to nature's overall "plan." Consequently, I argue that the so-called "cunning" of nature would be anything but cunning if this was the only part of nature that could guarantee historical progress.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I conclude my dissertation by largely performing a close exegesis of Kant's ideas on teleology and history to lend further textual support for my work in the previous chapters. I do this by explicating by Kant's teleological understanding of progress in the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*, especially in the well-known sections 82-84, wherein history and culture are explicitly judged to be teleological using the external principle of purposiveness: a principle that is the extended version of the principle of absolute or inner purposiveness that we must employ as an heuristic in judging organisms. Here I not only provide a close reading of these crucial sections, but also use my explication to counter an oft-cited failure on Kant's part to demonstrate the full significance of teleological principles in his historical essays. In concert with my dissertation's focus on the different proleptic aspects of Kant's philosophy, I conclude in this chapter that teleological principles can find practical employment with specific application to foster hope in historical progress, specifically by positing humanity as the end that is for no other means, which is consistent with Kant's formulation of such in his moral works, and, finally, that it would indeed be a betrayal of hope to forfeit the notion that there are teleological principles operating in history thereby resigning ourselves to the lawless and aimless "dismal reign of chance" (*trostloses Ungefähr*), an historical caveat that human beings cannot afford to dismiss.

Although my dissertation does not focus on any one area of Kant's proleptic philosophy of history, it moves through its main claims and arguments in order to take many stops in the diverse and rich aspects of Kant's proleptic philosophy of history. I believe that if taken together, my dissertation chapters can contribute to much broader

and fuller conception of how it is that human beings ought and can work to take hope in the present in order to keep giving hope to a world that is open to positive transformation, though the pages before you can hardly consider itself to have scratched the surface.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE FACULTY OF REASON AS GROUND AND BRIDGE†

What the faculty of reason is to the individual, history is to the human race. By virtue of this faculty, man is not, like the animal, restricted to the narrow present of perception, but knows also the incomparably more extended past with which it is connected, and from which it emerged: but only in this way does he have a proper understanding of the present itself, and can he also draw conclusions on the future.<sup>27</sup>

#### 2.1 *Yovel's Historical Antinomy*

Immanuel Kant's philosophy of history confers upon human beings an identity of membership in humanity which encourages commitment toward the ongoing construction of a better world. As the "only rational creature on earth" (IaG 8: 18), the human possession of reason serves not only to specify extensional membership for this identity,<sup>28</sup> but also acts as the most fundamental faculty in the promotion of this perpetual task. The conception is generally characteristic of an optimistic Enlightenment ethos that recognized reason as a central human value with inexhaustible, formative powers.<sup>29</sup>

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† A modified version of this chapter benefited from helpful questions and remarks at the 2016 Meeting of the Southwestern Philosophical Association, and appears in publication as: José Luis Fernández, "Bridging the Gap of Kant's 'Historical Antinomy'" *Southwest Philosophy Review*, 33:1 (January 2017). I am very grateful to J. Colin McQuillan for his instructive comments on my work.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume II, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1958), 445. Henceforth, WWV-II.

<sup>28</sup> See also, GMS 4:429-30 for Kant's identification of a "rational nature" which is *capable* of morality as the characteristic possession of human being; as well as ApH 7: 329, "One can therefore say that the first character of the human being is the capacity (*Vermögen*] as a rational being to obtain a character as such for his own person as well as for the society in which nature has placed him."

<sup>29</sup> See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), who identifies Voltaire as the first modern thinker to posit a history of progress based *exclusively* on human volition and reason (1, 104-114); and Ernst Cassirer,

The much heralded Copernican revolution in philosophy reinforced the belief that reason makes possible the ability to emancipate ourselves from heteronomous reliance (KrV B xiii), in addition to a staunch affirmation that knowledge, critique, and legitimacy derive from a selfsame source: self-knowledge, self-critique, and self-legitimacy, which not only became essential to the “Critical Philosophy” of addressing problems “to which everything must submit” (KrV A xi[n]), including reason itself, but Kant’s subject-centered turn also bore an indelible stamp on a remarkable breadth of work, systematic and historical.<sup>30</sup>

However, some commentators find that Kant’s description of reason (*Vernunft*) in history (*Geschichte*) is not without inherent complications. My goal in this chapter is to address an interesting problem that was detected and coined by Yirmiyahu Yovel as “the historical antinomy,”<sup>31</sup> and to attempt a reframing of this difficulty within the context of Kant’s overall proleptic vision of history.

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*The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), especially, Ch.1, “The Mind of Enlightenment.” See also, Robert Loudon, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Elude Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203-223, for a distinction between the promised expansion of reason’s progressive powers and concerns over its hindered fulfilment; as well as Katerina Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), which examines the influence of culture (*Bildung*) in Kant’s relation to the legacy of the Enlightenment project as a *learning process*. It should be noted, however, that Kant’s Enlightenment optimism always remained guarded (which will be examined in chapter 2). As Leszek Kolakowski puts it with regard to Kant’s skeptical place among other Enlightenment thinkers, “The professor at the boring provincial city had a better understanding of human nature than the intellectual dandies of Paris.” See Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 46.

<sup>30</sup> The *self-legitimizing* character of reason in the first *Critique*’s Copernican turn is not unique to the systematic works, but is also mirrored in Kant’s political writings. Two familiar examples of this re-centering are Kant’s famous use of the Horacian phrase “*Sapere aude!*” (Auf 8: 35) in *What is Enlightenment?* as a courageous call to self-emancipation from the direction of others, and the concomitant relation between human self-esteem and self-worth in the Third Proposition of the *Idea* essay (IaG 8: 20).

<sup>31</sup> See Yirmiyahu Yovel, “Kant and the History of Reason” in *Philosophy of History and Action: Papers Presented at the First Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter December 1974* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel,

In a paper delivered in 1974, Yovel expressed concerns over a pair of seemingly untenable problems; namely, the aforementioned “‘historical antinomy’ and the ‘problem of historical schematism.’”<sup>32</sup> The ‘historical antinomy’ considers reason in relation to Kant’s theory of time, and Yovel argues that it reveals a major challenge to Kant’s philosophy of history:

For reason to be a historical principle it must be embodied in actual time. Yet time, according to Kant’s *Transcendental Aesthetics*, is merely a “form of intuition” that cannot apply to reason at all, only to empirical data categorized by the forms of the understanding (Yovel 1978: 129)

The difficulty raised by Yovel proposes that there is an irreparable split between Kant’s systematic account of reason, and its influential role in the historical essays. He begins by considering how in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Kant argues that time (and space) is an indispensable a priori form of intuition, which “in it alone is all actuality of appearances possible” (KrV A31/B46).<sup>33</sup> Yovel’s objection arises because reason is certainly portrayed by Kant as transcendently derived (KrV A11/B24-5), which, if it were to be historicized, and thus unavoidably integrated within time, would have to take on the phenomenal character of an appearance – thus contradicting the ontological designation of reason as a noumenal faculty. Consequently, Yovel asserts that this constitutive contradiction, i.e., reason rendered as simultaneously temporal and

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1978), 129. The ‘historical antinomy’ receives expanded treatment in Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); henceforth, KPH.

<sup>32</sup> Yovel, “Kant and the History of Reason,” 129.

<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that time and space in the faculty of intuition are not uniform. Both are “given” *a priori*, but time is the ground of all intuitions (KrV A 31). It provides a structure in which to experience temporal succession (KrV B 48). Space provides the condition of the possibility of appearances, i.e., “the ground of all outer intuitions” (KrV A 24/B 38-39).

atemporal, is not only incongruous but also equally necessary to Kant's philosophy of history, hence the antinomy.

The 'problem of historical schematism' displays a similar incompatibility, but instead of examining the relation of reason to its temporal and atemporal modes, Yovel continues to develop his concerns by arguing that Kant cannot give a comprehensive account of the relation between reason and history:

How can a bridge be built between the history of reason and empirical history? I think that Kant does not and cannot have a sufficient answer. Reason is to grow, mature, and affect the world in and through empirical history, which goes on in time and is bound by natural laws. How can the correspondence between real states in experience and the stages in the evolution of reason be accounted for? (KPH 21)

Because Yovel believes that no possible mediation can take place between the noumenal "system" of reason and its phenomenal "system" in human history (KPH 23), the laws specific to those contrasting systems "cannot be united in a single process" (KPH 21). Consequently, the 'problem of 'historical schematism' compliments the 'historical antinomy' insofar as it calls attention to a dissociation in Kant's account of how reason and empirical history can be mediated;<sup>34</sup> ultimately, Yovel collapses both problems simply to the catchall phrase '*historical antinomy*' (KPH 272).

In formulating these difficulties, Yovel considers that, "[W]hereas for Kant empirical history is a challenge and a difficulty vis-à-vis the history of reason, for Hegel, empirical history is the medium, or the moment, in which the history of reason can alone

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel O. Dahlstrom views the problem to be defined by Yovel's belief that Kant could not succeed in reintegrating rational history within his Critical system. Rational history views historical events around a universal idea as a totality; empirical history is merely a collection of historical events in terms of cause-effect relationships. See Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "The Unity of Kant's Critical Philosophy" in Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (eds.), *The Emergence of German Idealism: Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy Vol. 34* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1999), 13, fn.1.

take place” (KPH 23). Moreover, unlike Hegel, who viewed the history of reason as necessarily mediated by empirical history, “without a bridging principle between pure changes in consciousness and actual states in time . . . . While on certain grounds a history of reason is indispensable for Kant, on the other grounds it is impossible” (KPH 286). Without this “bridging principle” to unite both accounts of reason, Yovel attempts to reveal a challenging lacuna in Kant’s philosophy, “which . . . prevents [Kant] from seeing rational history and empirical history as mediating each other in a single dynamic whole” (KPH 272). Thus, Yovel proposes a permanent caesura in Kant’s philosophy, i.e., the unviable break between the way reason is portrayed a priori in Kant’s system and its teleological expression in the historical writings, in which it “is to grow, mature, and affect the world” (KPH 21). The two problems, then, revolve around the issue of an incompatibility between these portraits of Kantian reason.

My own consideration of Yovel’s concerns finds that they disclose not so much an insuperable gulf between Kant’s descriptions of reason, but rather a puzzle of how to try to fit together two indispensable *aspects* of reason: (i) as formally self-standing and not given to temporal development, and, (ii) as temporally progressive, following its own rational blueprint, moving toward greater discursive development and facility, and increasing its *leading* influence on a world that can be improved via the right kind of motivation (e.g., *inter alia*, a world of expanding enlightenment, peaceful political institutions, and moral community).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> A similar problem identifying an untenable dualism within Kant’s philosophy is raised by Michael Despland with regard to Kantian morality as both timeless and embedded in the historical process, a puzzle which is quickly introduced and then just as quickly abandoned. See Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1973), 66-7. Despland’s methodological process is similar to, and admiring of, Yovel’s, “whose great merit is to recognize the importance of Kant’s book on

The picture which emerges from Yovel's examination is one of deep dissatisfaction because Kant's formal description of reason seems embarrassingly unsuited with his idea of its progressive, historical development. Subsequently, as we have seen, the 'historical antinomy' is treated by Yovel as both fundamentally necessary and exasperatingly unresolvable, but what is also at stake, and what I am most interested to consider, is whether Kant can offer a satisfying way out of the historical antinomy toward a rational vision of history that does not rely on dogmatic, *extra corpore* "deus ex machina solutions" (KPH 272), and in which the ideals of reason can serve to impel human actions from the standpoint of a world transforming *praxis* grounded in historical hope.

In the sections that follow, I want to examine whether this puzzle is as insuperable as Yovel believes. Specifically, I aim to address perhaps the most pertinent of Yovel's concerns, *viz.*: How can a bridge be built between rational history and empirical history? Can these be mediated? Yovel's own attempt to address this problem locates Kant's original expansions on teleological reason in the third *Critique*, and how they can be applied to empirical history; namely, by arguing that the concept of reflective judgment is Kant's main innovation to answering the problem of reason as teleologically presented (KPH 159).<sup>36</sup> However, while Yovel is right to incorporate the role of reflective judgment toward an explication of the development of reason in history, he insists that systematic difficulties remain because "Kant [cannot] admit of an affinity between pure reason and its opposite, empirical reality" (KPH 271-72).

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religion for grasping his view of history" (KPH xi).

<sup>36</sup> For example, by proceeding to reflect on history in an analogical or metaphorical sense, i.e., in the mode of a heuristic "*as if*" history is purposive, without ascribing any purpose to history itself. For a considered study of Kant's use of analogical language as a heuristic device to be used when talking about knowledge of a reality which reason cannot attain, see the chapter "Kant: The Fundamentals" in Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of As-If*, trans. C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952 [1924]).

It is important to note that Yovel's problem only asks for a solution that can be reconciled by an "inner architectonic" of Kantian tenets (KPH x), thus showing how the two depictions of reason are compatible and "ultimately coherent" (KPH 22). Toward an attempt to respond to this difficulty, I want to explore whether there might be a different way to frame Yovel's disrelation of reason and seek some kind of unification between reason as transcendently given and reason operating historically. Consequently, I believe that there is a way to 'skirt the schematism' by showing how Kant's philosophy can provide the desired rapprochement, with the result that some of the features which Yovel takes as hopeless might actually find plausible resolution.

## 1.2 *An Attempt at Skirting the Schematism*

In his study of Kant's philosophy of history, Yovel states that he set aside Kant's "peripheral essays" (*viz.* the historical essays) in order to place the critical literature at the forefront of his study. Although he does not discount the value of Kant's "lesser" works, Yovel states that Kant's historical writings lack the systematic framework that is found in the Critical body. He argues for this drawback by looking to the 1784 *Idea* essay in order to show how it was written just as Kant was still in the inchoate stages of his Critical period; indeed, not long after the first edition of his *Critique* (1781). Thus, Yovel believes that during the time he was writing *Idea*, Kant had not yet developed the more precise conceptual apparatus of his later *Critiques* (e.g., that *Idea*'s teleological account of reason in history lacks the concept of reflective judgment developed down the road in the third *Critique*):

Kant had written the *Idea*...even before the second and the third Critiques; which indicates that the *Idea* is indeed a vestige of his “dogmatic” thinking, chronologically but not systematically simultaneous with the beginning of his Critical period (KPH 155).

Consequently, Yovel claims that the historical essays, which not only relate the emergence and goals of reason, but also relate the medium from which “the character of the [human] species can only be drawn” (*Handschrift*, ApH 7: 330), are inadequately suited to support their own claims, and, hence, are not the most primary sources that are needed to grasp their content: “one must first reconstruct the foundations of Kant’s philosophy of history from his systematic work” (KPH 127).<sup>37</sup> As a proposed redress to this problem, Yovel turns his reconstructive efforts first to Kant’s systematic writings for the sake of then be able to more fully examine the historical essays.

Opposite to Yovel’s methodological approach,<sup>38</sup> my chapter takes its central point

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<sup>37</sup> Another shortcoming that Yovel identifies is a seeming proclivity Kant has to write about history from the exclusive vista of politics: “These essays...tend to reduce history at large to *political* history” (*Loc. cit.*) A response to this concern can point out that neither the establishment of just political institutions nor cosmopolitan governance is the goal of history, but rather that Kant deems both are necessary means toward the end of mankind fulfilling its highest vocations aimed at the use of reason (IaG 8: 22, 25, 30). Cf. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) for the view that politics or the political art aims at the highest human good because it incorporates both the individual good and the collective good (1094a-b), the latter upon which the former is dependent. Robert B. Louden performs a helpful comparison of politics as tied to the highest human good in Aristotle and Kant, while showing the limitations of their similarity, namely, as seen in Aristotle’s provincialism and in Kant’s cosmopolitanism. See Robert B. Louden, “The End of All Human Action/The Final Object of All My Conduct: Aristotle and Kant on the Highest Good” in *The Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant*, eds. Joachim Aufderheide and Ralf M. Bader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 112-28.

<sup>38</sup> As the aim of this chapter shows, my own readings find complimentary correspondence between Kant’s systematic and historical writings, while Yovel proceeds by looking to Kant’s critical works to explicate his historical writings. In related fashion, it is not uncommon to find that some Kant scholars read the critical works as fundamentally political. See, e.g., Onora O’Neill, “Reason and Politics in the Kantian Enterprise” in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Hans Saner, *Kant’s Political Thought: Its Origin and Development*, trans. E.B. Ashton (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973). Robert B. Louden has observed that Kant scholars are generally preoccupied with his three *Critiques*, with the result of neglecting his other writings; especially, in the “field of impure ethics,” which is the name Louden gives to those areas of Kant’s writings that are not concerned exclusively with aprioristic cognition. See Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics: From Rational Being to Human Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6. Also, some Kant

of departure from Kant's "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" to later examine a key aspect of reason in the *Critique*. Specifically, I should like to begin by turning to 'Idea's' Second Thesis, where we read: "*In man (as the sole rational creature on earth) those natural capacities directed toward the use of reason are to be completely developed only in the species, not in the individual*" (IaG 8: 18). Among other things, the Second Thesis attempts to combine species-centered notions of teleological progress, and goes on to state that the goal of history is the full development of those human predispositions aimed at the use of reason, which will culminate in moral agency.

However, the passage that I most want to highlight from the Second Thesis is the one in which Kant states:

Reason in a creature is a faculty to extend the rules and objectives of the use of all of its powers far beyond natural instinct, and knows no limits to its projects. However, reason itself does not operate on instinct, but requires trial, practice, and instruction in order to gradually progress from one stage of insight to another" (IaG 8: 19).

Of all the premises in *Idea* which serve to support Kant's aim to provide a "guiding thread" to our understanding of reason in history, the statement that "reason in a creature is a faculty" (*Die Vernunft in einem Geschöpfe ist ein Vermögen*), and specifically the

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scholars take the opposite of Yovel methodological direction. For example, in his study of Kant's practical philosophy, Allen Wood argues that "Kant's philosophy of history is indispensable for an understanding of his ethical thought." See Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 208. As does also Pauline Kleingeld in "Nature or Providence? On the Theoretical and Moral Importance of Kant's Philosophy of History" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXv, No. 2, 2001, 201-19: "Kant's philosophy of history...fulfills a function in both his theoretical and his practical philosophy" (204).

employment of the term ‘faculty’ (*Vermögen*),<sup>39</sup> i.e., of a useful ability, will be crucial to my efforts in this chapter to provide a bridging principle to Yovel’s historical antinomy.

As I have stated, my overarching goal in this section is to attempt a way through Yovel’s historical antinomy, and show how it is that we might be able to respond to his question of how to find some way of filling a troublesome lacuna between reason and empirical history that stays within the lines of Kant’s philosophy. As I read him, Kant has already answered Yovel not only in the historical essays, but also in the *Critique*, and I shall try to make my reading plausible by offering what I view as a resolution to this problem; namely, as suggested above, by turning to Kant’s essential formulation of reason as a faculty, capacity, or ability (*Vermögen*), which can lead us in its *regulative* employment.<sup>40</sup> Regulative principles are themselves “guides” which are provided for our use by the faculty of reason i.e., they provide guidance by setting standards we ought to follow toward obtaining possible ends.

Famously in *Idea*, Kant attempts to trace out several rich delineations of a “guiding thread” (*Leitfaden*) to history,<sup>41</sup> but there are also systematic works in which Kant identifies reason as offering “clues.”<sup>42</sup> Not only is reason a capacity in human

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<sup>39</sup> The German words for ‘capacity’ and ‘faculty’ are also rendered, respectively, as *Anlage* (‘predisposition’) and *Fähigkeit*, but as I will show, it is only as *Vermögen* that Kant employs when describing the faculty/capacity/ability of reason.

<sup>40</sup> For a helpful explication of regulative principles and the ideas of reason, see Paul Guyer, “Kant’s Principles of Reflecting Judgment” in *Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, e.d., Paul Guyer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 1-61. Congruent to the regulative principles stemming from Kant’s critical philosophy and its connection to his essays on history, see Pauline Kleingeld, “Kant on Historiography and the Use of Regulative Ideas,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008): 523-528.

<sup>41</sup> See *infra* (36-39) for my identification of five senses of “guiding thread” in *Idea*.

<sup>42</sup> E.g, perhaps most famously in the *Critique* itself (KrV A66/B91): “On the Clue to the

beings to set their own goals, but it can also (i) provide ideas to *lead* us through procedures that we ought to use toward reaching those ends (KrV 670-71/B698-99),<sup>43</sup> and (ii) demonstrate a *reflexive* capacity to continually test such guiding ideas (KrV Bxxxv-xxxvi).<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the faculty of reason (*Vernunftvermögen*) provides human beings with a fundamental ability to do something or perform some function, and then I proceed to show the unique use of the “ideas of reason” (*Vernunftideen*) in a mode that can serve to *unify* reason in its examination and questioning of empirical history.<sup>45</sup>

Viewed in this light, reason itself can be seen as one thing with two, non-contradictory aspects: reason presented as a constitutive, *a priori* ground; as well as reason functioning to provide regulative principles.<sup>46</sup> For example, the categories of our understanding are *constitutive*, dictating the form experience must take; while the ideas of reason are *regulative*, which can serve to *guide* cognition’s practical use toward particular

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Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding” (*Von dem Leitfaden der Entdeckung aller reinen Verstandesbegriffe*), and in the question of rational hope providing a clue to happiness (KrV A805/B833); as well as in the *Groundwork*, in which Kant argues that an indispensable “clue” (*Leitfaden*) to avoid moral corruption is found in a metaphysics of morals (GMS 4: 390).

<sup>43</sup> See Norman Kemp Smith, “The Regulative Employment of the Ideas of Reason” in *A Commentary to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 [1918]), pp. 543-61.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. PrL 4: 329, wherein Kant marks the critical enterprise as “a subjective investigation of reason itself as a source of ideas.”

<sup>45</sup> Though not engaging with Yovel’s problem of the ‘historical antinomy,’ recent works which also incorporate Kant’s ideas of reason into his historical and political writings are Kleingeld, “Kant on Historiography and the Use of Regulative Ideas,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 39, 2008, 523-28; Reider Maliks, *Kant’s Politics in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 32; and Geoffrey Bennington, *Kant on the Frontier: Philosophy, Politics, and the Ends of the Earth* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017), 50-51.

<sup>46</sup> For instructive discussions on the difference between regulative and constitutive principles in Kant’s philosophy see, Michael Friedman, “Regulative and Constitutive,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (1991) Volume XXX, Supplement; Sebastian Gardner’s “German Idealism, Classical Pragmatism, and Kant’s Third Critique” in Gabriele Gava and Robert Stern (eds.) *Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 25-26, and *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1999), 221-24; and Paul Guyer, *Kant* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 165-73.

ends. As Theodor Adorno puts them, the Kantian ideas serve as regulative, “unending” tasks.<sup>47</sup> A two-aspects reading of reason has been noted in the literature by commentators, who have referred to the distinction I draw as between a “wider sense” and a “narrow sense” of reason as drawn from Kant’s different definitions of it in the *Critique*. For example, Norman Kemp Smith puts the distinction this way,

By “pure reason” Kant therefore means reason (*Vernunft*) in so far as it supplies out of itself, independently of experience, *a priori* elements that as such are characterised by universality and necessity...In the above title it is employed in its widest sense, as the source of all *a priori* elements. It includes what is *a priori* in sensibility as well as in understanding (*Verstand*). In its narrowest sense it is distinct even from understanding, and signifies that faculty which renders the mind dissatisfied with its ordinary and scientific knowledge, and which leads it to demand a completeness and unconditionedness which can never be found in the empirical sphere.<sup>48</sup>

The “wider” sense of reason is what Kant means by stating that “By ‘reason’ I *here* understand, however, the entire higher faculty of cognition” (KrV A835/B863: my italics). In contrast, Kant also defines reason in a more narrow sense, namely, as the faculty of principles (KrV A298/ B355). And in this less general sense of reason, Marcus Willaschek notes that Kant’s,

way of distinguishing between reason in general and pure reason in particular may be contrasted with a different way of drawing that distinction, according to which “pure” does not primarily single out a particular kind of *a priori* cognitions, but rather indicates a *kind of use or employment* (“Gebrauch”) of the faculty of reason.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, trans, Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 24, points out the relation between Kant and Plato with regard to the ideas of reason. Adorno rightly distinguishes the Platonic ideas as constitutive, “they are the only essential and real things,” from the Kantian ideas, which are regulative principles “to which reality itself cannot simply be reduced.”

<sup>48</sup> See Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 [1918]), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> See Marcus Willaschek, “Kant’s Two Conceptions of Reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,” in Margit Ruffing, Claudio La Rocca, Alfredo Ferrarin & Stefano Bacin (eds.), *Kant Und Die Philosophie*

In his identification of the ‘historical antinomy,’ Yovel seems to overlook this distinction by conflating these two aspects of reason; namely, between reason as the *faculty* of principles (i.e., as a capability, whose efficacy in employment can improve over time), which is possessed by all potentially rational beings, and reason as the faculty of *principles* (i.e., as ideas, which have a “timeless” causal efficacy).<sup>50</sup> The difference is that the latter’s conceptual fund of *principles* is, indeed, atemporally derived, while the former is a *capacity* which requires temporal growth to develop its proficiency to use such principles. In other words, reason is not only a faculty of mind, as subjectively given, but is also, importantly, offers rules and principles that can be objectively considered. Indeed, Kant makes this very point in his consideration of the Transcendental Illusion, which takes “a subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts...for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves:”

Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even after it has been detected and its invalidity clearly revealed by transcendental criticism (e.g. the illusion in the proposition: the world must have a beginning in time). *The cause of this is that there are fundamental rules and maxims for the employment of our reason (subjectively regarded as a faculty of human knowledge), and that these have all the appearance of being objective principles.* We therefore take the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts, which is to the advantage of the understanding, for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves (KrV A297-B353: my bold italics).

The faculty of reason, as faculty, can therefore be understood as an inherent,

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*in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des XI. Kant-Kongresses 2010* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013). pp. 483-492: 486. My italics.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Henry E. Allison’s “Timeless Agency and the Causality of Reason” in *Kant’s Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 48-49.

intrinsic *ability* to perform some action by using very specific principles, an ability that not only can improve in historical time, as related in the historical essays, but also, as related in the systematic works, can serve as a critical *guide*, “something to which reason leads through its inferences” (KrV A311/B367).<sup>51</sup> Subsequently, reason as a system (KrV A841/B869) has two simultaneous aspects or perspectives: it is a system of a priori principles as well as one of ends and interests. Reason can be considered subjectively as a capacity to cognize according to rules, which can serve useful purposes; and it can also be considered objectively insofar as it can guide the human capacity toward the satisfaction of this practical employment. In this special capacity, the faculty of reason is a faculty of inference which directs and provides guidelines or maxims for the possible use of knowledge. Reason is a faculty possessed by individual human beings (as rational beings), and their individual use of it may improve through instruction (*Bildung*) and practice in drawing inferences. Improvement of this capacity is required because the guiding use of principles can sometimes fail in its performance, requiring reason to correct its own errancy.

Consequently, my reading of Kant’s philosophy of history is in support of what might be called a *Capability Thesis* that is woven through both Kant’s critical works and his historical essays in threads that portray reason as a readily available faculty, one that is restless and always working toward greater ideas for practical employment:

Reason is driven by a propensity of its nature to go beyond its use in experience, to venture to the outermost bounds of all cognition by means

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<sup>51</sup> Gilles Deleuze draws a distinction between reason as a faculty in relation to its interests, and as a faculty “capable of realizing [its] interests.” See Gilles Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 1-10.

of mere ideas in a pure use, and to find peace only in the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole (KrV A797/B825).

Subsequently, reason strives, but is also in need of instruction, as well as confronted with its own challenges, entanglements, and disappointments, which it actively attempts to overcome toward a future fulfilment not in discreet individuals, but rather in the aggregate *species* (a categorial notion that is itself both temporal and atemporal because *speciel* humanity encompasses all actual and *conceivable* human beings, past, present, and future which share in common the faculty of reason).<sup>52</sup>

Drawing from Kant's historical works, we note that while all of a creature's natural predispositions (*Anlagen*) are indeed destined to develop in conformity with their ends (the first Thesis in 'Idea'), it is not the 'predisposition of reason,' but actually the "faculty (*Vermögen*) of reason," expressed in the critical literature as the highest faculty to which all other faculties, capacities, and predispositions are subordinated, that, qua faculty, in order to make use of regulative principles, requires sustained practice and self-instruction to progress toward its destinal perfection (the second Thesis in 'Idea').

In formulating the 'historical antinomy,' Yovel's treatment of Kant's philosophy of history seems to overlook that reason as a faculty (*Vermögen*) has two unequivocal aspects: reason is a faculty that is atemporally given (e.g., a human infant possess the faculty of reason, is not yet rational, but still warrants *respect* and possesses *dignity* because of an innate rational nature which will render it *capable of morality* [GMS 4: 428, 435]), and reason is also a capacity whose applicability can be improved in temporality (e.g., an adult whose faculty of reason has been *cultivated* and *promoted*

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<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., *Handschrift*, ApH 7: 330 (fn 15): "The species can be considered collectively as a whole or distributively as the logical unity of the concept of the human being."

through education, which can lead to the improvement of her capacity to form better moral judgments). Moreover, though reason is a human capacity, its culmination is reached in the species, not in individuals; hence, the theater of history. Consequently, reason is not two separate things which require reconciliation, but rather is one thing with two non-contradictory aspects. It is in this dual sense of the faculty of reason, its two complimentary, and not competing, modes, which I believe can serve to assuage Yovel's concerns.

### 1.3 *The Faculty of Reason*

My way through Yovel's historical antinomy requires that reason be understood as a faculty (*Vermögen*), i.e., as a capacity to perform some function, which is possible to improve in time. It is a patent understatement to say that the possession and improvement of this faculty is for Kant the most important characteristic of the human being.<sup>53</sup> Reason is the ground and enabling condition for the possibility of the subject's rational thought and free action, is the sole arbiter of its own power, and is the only faculty capable of recognizing the purview of its own limitations. The association of reason with being a capacity is consistently raised by Kant in his theoretical, moral, and historical writings; indeed, perhaps no more forcefully than in the 1785 *Groundwork's* two-worlds theory, wherein he makes the substantive argument that the moral law is

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<sup>53</sup> I use the terms 'faculty' and 'capacity' interchangeably; basically, as an ability. The German word *Vermögen* also treats these terms synonymously. For an instructive treatment of the term 'faculty' and its connotations within Kant's *Critique*, see Allen W. Wood, *Kantian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114-16.

made possible by virtue of human beings having a rational ability that enables them to cognize themselves as members of the intelligible world (GMS 4: 454), which is not only a *sine qua non* foundation of all rational actions (GMS 4: 452) but also portrays reason as a faculty that is shared with all other all rational agents.

Moreover, the thesis that reason is an active capacity is affirmed by Kant in the Second Introduction of the *Critique*. Kant begins to put his critical project into relief by writing that, “reason is the faculty (*Vermögen*) that provides the principles of cognition a priori” (KrV A11/B24),<sup>54</sup> which is rearticulated later in the *Transcendental Dialectic* more succinctly as “the faculty of principles” (KrV A299/B356), i.e., as the faculty of ideas. As faculty qua other human faculties, e.g., cognition, judgment, perception, etc., Kant argues that reason is capable of realizing its own interests, which is repeated in the second *Critique*:

To every faculty of the mind one can attribute an interest, that is, a principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted. Reason, as the faculty of principles, determines the interest of all the powers of the mind but itself determines its own (KpV 5: 119-20).

Reflecting on his characterization of the faculty of reason in the first and second *Critiques*, in the Preface to his third *Critique*, Kant again begins by describing reason as an ability (*Vermögen*: KdU 5: 167) to cognize from *a priori* principles. Hence, Kant consistently argues that reason is an a priori faculty of principles and the source of autonomy, which, as we have already seen in *Idea*, enables human beings to transcend the hold of, and dependence to, natural instinct.

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<sup>54</sup> As do sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*), i.e., the faculty of intuitions, and understanding (*Verstand*), i.e., the faculty of concepts (KrV A15/B29). See also: “All our cognition starts from the senses [intuitions], goes from there to the understanding [concepts], and ends with reason [ideas], beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking” (KrV A299/B355).

However, it is also important to note that Kant characterizes reason not only as a transcendental faculty of principles, but as a dynamic capability. If we turn again to his 1785 *Groundwork*, we note how Kant argues that “a human being really finds in himself a capacity (*Vermögen*) by which he distinguishes himself from all other things...and that is *reason*” (GMS 4: 452), and we can see him reiterating the very same notion in the 1798 *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, wherein he states that human beings are endowed with a special autopoietic “character...insofar as he is **capable** of perfecting himself according to ends he himself adopts,” namely, “the *capacity of reason*” (*Vermögen*: ApH 7: 321; my bold emphasis).

Consequently, one can observe how Kant repeatedly describes reason, whether theoretical or practical,<sup>55</sup> as more than a transcendently given faculty, but also as a *productive* capacity; for example, as he does in the *Groundwork*, wherein he argues that reason is a “practical faculty” (*praktisches Vermögen*), “one that can influence the will” (GMS 4: 396) from acting solely from inclination. The faculty of reason, then, is indeed a capability, and thus fundamentally characterized by Kant throughout his vast body of work as an active, useful ability; namely, it is an ability that can be used to regulate and self-correct thoughts and actions.

Moreover, the faculty of reason is not a static capacity, but actively seeks content

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<sup>55</sup> Kant argues that there is a unity of reason: “I require that the critique of a pure practical reason, if it is to be carried through completely, be able at the same time to present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle, since there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason” (GMS 4: 491). See also KpV 5: 121: “[I]f pure reason of itself can be and really is practical, as consciousness of the moral law proves it to be, it is still only one and the same reason which, whether from a theoretical or a practical perspective, judges according to a priori principles.”

upon which to reflect and form judgments.<sup>56</sup> Thinking necessarily requires content or data, and this is furnished by existing things, for there seems nothing to think about unless thinking refers in some way to existence. Hence, while it is that reason is constituted *a priori*, it also has reflective interaction with the empirical world, and Kant argues that through this repeated interaction, the faculty of reason becomes “more developed” through “progressive cultivation” (KdU 5: 458).<sup>57</sup> The idea here is that while the faculty or capacity of reason is transcendently given, it does not develop in a vacuum. Far from being perfect, reason also has weaknesses, it can make mistakes, and so has a better chance to improve itself by coming into contact with others in community, wherein its full capacities can be developed. Kant argues that reason seeks (self)improvement because *a priori* faculties are not immune from inherent fallibility. Reason is thus vulnerable, it has an occasional propensity to err, and, hence, requires self-correction and reflective instruction.

In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant affirms this vulnerability by writing that reason cannot completely free itself from mistaken entanglements. As I previously noted in introducing the transcendental illusion, reason might well be the only capable arbiter of its own power, and it might also be that capacity which submits itself to its own immanent critique; but there always exists a possibility for reason to be (self)deceived:

[T]here is a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason, not one in which a bungler might be entangled through lack of acquaintance, or one that some sophist has artfully invented in order to confuse rational people,

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<sup>56</sup> Even the idea of God is seen as moving from “only rudimentary and vague concepts of a deity [to] the concept of the divine being that we now hold to be correct.” How? By reason being made to “attend more sharply to its object” (KrV A817-18/B845-46).

<sup>57</sup> This ability of reason to *improve* itself is also characterized in KrV A817/B845, KpV (5: 159), KdU (5: 433), and ApH (7: 324). In all of these passages, Kant basically argues that culture (*Bildung*) is necessary for the progressive development of reason and other cognitive capacities.

but one that irremediably attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage it will still not cease to lead our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed (KrV A298/B354-5)

Here Kant argues that reason can never be assured of its correctness, but it must always be open to submitting itself to self-correction and to formulating better ideas.

In addition to ascribing the faculty of reason active employment, Kant also describes reason as able to guide itself toward its own goals pursuant to its use in distinctive domains. In its theoretical use, the capacity of reason governs the faculty of the understanding in the domain of knowledge, and in its practical employment, the faculty of reason is directed at the will in the domain of human action. The wide-ranging catalogue of the faculty of reason that I have listed above demonstrates not only how Kant routinely describes reason as an innately possessed capacity, which, as ability (*Vermögen*), is given to improvement in an ever-advancing world, but also is susceptible to degradation and potential decline, as would exhibit any other type of capacity. For example, in the *Idea* essay, Kant claims that reason works “tentatively, by means of practice, *through progress and regress*, in order to ascend gradually from one degree of illumination to another” (IaG 8: 20; my italics); moreover, in *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, Kant writes that, “The human species’ advance in attaining its full destiny thus seems to be *continually interrupted* and in constant danger of *regressing* into the old brutishness again” (MAM 8: 118: my italics).

We see, then, how in his theoretical, moral, historical, and anthropological writings, Kant frames reason as exhibiting a special attribute, namely, that it is the

subject's highest faculty insofar as it extends to, measures, directs, and critiques all of its other faculties. This rational ability is not only directed to other faculties, but is also capable of being aimed, *sua sponte*, at itself (KrV B xxiii). As a capacity, reason itself possesses the meta-capacity to self-correct, and, hence, not only has a regulative ability, but is also capable of self-regulation to ensure that it does not overstep its bounds.<sup>58</sup> Viewed as the highest subjective capacity, reason therefore provides the unconditioned power to think and act in normative terms, and possessors of this capacity are recognized as rational beings.

However, as with any other kind of capacity, possession is one thing; usage (and proficiency) is another. Kant acknowledges in both his moral and historical works that the mere ownership of a rational capacity provides no guarantee that the capacity will be actuated or that reason will be exercised effectively, and, indeed, there is always the looming possibility that, as the subject is in part sensuous nature (GMS 4: 454), one's rational nature will sometimes fail to be employed. Subsequently, we note how Kant is aware that there is no assurance that man's rational capacities, moral character, or universal cosmopolitan aims will ever become fully fulfilled: "The human race should and can create its own good fortune; but that it will do so, we cannot infer a priori from

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<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Kant's distinction between logical and real possibility. Logical possibility is a requisite condition for thinking, and, by extension, for experiencing. However, thinking can always slip into the mistake of producing fictions. Real possibility has the advantage of *restraining a potentially unrestrained reason* and wedding possibility to concrete experience, which is conditioned by the forms of intuition and the understanding: "As far as reality is concerned, it is evidently intrinsically forbidden to think it *in concreto* without getting help from experience, because it can only pertain to sensation, as the matter of experience, and does not concern the form of the relation that one can always play with fictions" (KrV A223/B270). See also, Kant, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God," in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, trans. and ed. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), OPA. 2: 78, 123-24. Here Kant diverges from his predecessors, most notably from Leibniz, in taking the notion of possibility to be restricted to purely formal, i.e., logical, considerations. He does this by linking possibility to thinking and existence. For example, it is self-contradictory to suggest there are possibilities that do not exist. See also, KdU 5: 402.

what we have seen in its natural predisposition” (ApH 7: 328-9). Kant relates that even though human beings are the only creatures on earth with the faculty of reason, they are made from “crooked timber” (IaG 8: 23) and are recalcitrant creatures, i.e., a human being only *possess* the capacity for rationality, but because of “the counterweight of his needs and inclinations” (GMS 4:405), it is not assured that she will *use* this capacity.<sup>59</sup> As Sidney Axinn has judiciously observed, Kant “is optimistic about human beings, collectively, but pessimistic about individuals.”<sup>60</sup>

Kant also argues that the normative power of reason to affect the will is felt not only within the subject, but also shared in community with other subjects. This implies that the faculty of reason has yet another special character as a capacity, namely, that it can be exercised by all other rational beings. Reason, then, is also shown as an *intersubjective* capacity shared by rational beings not only in coming to general agreement via mutual obedience of universally valid laws, but also in reason’s own polemical subjection to self-critique, of which nothing can escape its inspection (KrV A738/B766).

This communal character of reason reveals itself as a capacity between rational beings to locate the ground of their thoughts and actions not only in themselves, but also in a common, universal perspective from which to think and act consistently (KdU 5: 294-96). As is also the case with the Categorical Imperative, which demands that we

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<sup>59</sup> See also, RGV 6: 32, MS 6:383, and C 29: 626: “Reason attends either to the interest of the inclinations, or to its own interest. In the first case it is subservient, but in the other, legislative. If reason determines the will through the moral law, it has the force of an incentive, and in that case has, not autonomy merely, but also autocracy. It then has both legislative and executive power.”

<sup>60</sup> See Sidney Axinn, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant’s View of Religion* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 290.

exercise rational consistency in our legislation and application of the moral law (GMS 4: 402), from such a standpoint, we might find ourselves situated in moral community or perhaps in promoting an *idea* of a shared universal history. Subsequently, to act rationally entails that subjects use the faculty of reason from an intersubjective standpoint which is universally valid for all others as well as for oneself.

Another character of reason as a capacity is given in its teleological dimension, which, as portrayed in the historical writings, progresses under an inherent plan from one stage of development to another (IaG 8: 19). Kant's teleological philosophy employs the concept of purpose as a regulative function insofar as human beings are self-determining organisms that fashion their products out of their own, end-setting capacities (IaG 8: 19), namely, the establishment of culture (IaG 8: 21), and its progression in history "from the low level of animal nature to the highest level of humanity by its own art" (IaG 8: 25).<sup>61</sup> Reason as a capacity thus displays a self-determining, creative facility, one that is seemingly without limits. Here Kant argues that reason is purposive insofar as the products of reason are aimed toward its own end, i.e., toward the increasing development and expanding influence in the world.

Reason's incremental purposive movement and regulative use are also shown in Kant's "pre-historical" essays, where we see the faculty of reason emerging into human existence and guiding the employment of knowledge. For example, in the 1786 *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, Kant sets out on what he calls an imaginative aerial journey (*Luftreise*) to offer a fictive account of how reason begins and develops in

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<sup>61</sup> See also KdU 5: 25-36. The teleological basis for history will be examined in Chapter Five.

history.<sup>62</sup> More specifically, using the Book of Genesis as a template, he aims to give a speculative explanation of how human reason accrued in the world. Kant writes that reason was compelled to seek knowledge through its ability to make distinctions and use its comparative powers (MAM 8: 111), which was not dependent on natural instinct:

What occasioned the desertion of the natural urges may have been a trifle, but the result of the first experiment, that is, becoming conscious of one's reason as a faculty [*Vernunft als eines Vermögens*] that can extend itself beyond the boundaries to which all animals are confined, was a very important and decisive for the way of life (MAM 8: 111-12).

Kant imagines that the original stirring of the faculty of reason was owed to its ineluctable compulsion to make itself present in its own rational domain, which was an act of autonomy away from, and willful annulment of, the natural domain. In the essay, he depicts a story of how reason and its regulative use transcended the bounds of animal nature; however, the newly discovered awareness of this emancipatory power led man to

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<sup>62</sup> In *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (MAM), Kant acknowledges continuity with “J.J.” Rousseau’s project to ascertain the developments of culture. Like Rousseau, his *speculative* or *imaginary* enterprise ensues because of the same epistemic limitations described by Rousseau in Part One of the *Second Discourse*: “However important it may be...to consider [man] from his origin and to examine him....On this subject I could form only vague and almost imaginary conjectures.” See Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* in *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Crest (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 39-40. Here it should be noted that although Kant claims to have been “set straight” by Rousseau’s influence (BZB 20: 44), his thought is more optimistic when it comes to the notion of modern progress than that found in the *Second Discourse*. Another thing to note is Rousseau’s provocative question in the Preface: For how can the source of the inequality among men be known unless one begins by knowing men themselves? **And how will man be successful in seeing himself as nature formed him**, through all the changes that the succession of time and things must have produced in his original constitution, and in separating what he derives from his own wherewithal from what circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state?” (33: my bold emphasis). Here Rousseau alludes to nature’s purposes, but without any attempt to disclose its creative intentions in terms of teleology – instead only positing how well suited human beings were to their natural environment – an omission which is taken up in gradual steps in Kant’s *Idea* essay. However, for a sustained account of how Rousseau’s theodical thought can itself serve to “cultivate a hope for humanity’s future and to translate that hope into concrete action,” see Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau’s Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8; and for a detailed examination of Rousseau’s influence on Kant, see Richard L. Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989).

an abyssal moment with his now dual constitution as both natural and rational. Man, not accustomed to his freedom, was at an impasse on how to go forward.

Kant next writes that man's liberation from natural instincts recast desire away from nature and toward a longing for respect (*Achtung*), which can only be apprehended through reason and is the foundation of "true sociability" (MAM 8: 113). The culmination of sociability is envisioned in something like mutual moral regard as the goal of history. Subsequently, the newly forged faculty of reason began to employ its regulative ability in *guiding* man's striving for knowledge, distant ends (*entfernten Zwecken*), and helping to correct his errors. The result revealed man as the true end of nature (MAM 8: 114), and that the subsequent flow of history must move toward justifying the goal of man's character as an end. Of course, Kant's narrative in *Conjecture* is only mere speculation, but for the purposes of this chapter we can see how in this "flight of fancy," it is the faculty of reason and its regulative use that is being described taking over as our primary *guide* in history, which was taken up more famously in *Idea*.

#### 1.4 *The Faculty of Reason as a "Guiding Thread"*

Yovel's discrimination between Kant's "core" works and "peripheral" works in his study of Kant's philosophy of history seems to me to be methodologically unsound, but it is not uncommon. As I have tried to show, my own approach does not believe any such distinction can be justified either historically or philosophically with respect to Kant's account of reason. However, a perennial task for interpreters of Kant's historical

writings is to explain the congruence or discontinuity between his socio-political essays and his critical project.<sup>63</sup> The task is often motivated by a desire to find coherence within Kant's rich and broad writings by using the resources of critique to point out inherent contradictions between the two domains, and also, perhaps, by trying to find a more coherent interpretive key for grasping certain parts of Kant's philosophy.<sup>64</sup>

Broadly construed, Kant's philosophy of history relates the *poietic* ability that human beings have to make this world according to an ever-approximating movement toward the end of the Highest Good in the world, which is more than a "mere wish;" it is a need arising from reason (KpV 5: 143n). I use the term '*poietic*' in the spirit of Aristotle's *Poetics*, i.e., of writing as a power of *making* – specifically, that the writing of a universal history is a kind of making insofar as it can serve as a guide for all people at all times. Thus understood, *poiesis* can be explained in two senses. On the one hand, it is

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<sup>63</sup> This task has a long history and is commonly accepted to have begun with Herder's rejection of Kant's philosophy. See Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Though not exhaustive, for more contemporary illustrations of this task, see: Emil Fackenheim, "Kant's Concept of History" in John Burbidge, ed., *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996 [1956]); Bruce Mazlish, *The Riddle of History: The Great Speculators From Vico to Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Hans Saner, *Kant's Political Thought: Its Origin and Development*, trans. F.B. Ashton (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974); William Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Susan Meld Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996); Katrin Flikschuh, *Kant and Modern Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sharon Anderson-Gold, *Unnecessary Evil: History and Moral Progress in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Patrick R. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt, eds., *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Kate A. Moran, *Community and Progress in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012); Kristi E. Sweet, *Kant on Practical Life: From Duty to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> For example, by foregoing the socio-political essays altogether and instead turning to the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* to better grasp Kant's historical project.

ted to a kind of pure making, the products of which follows from autonomous willing. The guiding hand of this creative power is expressed in Kant's belief that human freedom makes it possible to create a moral world, i.e., via "a practical idea for the sake of bringing about [a kingdom of ends], in conformity with this very idea, that which does not exist but which can become real by means of our conduct" (GMS 4: 437).

Moreover, the concept of freedom, Kant avers in the third *Critique*, makes it possible for the supersensible world to appear and have influence in the sensible world (KdU 5: 176): "the concept of freedom is to actualize in the world of sense the purpose enjoined by its laws" (Loc. cit.), which coheres with the task of examining what "sort of world he would *create*, were this in his power, under the guidance of practical reason - a world within which, moreover, he would place himself as a member" (RGV 6: 5).

Another sense of *poiesis* is the making of a chronicle based on free ideas. On this account, by following the lead of reason, it is possible for the philosopher of history to engage in *poiesis* because she "is able to compile" (IaG 8: 18) a narrative that can appeal to humans *universally* (via *Geschichte*) as opposed to a *particular* chronicle of the past (via *Historie*).<sup>65</sup> Consequently, not only is the *poietic* writing of history instructive, but a philosophical *reading* of history (*Geschichte*), which receives its guiding directions from reason, encourages a special orientation or "mind-set," and here, as both writer and reader, Kant offers a portrait of the faculty of human reason to conceive of a future improved world and set about the task to motivate the *making* a

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<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., Chapter 9 of *Poetics*, wherein Aristotle states that "poetry is more philosophical and of higher value than history; for poetry universalizes more, whereas history particularizes." See Aristotle, *The Poetics*, trans. L.J. Potts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 1451b 5-15.

world hospitable to rational ends. Understood in this way, my reading of Kant's historical work is strongly influenced by Hans Blumenberg's rich metaphor of the "unfinished world," wherein human progress is described through a "teleology that discovers reason as its own immanent rule that up until then had been projected onto nature."

Kant's critique concentrated all directed, purposeful processes in man's rational action, and this meant that the world could participate in this sort of directedness only by becoming a substrate subject to man's purposes. In its metaphorical usage, the expression 'unfinished world' no longer legitimates human action by reference to a prescribed definition and obligatory role in nature. Rather, the transcendental turning requires that the world must be 'unfinished,' and thus material at man's disposal, because this is a condition of the possibility of human action.<sup>66</sup>

As well as Lucien Goldmann's conclusion after juxtaposing the notion of "world" between the philosophies of Heidegger and Kant, that,

the greatest difference between the world of Heidegger and that of Kant is that for Heidegger the world is *given*, whilst for Kant it is *to be created*. In the language of Heidegger, we might say that for him a fundamental category of existence is *being in the world*; for Kant, on the contrary, *it is the task of creating a world*.<sup>67</sup>

And finally, Reinhart Koselleck's observation that,

With the imperative of his practical reason, Kant sought to realize the optative mood of a progressive future that broke with the condition of all previous history .... The meaning of creation is...taken up and transposed into the work of man as soon as practical reason assumes power.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 214.

<sup>67</sup> Lucien Goldmann, *Immanuel Kant*, trans. Robert Black (London: New Left Books, 1971), 57. First published as *Mensch, Gemeinschaft und Welt in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants* (Zürich: Europa-Verlag, 1945).

<sup>68</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 198. On Kant's poetic model of the "makeability of history" (*Machbarkeit der Geschichte*), which is tied to active self-fulfillment in history, see also 197-98, 201.

Kant's philosophy *in toto*, systematic and historical, can therefore be instructive for offering a vision of how the use of our rational faculties charge us with, and provide us a guide to, the practical task of setting out to make this world a better place.<sup>69</sup>

Because history is not only a narrative of human agency but can also be used as a guide to action, Kant's philosophy of history can be instructive for how it is that we can reflect on a notion of ourselves as the latest historical agents in a long genetic chain in which no link was effortlessly forged. The vision is therefore one of human and historical unity. Cast in this light of sharing rational membership with others, Kant's philosophical study of history can help us to formulate a conception of history that relies on shared hope, which is founded upon laws that can offer justification to a rational expectation for a better world, rather than capitulating to pessimistic resignation (IaG 8: 18).

In this latter sense of intuiting a kind of call to history, Yovel has given this command the name of "The Historical Imperative" (KPH 7, 137-39). In similar spirit, Barbara Herman has expressed this same idea as, "The need for *history* is to provide us with a proleptic reason for thinking we might now be living at a time when the responsibility for making the (human) world a more rational place is ours."<sup>70</sup> Hope, even

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<sup>69</sup> As Allen Wood puts it in "Unsociable Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics," *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1991: "Our practical concern with human history...forces us to adopt some views about it. As rational beings we must try to leave the human race better than we found it" (328).

<sup>70</sup> See Barbara Herman, "A Habitat for Humanity" in *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, eds. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 170. Chapter 2 engages with these themes.

if only a Promethean illusion,<sup>71</sup> is integral to our philosophical understanding of history, for, as Kant might say, if the grand play of human action is naught but chaos in masquerade, why bother to record our costumed folly?<sup>72</sup>

In contradistinction to the writing of empirical history, which focuses on a causal chronicling provincial events, Kant's writings on history offer a grand narrative intended to disclose a powerful philosophical standpoint from whence to grasp an instructive clue or 'guiding thread' (*Leitfaden*) that not only can reveal a destinal pattern in history, one that recognizes, and distinguishes, the crucial emergence and interplay between rational and irrational drives in the constitutions of human being and society, but also a worthwhile plan that we can take part in fulfilling. History, *cognized in its totality*, is the product of these drives and efforts, and Kant the philosophical historian, in part, is set to the task of illuminating their elements so as to motivate human beings to recognize this pattern for the sake of fostering just political administration wherein humanity's capacities aimed at the use of reason can develop toward future perfection.

We see this *instructive* element in Kant's *Idea* essay, wherein I interpret *five* senses of what Kant means by "guiding thread." Kant *first* uses the phrase to denote a hidden blueprint in connection to natural providence and human self-interest, i.e., *as if*

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<sup>71</sup> The reference is to Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, in which Prometheus removed the power of forethought from human beings, which included foreseeing of one's doom, leaving in its place the gift of blind hope. See Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound and Other Plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott (London/New York: Penguin Books, 1961) p, 28, line 250. See also, *supra*, fn. 2.

<sup>72</sup> "For what good does it do to praise the magnificence and wisdom of creation in the nonrational realm of nature and to recommend the contemplation of it, if there shall remain the constant objection, against that part of the great scene of the most supreme wisdom which contains the purpose of all of this—the history of the human species—the sight of which compels us to reluctantly turn our eyes from it and, as we despair at ever finding in it a completed rational aim, leads us to hope to find it only in another world?" (IaG 8:30).

human beings are following a plan to which they are not aware.<sup>73</sup> The as if (*als-ob*) qualifier cannot be understated because the blueprint, while unknowable in itself, nevertheless serves as a leading clue for regulative use. It is a thread provided by reason to follow *as if* it were real. Kant's *second* use of the phrase is in connection to philosophical historiography, and conveys a *descriptive* and *explanatory* power: a descriptive theory offers a predictable pattern of history; an explanatory theory shows why this pattern holds (IaG 8: 18)<sup>74</sup> Taken in this context, historiographical "guiding thread" is revelatory; it has the potential to shed a lawful light on history, as exemplified by an analogy to the contributions to science made by a division of labor between, respectively, a Johannes Kepler and an Isaac Newton.<sup>75</sup> The *third* way that Kant uses the phrase is in the form of a call or summons.<sup>76</sup> This call transcends the first two modes of the guiding thread by introducing a kind of species specific imperative, i.e., now that we can grasp the idea of history as a special end, our membership as rational beings "ought"

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<sup>73</sup> "Individual men and even entire peoples give little thought to the fact that while each according to his own ways pursues his own end—often at cross purposes with each other—they unconsciously proceed toward an unknown natural end, as if following a guiding thread" (IaG 8: 17).

<sup>74</sup> This theme is examined against Arthur Danto's use of Kant's *Idea* essay in chapter 3.

<sup>75</sup> "Let us see if we can succeed in finding a guiding principle for such a history, and then leave it to nature to bring forth the man who will be fit to compose it. Thus nature produced a Kepler who an unexpected means of reducing the eccentric orbits of the planets to definite laws, and a Newton who explained these laws in terms of a universal natural cause" (IaG 8: 18). By careful observation of the six planets known to him in 1618, Kepler discovered the third law of planetary motion by measuring the periods and diameters of their orbits; Isaac Newton drew from the *guiding clues* of Kepler's *empirical data* to formulate the *theoretical laws* of gravitation fifty-nine years later in 1687.

<sup>76</sup> See also Ted Humphrey's note on the initial publication of "Idea" in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, November, 1784: "One of Professor Kant's cherished ideas is that the ultimate end of the human race is the attainment of the most perfect civil constitution; and he wishes that a philosophical historian might undertake to give us a history of mankind from this perspective and to point out the extent to which humanity has at different times approached or distanced itself from this end, **as well as what is still to be done to attain it**" (*Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, n. 1, p. 40: my bold emphasis). I highlight this fragment to draw attention to how Kant's turn to history contains, at its inception, a prescriptive summons, which elevates the philosophy of history beyond the merely descriptive and explanatory.

to motivate us to contribute toward this goal.<sup>77</sup> The *fourth* sense of guiding thread is as a *regulative* standard for governance that can be used in social and political administration. In this sense, an understanding of universal history can be employed by those in influential positions to model and promote the possibility of arriving at a conducive *condition*, for example, a “universal cosmopolitan state” (IaG 8: 28). Kant makes the appeal to historians explicit in his Introduction (IaG 8: 18), and his call to national leaders appears in the Ninth Thesis (IaG 8: 31). Moreover, the scope of this instruction is always ongoing and worthy of respect, for it “can serve not only to clarify the thoroughly confused play of human affairs,” but also to help future generations so that “they can be directed to the only means that will ensure that they be regarded as praiseworthy into the latest of ages” (*Loc. cit.*).

There is yet a *fifth* sense of “guiding thread” which follows from this instructive direction, namely, as a *comforting* or *consoling* prospect of the future (*eine tröstende Aussicht in die Zukunft*) from which we can view the promise of humanity in its ultimate fulfillment (IaG 8: 30).<sup>78</sup> That is to say, in the essay’s final paragraph, Kant states that

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hegel’s Preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 11-12, wherein he argues that philosophy cannot give instruction to the world on how to derive an *ought to be* from a mere *what is*:

This book...is to be nothing other than the endeavour to apprehend and portray the state as something inherently rational.... The instruction which it may contain cannot consist in teaching the state what it ought to be; it can only show how the state, the ethical universe, is to be understood.... One more word about giving instruction as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy always comes on the scene too late to give it [i.e., to give instruction as to what the world ought to be].

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Hegel, who argues that even though philosophy aims to reconcile the actual with the rational, it cannot provide consolation. As he puts it in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 67: “[C]onsolation is merely something received in compensation for a misfortune which never ought to have happened in the first place, and it belongs to the world of finite things. Philosophy, therefore, is not really a means of consolation.”

his idea of world history has been *led* to a certain extent by “an a priori guiding thread” (IaG 8: 30). It is the only time that he qualifies the phrase in the essay as *a priori*, which, as I have outlined in its previous uses, suggests (i) a hidden blueprint, (ii) a constitutive and regulative revelation, (iii) a prescriptive summons, (iv) a regulative standard, and last (v) as a consoling vision. Recall that in the preamble to the nine Theses in *Idea*, the goal was to hopefully “see if we can succeed in *finding* a guiding thread for such a history” (IaG 8: 18: my italics), while the concluding lines reveal that the *a priori* winds sweeping the flight of his historical journey were the ideas of reason; hence, the “idea” in the title of the essay.

If I am right in attempting to connect these points, then the implication seems to be that the philosophical historian’s goal of finding a ‘guiding thread,’ which she ultimately discovers to be *a priori*, represents the faculty of reason in attempting to impose a diachronic totality (past, present, and future) within a linear historical process, an activity which also served to loop back on itself in the form of recursive self-examination (subsequently revealing both a linear and recursive *guiding* structure).

As an active faculty, the ‘guiding thread’ woven through history by the faculty of reason is thus attributed a kind of subjective motivation to go beyond the limits of experience. In the *Canon of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that reason is purposive because it actively strives to achieve its aims: “For to what cause should the unquenchable desire to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience otherwise be ascribed?” (KrV A796/B824). In addition to ascribing the faculty of reason active employment, Kant also describes reason’s subjective function as guiding itself toward its own goals pursuant to its use in distinctive domains. In its theoretical use, the capacity of reason governs the

faculty of the understanding in the domain of knowledge, and in its practical employment, the capacity of reason is directed at the will in the domain of human action. The domain of human action is that of history, which Kant believes demonstrates certain guiding principles. And while the content (or “object”) of history is different than those of the theoretical and practical domains, still can reason turn its regulative capacity to both theory and practice. Consequently, in the concluding section, I posit that the guiding principles from the faculty of reason as argued for in the *Critique*, which employ a regulative function which can have effect to lead human agency, and constitute the “guiding thread” so alluded to in *Idea*, is a plausible answer to Yovel’s question of how rational history and empirical history can be mediated.

### 2.5 *Bridging the ‘Problem of Historical Schematism’*

At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced Yovel’s concerns with Kant’s philosophy of history. He identifies two seemingly irreconcilable problems. The first he calls the ‘historical antinomy,’ which revealed reason as caught between two equally necessary modes. One mode was temporal, and the other was atemporal. Subsequently, Yovel detects a frustrating antinomial character with Kant’s description of reason in his writings (e.g., as *a priori* and teleological).

The other worry that Yovel articulated was with what he called the ‘problem of historical schematism.’ Here, he found an incompatibility in Kant’s philosophy of history because there seems no way to mediate between rational history, which discerns a necessary, *a priori* plan to history, and empirical history, which is contingent and based

on events with causal relations. Yovel stated that he did not think that Kant had a sufficient answer to this problem without violating his own philosophy, and he asked the question of how a bridge could be built between the history of reason and empirical history. I suggest that a bridge between rational history and empirical history can be constructed by the faculty of reason by using the tools of its ideas (*Vernunftideen*) through its regulative employment (KrV A311/B368, A320/B377, A327/B383), and that these ideas are the “guiding threads” of universal history.

Subsequently, throughout this chapter I have purposely identified and emphasized the “faculty of reason” as a capacity in Kant’s theoretical, moral, aesthetic, teleological, anthropological, and historical writings. Recall that Yovel believed that systematic difficulties remain in Kant’s philosophy of history because “Kant [cannot] admit of an affinity between pure reason and its opposite, empirical reality” (*Supra*, 16). However, I believe that the *faculty* of reason has a capacity to provide regulative principles that bridge two worlds, the empirical and transcendental by turning to history and seeking out the *highest* ground of unconditional unity. In its function as a faculty, reason strives to unify and subsume all particular experiences under increasingly higher principles of knowledge into totalities (KrV A324-6/ B380-2). In this task, sensibility is inadequate because it is incapable of providing the intuitions that would make knowledge of these higher principles, and of things as they are in themselves, possible.

Still, undaunted by the incapacity of sensibility, reason, in its function as the faculty of inference, goes on to draw conclusions about what lies beyond the boundaries of sensibility. Consequently, this activity is itself instructive and guiding,

for it reveals more about the mind's relationship to the world in which it resides. As Sebastian Gardner's put it:

To form these ideas is to move from considering experiences singly, in the course of which we remain within the domain of experience, to considering experience as a whole, the 'collective unity' or 'absolute totality of all possible experiences'.<sup>79</sup>

In this sense, rationality and empiricity enter into a relation of productive mediation within the subject. While not focusing on Yovel's "historical antinomy," I believe that Pauline Kleingeld's insightful drawing from the *Critique* to analyze how Kant develops a regulative idea of history adds support to my interpretation.<sup>80</sup>

The unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely, the idea of the form of a whole of cognition, which antecedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining the position of every part and its relation to the others. Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding's cognition, and thereby this cognition becomes not a contingent *aggregate*, but a *system* that is internally internally connected in accordance with necessary laws (KrV A645/B673).

Consequently, with an understanding of the dynamic interplay between the faculty of reason (i.e., its regulative function, the employment of transcendental ideas, and the empirical world), we can start to explore if they can help us attempt to bridge the gap Yovel discerns between rational and empirical history.

Kant argues that in this capacity, the transcendental ideas of reason strive to unify and subsume all particular experiences under increasingly higher principles of knowledge (KrV A321/B378), and "consider all experiential cognition as determined through an absolute totality of conditions" (KrV A327/B384). Subsequently, the transcendental

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<sup>79</sup> Sebastian Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Routledge, 1999), 217.

<sup>80</sup> Pauline Kleingeld, "Nature or Providence? On the Theoretical and Moral Importance of Kant's Philosophy of History," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXv, No. 2, 2001, 208.

ideas serve as kinds of necessary *guides* to the unconditioned, and can be used to grasp normative standards. The Ideas are thus models that can be followed; however, these ideas are not actually in the world but are treated “as heuristic fictions” (*als heuristische Fiktionen*):

The concepts of reason are, as we have said, mere ideas, and have no object that can be met with in any experience. None the less they do not on this account signify objects that having been invented are thereupon assumed to be possible. They are thought only problematically, in order that upon them (as heuristic fictions), we may base regulative principles of the systematic employment of the understanding in the field of experience (KrV A771/B779).

Although the ideas of reason are explicitly sketched as heuristic fictions in the *Critique*, they are implicitly drawn by Kant in *Idea*. I have already noted the five senses of *Idea*'s guiding threads, which are constituted by the transcendental ideas. But Kant also, rather cryptically, refers to the Idea of Universal History as a heuristic fiction in the Ninth Proposition:

It is indeed an odd and seemingly inconsistent approach to want to narrate a *history according to an idea of how the course of the world would have to progress* if it is to be adequate to certain rational aims; it may seem that such a project could yield only a *novel*. Yet if one may assume that nature itself does not progress without a plan and ultimate intention even in the exercise of human freedom, then such an idea could become **useful** indeed (IaG 8: 29: my bold emphases).

Kant's references to “idea” (*Idee*), “novel” (*Roman*) and its “useful” (*brauchbar*) value is suggestive of the analogical, *as if*, structure of reason's useful employment of *heuristic fictions* in the manner explained in the *Critique* as a basis for regulative principles, i.e., “only as object in the idea and not in reality, namely, only insofar as it is a substratum, unknown to us, of the systematic unity, order, and purposiveness of the world's arrangement, which reason has to make into a regulative principle” (KrV A697/B725).

The heuristic fictions, the *as ifs*, serve as possible standards to follow, but only as ideas and what can come about from their use in the world are the representations (or appearances) of their following. However, while the analogical function of the heuristic fictions operate only problematically, they are also necessary. The “necessity” here derives from what Kant calls a “need of reason” (*Bedürfnis der Vernunft*) to search for and an unconditioned absolute. As Kant puts it,

For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing it all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use; and thus a certain sort of metaphysics has actually been present in all human beings as soon as reason has extended itself to speculation in them, and it will also always remain there (KrV B21).

This activity and use of ideas as necessary guides is innovative and unique. For example, it runs counter to David Hume’s own employment of ‘ideas’ as a copy of an impression in experience deriving from the senses or memory, as in his rich and interconnected idea of Rome:

I form an idea of *Rome*, which I neither see nor remember; but which is connected with such impressions as I remember to have receiv’d from the conversation and books of travellers and historians. This idea of *Rome* I place in a certain situation on the idea of an object, which I call the globe. I join to it the conception of a particular government, and religion, and manners. I look backward and consider its first foundation; its several revolutions, successes, and misfortunes. All this, and every thing else, which I believe, are nothing but ideas ; tho by their force and settled order, arising from custom and the relation of cause and effect, they distinguish themselves from the other ideas, which are merely the offspring of the imagination.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 108.

Hume's idea of Rome consists of the vast web of other ideas furnished by experience, which he takes as dispositive for the formation of beliefs, and so does not rely on ideas arising from the imagination, which produce fanciful creations, which seem to describe ideas as fictions. Although the critical nature of Kant's system precludes constitutive speculative claims and thus knowledge of anything beyond possible experience, and while the heuristic fictions are fictional with regard to actual knowledge, their practical uses in empirical reality is not fictional; hence the *usefulness* of an *idea* that might only produce a *novel*.

Moreover, recall that thinking necessarily requires content for there seems nothing to think about unless thinking refers in some way to existence. If we apply the regulative use of ideas to history, we might say that when reason at first considers empirical instances of history it employs the transcendental ideas to "push on" beyond experience in order to formulate a totality. Here we note that in addition to the three special transcendental ideas (*viz.*: the subject, the world, and God), Kant identifies other possible ideas of reason that can serve as "ground" or standards to follow.<sup>82</sup>

Are there aspects of empirical history included in the employment of these ideas for our use? There are, for example, when Kant turns to consider the transcendental ideas in relation to historical instruments of political governance:

A constitution providing for the greatest human freedom according to laws that permit the freedom of each to exist together with that of others (not one providing for the greatest happiness, since that would follow of itself) is at least a necessary idea, which one must make the ground not merely of the primary plan of a state's constitution but of all the laws too; and in it

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<sup>82</sup> Ideas of reason are manifold and also included in guiding human cognition toward, e.g., the idea of a cosmopolitan society (ApH 7: 331), the idea of a social contract (TP 8: 297), the idea of race (TPP 8: 159), the idea of happiness (KdU 5: 430) and the concept of a final end (KdU 5: 454).

we must initially abstract from the present obstacles, which may perhaps arise not so much from what is unavoidable in human nature as rather from neglect of the true ideas in the giving of laws (KrV A316/B373).

As well as,

[W]hat can be represented only by pure reason and must be counted among *Ideas*, to which no object given in experience can be adequate — and a perfectly *rightful constitution* among men is of this sort — is the thing in itself. If then a people united by laws under an object of experience in conformity with the Idea of the unity of a people *as such* under a powerful supreme will, though it is indeed given only in appearance, that is, a rightful constitution in the general sense of the term exists. And even though this constitution may be afflicted with great defects....The *Idea* of a civil constitution as such, which is also an absolute command that practical reason, judging according to concepts of Right, gives to every people, is *sacred* and irresistible (MS 6: 371-71).<sup>83</sup>

As these passages illustrate, when reason employs the transcendental ideas to empirical history, the seeming incompatibility between empirical and rational history which was identified by Yovel appears to be mediated in a single process. Moreover, in the passages above, the ideas of reason serve to provide archetypal guidelines for us to follow in our work to approximate the making of an ideal state. For example, as with the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, as Lewis White Beck notes, “It is only in relation to man’s will that these Ideas have any necessary use, as guides or regulative principles for the pursuit of happiness through becoming worthy of it.”<sup>84</sup> The will requires an object, which the ideas of reason can also supply. With regard to history, Kant’s use of transcendental ideas as regulating principles also appear when he turns to discuss the concept of the state:

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<sup>83</sup> Compare these passages with the Fifth Proposition in *Idea*: “Thus a society in which *freedom under external laws* is connected to the highest possible degree with irresistible power, that is, a *perfectly just civil constitution*, must be the highest goal of nature for the human species, since it is only by solving and completing this task that nature can attain its other goals for humankind” (IaG 8: 22).

<sup>84</sup> Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary of Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 10.

A *state (civitas)* is a union of a multitude of human beings under the laws of right. Insofar as these are *a priori* necessary as laws, that is, insofar as they follow of themselves from concepts of external right as such (are not statutory), its form is the form of a state as such, that is, of *the state in idea*, as it ought to be in accordance with pure principles of right. This idea serves as a norm (*norma*) for every actual union into a commonwealth (MS 6: 313).

Consequently, when the faculty of reason turns to consider history (as with politics, in the examples above), it attempts to piece together its empirical components under regulating principles (i.e., as something “ought to be”) that can formulate a rational conception of the whole, which is needed for our comprehension of universal history as an *idea* that we can follow.

If we now overlay this rational activity over empirical activity in history, we might say that the faculty of reason attempts to seek a mode of totality in the seeming interplay of unrelated empirical events. However, even though all we have are ideas, this activity has a practical use:

In its practical reason even has the causality actually to bring forth what its concept contains; and hence of such wisdom we cannot likewise say disparagingly: It is only an idea; rather just because it is the idea of a necessary unity of all possible ends, it must serve as a rule, the original and at least limiting condition, for everything practical. Although we have to say of the transcendental concepts of reason: They are only ideas, we will by no means regard them as superfluous and nugatory (KrV A328/B385).

These ideas are regulative as if (*als ob*) they represent states of affairs that do not exist, but nonetheless provide standards that ought to exist, and, consequently, serve as models for rational hope which we can work to achieve together, which we can call upon others to join us in the completion of its hopeful vision. Even though our standpoint is always within the bounds of experience, in this activity reason and empirical history do seem to

be mediated in a single process, which can possibly move us to discern an idea of history beyond the limitations of sensible experience:

Yet if one may assume that nature itself does not progress without a plan and ultimate intention even in the exercise of human freedom, then such an idea could become useful indeed; and although we are too shortsighted to understand the secret mechanism of nature's organization, this idea may nonetheless serve as a guiding thread with which to describe an otherwise planless *aggregate* of human activities, at least in the large, as a *system* (IaG 8: 29).

The "experience" the faculty of reason undergoes in its drive to derive unified system in history is here also analogous to the task performed by Kant as a philosophical historian, e.g., even though he cannot experience history as a totality, for all one can experience are phenomena, still the totality of history derived from the transcendental ideas can be posited.<sup>85</sup> Although not dealing with the ideas of reason, in the nevertheless titled *The Idea of History*, R.G. Collingwood speaks to Kant's historiographical stance in this respect:

Kant begins his essay by saying that although as noumena, or things in themselves, human acts are determined by moral laws, yet as phenomena, from the point of view of a spectator, they are determined according to natural laws as the effects of causes. History, narrating the course of human actions, deals with them as phenomena, and therefore sees them as subject to natural laws. To detect these laws is certainly difficult, if not impossible; but it is at any rate worth considering whether the general course of history may not show a development in mankind similar to that which biography reveals in a single individual.<sup>86</sup>

The totality of history is not knowable, but like the incremental understanding one receives in an ongoing *Bildungsroman*, it is the completion of the object of knowledge that lies beyond our experiential grasp. However, via the faculty of reason we can still

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<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., KrV A311/B367-68: "Concepts of reason [a.k.a. "transcendental ideas"]...if they contain the unconditioned, then they deal with something under which all experience belongs, but is never itself an object of experience."

<sup>86</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 93.

try to assign a principle (KrV A309/B365), i.e., a regulative idea, as a heuristic guide to our experiences as historical agents. In their regulative mode, the ideas of reason do not emerge from history, but serve to guide our historical understanding in the way we compare historical manifestations to their standards. As articulated so well by Daniel Tourinho Peres,

practical concepts do not have their genesis in history and continue to be considered as originally acquired a priori concepts; **but only in history, by means of history, do such concepts gain clarity and distinctness, because they are recognized in the context of their application.** In other words, history provides material for reflection, which will then seek the form that organizes it, a form that has its origin in the superior faculties of the mind, that is, in pure reason. In other words: history—coherent, systematic discourse regarding human actions, which allow themselves to be subsumed under universal practical principles, principles that are merely regulatory and not determining—posits itself as *the fact*, the possible conditions of which are then investigated, *fact* that is demanded by reason itself.<sup>87</sup>

Most important to this examination is when the discrepancy between the ideal and its realization is seen, then is it possible to discern the possibility of correcting history as fact.

Consequently, this guiding thread connects the systematic account of reason and its historical correlate by telling us not that we can assume that the unconditioned actually exist, but rather that we must always seek out further conditions for its existence. And it is this ongoing philosophical quest to ascertain a principle in history that “allows us to *hope* that, however deeply concealed their causes may be, if we consider the free exercise of the human will *broadly*, we can ultimately discern a regular progression in its appearances” (IaG 8: 17) in order to describe a seemingly aimless flow of human

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<sup>87</sup> Daniel Tourinho Peres, “Right, History, and Practical Schematism” in *Kant in Brazil*, eds. Frederick Rauscher and Daniel Omar Perez (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 242.

activities. Therefore, while there is no empirical evidence to suggest that history is progressing towards a certain goal, the philosopher of history can, if she is able to discern a guiding thread behind all these actions and events as a whole, unite them into a systematic account.

Recall that the problem of the historical antinomy is defined by Yovel's belief that Kant could not succeed in reintegrating rational history within his Critical system. Rational history views historical events around a universal idea as a totality; empirical history involves historical events in terms of cause-effect relationships. However, as I have argued, by submitting empirical history to the regulative function of the faculty of reason via the transcendental ideas, we note how this special faculty, for the sake of its own orientation, demands that history exhibit cohesive unity; and, moreover, that in the course of history's unfolding, reason will demand that it continue to unfold to ever higher levels of perfection.

While not addressing the problem of the historical antinomy, in a much later work than when he first presented the problem, Yovel himself seems to acknowledge how it is that reason and empirical history have a bridgeable correspondence based on what I have presented as the work performed by the transcendental ideas. For example, when Yovel turns to a discussion of the regulative ideas, he writes:

The regulative idea calls upon reason to never make do with partial, fragmentary results, but always strive to know further areas and aspects of the world: more causes and effects, new natural laws, and more continuous links between the natural laws and natural species we already know. **This is a genuinely rational norm**, which had strayed into the wrong path of pursuing transcendent, supernatural entities, **but the regulative idea reverts it to the immanent world and directs it toward the infinitely open horizons of empirical research. Thus the**

**metaphysical interest, expressed as a striving for totality and infinity, is rechanneled into a valid and fruitful course.** The regulative idea deals with the products of the scientific understanding, which it seeks to endow with second-order patterns of order, organization, and classification that do not affect the constitutions of objects but allow for more unity, continuity, and affinity between the separate domains of science (physics, chemistry, biology, geology, etc.).... **The regulative idea sets this semi-monotheistic vision within the immanent world, as the ultimate, never-to-be-attained goal of human knowledge.** Thereby it performs a crucially important critical move.<sup>88</sup>

In this passage, Yovel writes that the regulative ideas do have commerce with empirical reality in the domains of science, but he could have added the domains of history and politics without any loss in his explication. Even though we have no direct representation of this development in our own experience, this rational activity is the ‘guiding thread’ of history to the extent that it is an *idea* that we ought and can pursue in its course, and thus the seeming incompatibility between empirical and rational history is dissolved.

## 2.6 Closing Remarks

I began this chapter by developing Yovel’s very interesting concerns over the historical antinomy, and proceeded to consider the question of how a bridge could be built between the reason and empirical history. In formulating the problem, Yovel asked only for a reconciliation that does not violate Kant’s philosophy while providing a bridging principle which can represent a totality (KPH 286).

With regard to this problem, I posited a response based on a two-aspect reading of faculty of reason, proceeded to explicate reason as a faculty or capability (*Vernunftvermögen*) in both the critical and historical works, and concluded by showing

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<sup>88</sup> Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant’s Philosophical Revolution: A Short Guide to the Critique of Pure Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 101-02. My bold emphases.

the faculty of reason's ability to apply transcendental ideas of reason (*Vernunftideen*) to empirical history for the sake of grasping a rational and regulative idea of history as a totality, a vision which can serve our practical employment of such ideas by guiding us forward in history to approximate its Ideal. Moreover, if we understand how it is that the ideas of reason work to provide human beings with a total picture of history, we can begin to understand why it is that Kant's famous essay is titled: *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*.

While Kant does not identify the guiding threads to history as the ideas of reason, I believe it can be posited that "idea," "universal history," and "cosmopolitan standpoint" are all indicative of these leading principles. Moreover, there is also a proleptic and optimistic message woven in these guiding principles from the faculty of reason, namely, that the employment of regulative principles can have a positive effect on leading human agency, which conveys the possibility that such principles can serve as models for, and aims of, hope that can find fulfilment in this world.

Considered together, I should hope my efforts in this chapter present a plausible response to how Kant's philosophy is able to mediate reason and history in a single process and thus serve to bridge the gap of Yovel's historical antinomy.

## CHAPTER 3

### KANT'S PROLEPTIC PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY†

Who can show us the border where well-founded probability ends and arbitrary fictions begin? (ANG 1: 365)

Epistemology will demonstrate that we cannot know, cannot be certain of, the future; but we don't believe it. We anticipate, and so we are always wrong. Even when what we anticipate comes to pass we get the wrong idea of our powers and of what our safety depends upon, for we imagine that we knew this would happen, and take it either as an occasion for congratulations or for punishments, of ourselves or others. Instead of acting as we can and remaining equal to the consequences. (Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 322).

[C]onstructive histories, guided by a shallow optimism, always ultimately end in a comfortable, substantial, fat State, with a well-regulated constitution, good justice and police, useful arts and industries, and at most intellectual perfection .... What history relates is in fact only the long, heavy, and confused dream of mankind (Schopenhauer, WWV-II 442-43)

Humanity does not represent a development for the better, does not represent something stronger or higher the way people these days think it does. 'Progress' is just a modern idea, which is to say a false idea.<sup>89</sup>

#### 3.1 Kant's Idea of Hope as Both Taken and Given

In chapter 2, I attempted to offer a plausible resolution to Yovel's problem of 'the historical antinomy' by turning to Kant's essential formulation of reason as a faculty (*Vernunftvermögen*) in its *regulative* employment to respond to the problem of how to possibly construct a bridge between reason and empirical history. By submitting

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† An earlier paper based on this chapter was presented as "Kant's Proleptic Philosophy of History" at the 2015 Long Island Philosophical Society held at Saint John's University. Participants at the conference provided helpful feedback, and I should acknowledge in particular Clayton Bohnet for generating very helpful comments and questions.

<sup>89</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols: And Other Writings*, Eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2005), 5.

empirical history to the regulative function of the ideas of reason (*Vernunftideen*), I showed how reason demands that history exhibit cohesive unity in its unfolding to ever approximating levels aimed at creating a world hospitable to our human moral vocation. Even though we can have no direct representation of the totality of history in our own experience, Kant nevertheless identifies the regulative activity of reason as the ‘guiding thread’ (*Leitfaden*) of history to the extent that it is an *idea* that we ought to, and, thus, can, pursue in its course toward the good in this world. Consequently, I put forward what I believe to be a plausible rapprochement for what Yovel takes to be an unresolvable puzzle over reason’s dualism.

The pursuit of an optimistic course in history is thus no mere chimera, and Kant believes that there are rational bases to hope that such ends as a cosmopolitan state or progress toward peaceful relations among nations can obtain. In part, the aim of this chapter is to articulate that the grounds for such practical expectations exhibit a kind of bi-directionality, namely, as both *taken* and *given* in its proleptic sense, i.e., that we can receive hope from past history to give hope to the future.<sup>90</sup>

History possesses a dual character: it is a *chronicle* (as *Historie*) and reception of the past, and it is also provides reflective content from which to grasp the process of how our rational capacities continue toward *speciel* perfection (as *Geschichte*).<sup>91</sup> On my

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<sup>90</sup> A brief look into the word’s etymology reveals that ‘prolēpsis,’ literally, *pro* (‘before’ and ‘forward’) and *lambanein* (take), denotes something which is ‘taken beforehand’ and ‘forwarded,’ or given to: namely, an anticipation of a future state of affairs.

<sup>91</sup> See also, Yovel, KPH, 240-51, for how Kant uses the terms *historisch* and *geschichtlich* with regard to their respective relations to empirical knowledge (“*ex datis*”) and rational knowledge (“*ex principiis*”). Yovel’s helpful clarification of the subject matter of these two forms of history, and what is gained in their study, is owed to the distinction Kant makes in the *Critique* between *cognitio ex datis* or

reading of Kant's philosophy of history, *Historie* represents that which is taken as an evidentiary clue from the aggregate of human actions, as it were, in order give or forward this clue to arrive at the idea of *Geschichte* as the unique goal of human actions, past, present, and future.<sup>92</sup>

Kant's writings on history intends to disclose an exclusive standpoint from which to grasp an instructive clue that not only can reveal a destinal<sup>93</sup> pattern within human history, one that recognizes, and distinguishes, the crucial emergence and interplay between rational and irrational drives in the constitution of human being and society, but it could also work to encourage the completion of a plan that we can take part in fulfilling. History, cognized in its totality, is the ongoing interplay of these drives and efforts, and Kant is set to the task of illuminating its guiding elements so as to motivate human beings to recognize this pattern for the sake of fostering just political administration wherein all of humanity's capacities can develop toward perfection.

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cognition from data, i.e., knowledge that has been passed down from others, and *cognitio ex principiis* or cognition from principles, i.e., the critical activity of evaluating for oneself knowledge which has been passed down. Kant's Copernican turn is appreciative of both forms of knowledge, but it gives pride of place to the latter, lest one become "a plaster cast" (*Gipsabdruck*) of someone else (KrV A836/B864).

Cf. Hegel's own focus on the subject matter of original and reflective history, and its deficiencies in relation to the "guiding influence" or leadership (*in dieser Führung*) revealed by philosophic history, which "is eternally present to itself and for which there is no past" (24). See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 11-24.

<sup>92</sup> See also Johann Gottfried Von Herder, "Older Critical Forestlet (1767/8)" in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 257-8, for the objection that historians write, by necessity, from a first-person, one-sided perspective which renders *Geschichte*, as a description of a many-sided whole, erroneous and useless. In this piece, Herder's concerns are aimed at Johann Joachim Winckelmann's history of art, specifically, Winckelmann's account of the art of antiquity.

<sup>93</sup> The idea of 'destiny' is an example of an open-ended future that might, or might not, be achieved. The distinction between fate (*Schicksal*) and destiny (*Geshick*) is discussed by David Michael Kleinberg-Levin in *Gestures of Ethical Life: Reading Holderlin's Question of Measure After Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005): "Whereas fate denies us freedom, destiny is an ontological dispensation that grants it" (269).

Subsequently, it was related that the pursuit of this historical purpose anticipates the creation of a world that may be rationally hoped because of a special human ability to develop, apply, and promote reason in oneself and others.

In this chapter, I want to examine the proleptic basis for Kant's philosophy of history by raising concerns over Arthur Danto's association of Kant with what he calls "substantive philosophers of history," whose defining attribute is to offer "prophetic" accounts of the historical future. Danto's use of Kant's philosophy of history serves to launch his critique of other philosophers who offer a closed-ended view of the historical future. According to Danto, these philosophers, exemplified by Hegel and Marx, attempt to write history in the manner of a future known in advance, thus giving a present account of history as a fulfilled whole. My appraisal of Danto's use of Kant in his theory finds that he underestimates the kinds of uncertainty and openness that characterizes the historical essays. Here I argue that Kant's philosophy of history is directional, it does look forward with anticipation of a better future, but his stance is less than certain. Kant's pronouncements on history and progress are always from the standpoint of a spectator, who, denied knowledge of noumena, must instead draw inferences from the phenomena of human actions, which offers only a small but indispensable glimmer of hope because there is no empirical proof that the future will proceed toward the better. Ultimately, the interpretations and arguments presented in this chapter are aimed toward an articulation of Kant's philosophy of history as *proleptic*, not prophetic, and that this anticipatory view can be taken in the present to give hope for the future.

### 3.2 Danto's Substantive Concerns

In *Narration and Knowledge*,<sup>94</sup> Danto's associates Kant with what he calls "substantive philosophers of history," who aim to offer "prophetic" accounts of the historical future. Danto's characterization of Kant as a substantive philosopher of history is admittedly brief and underdeveloped; however, his use of Kant serves to launch his critique of other philosophers who offer a closed-ended view of the historical future. According to Danto, these philosophers, exemplified by GWF Hegel and Karl Marx, attempt to write history with a view of a future known in advance, thus giving a present account of history as a fulfilled whole. Danto claims that Kant often writes in this manner in the historical essays, but my appraisal of his understanding of Kant in this context finds that he underestimates the kinds of uncertainty and openness which characterizes these works. Consequently, I argue that Kant's philosophy of history does look forward with anticipation of a better future, but his stance is *proleptic*, not prophetic, thus showing Danto's misclassification of Kant as a substantive philosopher of history.

In his writings on history, Kant develops a descriptive narrative which can lead to a prescriptive praxis, namely, by embarking on the peculiar task of illuminating guiding threads (*Leitfäden*) to lead his readers toward promoting and taking part in the construction of a better world. This is what Barbara Herman has aptly named "*the proleptic effect*"<sup>95</sup> from the Eighth Thesis of Kant's *Idea for a Universal History from a*

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<sup>94</sup> Arthur Danto, *Narration and Knowledge: With a new introduction by Lydia Goehr and a new conclusion by Frank Ankersmit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). Henceforth, NK.

<sup>95</sup> See Barbara Herman, "A Habitat for Humanity" in *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, eds. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 154. See also, Barbara Herman, *Moral Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 147: "Where a progressive interpretive narrative [of history] is possible, it can

*Cosmopolitan Perspective*;<sup>96</sup> that is, a hopeful vision “whose occurrence can be promoted by its idea” (IaG 8: 27), and which can imbue human beings with hope for the future thus impelling them to help bring about its completion: “The need for *history* is to provide us with a proleptic reason for thinking we might now be living at a time when the responsibility for making the (human) world a more rational place is ours.”<sup>97</sup>

Subsequently, Kant’s philosophy of history can be understood as offering a proleptic vision that can be motivating not only because we ought to work toward its future fulfilment, but also, I add, precisely because *its eventuation is not assured*. In the *Idea* essay, for example, Kant attempts to discover and promote leading clues in history because the advent of a better future world can be undermined by the “crooked timber” of akratic humanity, selfish inclination, and any number of obstacles to progress, which all the more requires a proleptic standpoint to better grasp (*zu fassen*) the burden of history (*die Last von Geschichte*: IaG 8: 31).

That Kant is not only optimistic but also apprehensive over historical progress should seem uncontroversial. The reasons he offers for our warrant to hope for a better world demand serious consideration precisely because of his concerns over the inherent uncertainties presented by historical openness. Danto, whose contributions to analytical interpretations of the philosophy of history are influential and important, seems not to

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establish a social context that allows agents an expanded range of effective moral meaning for their actions and efforts, making possible further development of institutions and of moral character.”

<sup>96</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective* in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, Peace, and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). Henceforth, IaG.

<sup>97</sup> Barbara Herman, “A Habitat for Humanity,” *Ibid.*, 170.

note Kant's uneasiness over the future, and thus, as I will show, very much mischaracterizes Kant as writing in the substantive vein.

### 3.3 Substantive Philosophy of History

Danto dismisses what he calls "substantive philosophy of history" because it attempts to offer predictions of, what are by all accounts, unpredictable future events. He borrows the term from Karl Löwith's ascription of it as "a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning" (NK 7).<sup>98</sup> In *Meaning and History*, Löwith famously argues for what is known as the "secularization hypothesis:" namely, that the notion of historical progress in general discourses of modernity is but a secularization of Christian eschatology (MH 2), which projects a frontside-back picture of the future as driving the past forward. Consequently, Löwith inveighs against philosophers who incorporate a totalizing narrative in their historiography; specifically, "the theological concept of history as a history of fulfilment and salvation" (MH 1).

Similar to Löwith's criticism of these theological implications, Danto views substantive philosophers of history as equally incoherent because they fail to formulate a "projectable pattern" (NK 3-4) that can truthfully foretell the historical future (NK 9). As he puts it, substantive philosophers of history ascribe "temporally inappropriate

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<sup>98</sup> See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1. Henceforth, MH.

descriptions” (NK 14) into history, thereby transgressing the bounds of “temporal provincialism” (NK 126). For Danto, this would entail the writing of history under the light of *fatuus* fire, which is more illusion than illumination from figures such as Giambattista Vico, Hegel, and Marx, but before doing so he specifically draws from Kant’s *Idea* essay to identify him as one such philosophical historian, a classification which I believe is a mistake.

In order to show why Danto is wrong to start his work with Kant, I wish to take as my point of departure Lydia Goehr’s claim that Danto’s reservations with substantive philosophers of history draws inspiration from Jacob Burckhardt’s view that “a future known in advance is an absurdity” (NK xxxix). In *Reflections on History*, Burckhardt situates his work in contradistinction to providentialist philosophers of history by writing that any attempt to provide foreknowledge of the future is not only absurd, “it is beyond our power as well.”<sup>99</sup> Although one can identify a predictive strand in Burckhardt’s own writing,<sup>100</sup> Goehr states that Danto saw Burckhardt not as a prophet, but rather as an “anticipator, where anticipation as opposed to prophecy, so Danto argues, is a perfectly reasonable or logical notion that historians may employ” (NK xl).<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, Danto’s espousal of the Burckhardtian stance informs his focal concern over historical “openness”

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<sup>99</sup> See Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, trans. M.D.H. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1979), 44. Perhaps it is worth noting that Löwith, like Danto, begins *Meaning in History* with an explication of Burckhardt, who he views as “completely free of modern prejudice, in particular, of that of Hegel, who saw in history a cumulative process of progressive development” (MH 31). In her introduction, Goehr states that she believes that Danto came to Burckhardt through Löwith (NK, xli).

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., “The Age of Revolution” in Jacob Burckhardt, *Judgments on History and Historians*, trans. Harry Zohn (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 223-78. Burckhardt was not at all optimistic about Europe’s future, himself offering a prediction of a future crises sweeping over the continent.

<sup>101</sup> Goehr states her accord with Danto’s Burckhardtianism in *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). Goehr’s concern is with Hegel’s philosophy insofar as it objectifies events of the past, present, and future: “In the view, if the past was turned into a thing of the past, so, by intellectual extension, were the present and the future: all history was placed in a closed domain and systematically controlled” (138).

(NK 353), which he takes to allow for narrative redescriptions, but is logically dissolved, and hence closed off, by substantive philosophers of history.

*Pace* Danto, my reading of Kant's philosophy of history understands it to escape his characterization by satisfying exactly what Goehr claims he finds so reasonably acceptable in Burckhardt's historiography; namely, that Kant's philosophy of history (i) *anticipates* a future course of history, one that is rationally possible, even if it might not obtain, and (ii) exhibits the kind of *openness* which Danto thinks is crucial for narrative redescriptions. Toward this goal, the following sections will challenge Danto's use of Kant's philosophy of history by demonstrating its *proleptic* vision of human futurity, which is certainly optimistic, yet hardly prophetic.

### 3.4 *The Substantive Historian as False Prophet*

Danto begins his characterization of substantive philosophers of history by marking a distinction between "descriptive" and "explanatory" theories of history (NK 2). Using Kant's examples of the contributions to science made by Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton, Danto suggests that a descriptive theory offers a predictable pattern of history (à la Kepler's), while an explanatory theory shows why this pattern holds (à la Newton's):

It was Kepler who succeeded in...discovering...that a planet's positions could be located on an ellipse with the sun as one focus. This would be like having what I have called a descriptive theory. It remained for Newton to explain why this particular pattern held; that is, to offer an explanatory theory. On occasion, philosophers of history have seen their task in terms exactly analogous to these. **Kant, for example, writes in this manner**" (NK 3: my bold emphasis).

In this passage, Danto identifies Kant as putting forward the ambitious project of displaying both theories (descriptive and explanatory) in his philosophy of history, specifically citing from the analogy Kant draws between history and science from the opening paragraph of *Idea*.<sup>102</sup> However, does Kant write in the manner of Kepler and Newton? One problem with Danto's allusion to this analogy is that Kant is not aiming to produce a strict scientific description of history. Science aims to describe consistent mechanism (empirical laws and regularities), like both Kepler and Newton did to the crisp mechanisms of planetary movement. Danto's ascription of this manner of writing introduces a fact-value dualism into Kant's philosophy of history, but the problem with this attribution is that mechanism has no value; it just is: mechanisms are just positivistic accounts of other mechanisms, and Kant's aim is not to produce a value-free account of human actions in history, but something of much greater value. As Kant puts it in the third *Critique*, on the one hand, reason out not abandon the mechanism nature employs in it products, "since without mechanism we cannot gain insight into the nature of things;" while on the other hand, "it is an equally necessary maxim of reason not to bypass the principle of ends" (KdU 5:411). Teleological judgments are about purposes, which transcend mechanical explanation insofar as they have heuristic, *regulative* employment.

Whereas for Kant, although human nature is in part mechanism, the mechanism of the human being's natural constitution provides a clue to something of infinitely more

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<sup>102</sup> Danto specifically quotes the following passage from *Idea*: "[W]e may hope that what strikes us in the actions of individuals as confused and fortuitous may be recognized, in the history of the entire species, as a steadily advancing but slow development of man's original capacities .... Let us see if we can succeed in finding a guiding principle for such a history, and then leave it to nature to bring forth the man who will be fit to compose it. Thus nature produced a Kepler who an unexpected means of reducing the eccentric orbits of the planets to definite laws, and a Newton who explained these laws in terms of a universal natural cause" (IaG 8: 18).

worth, which is the hidden “intent of nature” for the development of our free, rational constitution and moral vocation.<sup>103</sup> The guiding threads Kant is interested to discern in his essays on history are taken from an observation of positivistic natural laws but are given to sketch out an understanding of the value-laden freedom of humanity.<sup>104</sup>

Mechanistic actions are heteronomously derived, but freely willed, autonomous actions transcend mere mechanism, as conveyed in *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*:<sup>105</sup>

Hence reason can use the mechanism of nature, in the form of selfish inclinations, which by their nature oppose one another even externally, as a means to make room for reason’s own end, legal regulation, and to thereby promote and secure, insofar as it is within the power of the state to do so, both internal and external peace (ZeF 8: 366-67).

With regard to “the mechanism of nature,” Kant’s writing in the historical essays share some similarities with David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For example, Hume’s 1847 *Enquiry* argues for an empirical basis for understanding of the uniformity of human actions, which recognizes a predictive regularity in human behavior analogous to the blind, yet consistent, causal interactions of billiard balls:

It is universally acknowledged, that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always

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<sup>103</sup> Paul Guyer claims that “the fundamental but indemonstrable value of freedom itself is the heart of Kant’s moral theory.” I believe the same can be said about his essays on history. See Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 131.

<sup>104</sup> Allen Wood argues that although some commentators (he singles out Alasdair MacIntyre) view empirical anthropology as studying deterministic causal mechanisms of human action, “Kant regards the empirical world of nature as a strictly deterministic causal mechanism, in which no free agency could be found, and therefore that he locates our free agency in the noumenal world, inaccessible to empirical investigation. He therefore also infers that if human beings are considered merely as parts of the natural world that is accessible to our empirical cognition, human actions cannot be regarded as free.” See Allen W. Wood, “Kant and the Problem of Human Nature” in *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*, eds. Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

<sup>105</sup> See Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, Peace, and History*. Henceforth, ZeF.

produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit; these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprizes, which have ever been observed among mankind.

As well as,

Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by shewing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials, from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour.

And finally,

Should a traveller, returning from a far country, bring us an account of men, wholly different from any, with whom we were ever acquainted; men, who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition, or revenge; who knew no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit; we should immediately, from these circumstances, detect the falsehood, and prove him a liar, with the same certainty as if he had stuffed his narration with stories of centaurs and dragons, miracles and prodigies.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, Rousseau writes in his 1754 *Second Discourse*,

Nature commands every animal, and beasts obey. Man feels the same impetus, but he knows he is free to go along or to resist; and it is above all in the awareness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is made manifest. For physics explains in some way the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; *but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the feeling of this power, we find only purely spiritual acts, about which the laws of mechanics explain nothing.*<sup>107</sup>

The Preface to Kant's *Idea* essay states as much as Hume and Rousseau in these passages when it comes to discerning the regular *appearance* of the human will in accordance with

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<sup>106</sup> See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60-1. Henceforth, ECU.

<sup>107</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality in Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 45. My italics.

*natural laws*, but it differs especially from the Humean picture insofar as Kant foresees that,

however deeply concealed their causes may be, if we consider the free exercise of the human will *broadly*, we can ultimately discern a regular progression in its appearances. History further lets us hope that, in this way, that which seems confused and irregular when considering particular individuals can nonetheless be recognized as a steadily progressing, albeit slow development of the original capacities of the entire species (IaG 8: 17).

The appearance of the human will has two possible sources of motivation: natural mechanism and rational freedom. The former is tied to nomological necessity, i.e., natural causality, and it is found operating causally in the phenomenal realm. Hume famously wrote that causation is one of three constituents (along with resemblance and contiguity) which,

so far as regards the mind...bind the parts of the universe together, or connect us with any person or object exterior to ourselves. For as it is by means of thought only that any thing operates upon our passions, and as these are the only ties of our thoughts, they are really to us the *cement of the universe*, and all the operations of the mind must, in a great measure, depend on them" (ECU 145)

For Kant, such dependence is akin to placing the rational will in cement boots and throwing it into a river, effectively drowning its nonconformity to laws of nature. Rather, Kant argues that the will, conceived as self-legislating, is not dependent on, but is independent from "everything empirical and hence from nature generally .... Without this freedom...which alone is practical a priori, no moral law is possible and no imputation in accordance with it" (KpV 5: 97).

Hume's mechanistic account of the human mind is not Kant's only target; Leibniz, too, comes under scrutiny for describing what Kant derides as a subject who is no more than an "*automaton materiale*, [whom would exhibit] nothing better than the freedom of a turnspit, which, once it is wound up, also accomplishes its movements itself" (KpV *Loc. cit.*).

Against these clockwork accounts, Kant posits freedom emanating from the noumenal realm in which human beings enjoy membership in the world of understanding, and thus his hopeful vision of human progress is based on the capacity human beings have to *choose* rational ends rather than succumbing thoughtlessly to mechanism. Natural mechanism might provide phenomenal uniformity, but it is noumenal freedom which makes possible universality. Subsequently, human meaning derives from human freedom; mechanism *per se*, is not meaningful.<sup>108</sup>

In a similar vein, commentators on Kant's teleological account of history often remark that it was written before Charles Darwin's influential innovations in the domain of natural selection; among other things implying that Kant's model is antiquated and invincible, if not outright wrong.<sup>109</sup> However, these concerns also highlight the contrast between a positivistic account of mechanism and Kant's purposive theory of history. For example, unlike Kant, Darwin's theory of evolution purges meaning and value from an understanding of human origins and destinations; removes any reference to

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<sup>108</sup> The fact-value distinction in history is brought up by Karl Popper using the language of *clues* or *guiding threads* in the conclusion to *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 2: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 1966): "Historicism is out to find **The Path** on which mankind is destined to walk; it is out to discover The Clue to History...or The Meaning of History....But is there such a clue? *Is there a meaning in history?*....I answer: *History has no meaning*....There is no history of mankind, there are only many histories of all kinds of aspects of human life....But is there really no such thing as a universal history in the sense of a concrete history of mankind? There can be none" (256-57: my bold emphasis). Briefly, among other reasons, Popper denies any approach to history which assumes a "path" which implies a course toward an end of history, with the path serving as a kind of implicit law. Danto views Popper as a precursor of C.G. Hempel's deductive-nomological model of "covering laws" in "The Function of General Laws in History," *Journal of Philosophy*, 39 (1942): 35-38, in which historians (and others) offer "explanation sketches" denoting a law that cannot possibly be tested but is implied. Moreover, because there can be a wide panoply of such sketches, there can be a diverse parade of such paths.

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant, History, and the Idea of Moral Development," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1, January 1999, pp. 60, 75; and Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Philosophy of History" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, 260.

providence and purpose; and struggles to accept notions of directionality and progress.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, the descriptive and explanatory models of the scientific Kepler and Newton analogy, if understood only along mechanistic lines, fails to consider Kant's own use of it as a pathway to greater meaning, namely, the freedom from which to, for better or worse, take responsibility in the worlds human beings create. Consequently, Danto's use of this analogy seems exaggerated because Kant is not at all writing in the same "manner" as Kepler and Newton, but rather as trying to ascertain guiding principles for a conception of history "according to a definite plan of nature" (IaG 8: 18) in which the goal is to transcend its origins. And here Kant is quite explicit in that the teleological principles which are posited in the *Idea* essay are for the sake of seeing whether a species-specific historical account "could be given" (IaG 8: 17) in order to avoid acquiescence to the idea that human history is naught but an anomic, absurd course (which is unacceptable to reason).

However, Danto's main issue is that the substantive philosopher's standpoint lies ahead of the supposed objects of their historical knowledge, which places severe

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<sup>110</sup> Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* (New York: Modern Library, 1993 [1859]) is held as one of the last nails in the coffin for notions of teleology with regard to final causality, but it does not abandon causal connections altogether. While Darwin advances his idea of species origin and evolution, he never actually applied this talk to the origins of life itself, and he does not entirely remove talk of their being "ends" in creation when he was beginning to formulate his theory. For example, in his *The Foundations of the Origin of Species: Two essays written in 1842 and 1844*, ed. Francis Darwin (Cambridge University Press, 1909), Darwin writes in 1842 about how greater things emerge from misery and violence: "From death, famine, rapine, and the concealed war of nature we can see that the highest good, which we can conceive, the creation of the higher animals has directly come," which famously receives poetic modification in the final paragraph of the 1859 *Origin*, suggesting not only an intentional creation of life, but a purpose for suffering: "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved (*Origin*, 648-49)." The upshot being that natural selection is a consequence of life, not a cause of life; the latter of which we have to *presuppose* an intentional creator (as does Kant), whether divine or natural. The mechanism of natural selection might suffice to do away with any notion of purposes and final ends, but it cannot account for first causes.

constraints on her epistemic capacity to write history: that is, she cannot acquire knowledge of the relevant historical propositions because the only way for her to do so would be to do the impossible – to witness historical events that she cannot witness, as the future events she cannot witness have concluded. According to Danto, substantive philosophers of history thus attempt to write history as a totality, which involves a vision of history as fulfilling some form of *prophecy*:

[S]ubstantive philosophies of history...are clearly concerned with what I shall term *prophecy* .... A prophet treats the present in a perspective ordinarily available only to future historians, to whom present events are past, and for whom the meaning of present events is discernible” (NK 9).

Danto’s use of Kant’s *Idea* essay serves to begin his characterization of substantive philosophers of history as “concerned with the whole of history: the whole past and whole future: the whole of time” (NK 4). Consequently, because Kant attempts to provide a priori “guiding threads” to historical understanding in both descriptive and explanatory modes, he, like other substantive philosophers of history, is seen by Danto as writing in the prophetic vein of “describing the present in the light of things which have not as yet happened” (NK 12).

*Ex facie*, Danto’s characterization of Kant writing in the manner of substantive philosophers of history appears plausible. Kant’s writings on history articulate a uniquely human development in society and in oneself, “from the grossest barbarity to the highest level of sophistication” (IaG 8: 20) framed within a hopeful narrative of the purposive unfolding of human progress. Moreover, while not discussed by Danto, as I showed in chapter two, the “idea” in Kant’s *Idea* essay is an implicit allusion to the

“ideas of reason” or *Vernunftideen* of the *Critique*.<sup>111</sup> In this capacity, the transcendental ideas of reason strive to unify and subsume all particular experiences under increasingly higher principles of knowledge (KrV A321/B378), and “consider all experiential cognition as determined through an absolute totality of conditions” (KrV A327/B384). Subsequently, the transcendental ideas serve as necessary *guides* to the unconditioned, and can be used to grasp normative standards. The Ideas are thus models that can be followed; however, far from offering any prophetic account of certainty, these ideas are not actually known to us in the world but are treated “as heuristic fictions” (*als heuristische Fiktionen*: KrV A771/B779). Although the ideas of reason are explicitly sketched as heuristic fictions in the *Critique*, they are implicitly drawn by Kant in *Idea* as a priori guiding threads. As we have seen, for Kant, there is no empirical proof that history will progress continuously, much less culminate in special perfection.

And yet, Kant believes that human beings are justified in hoping that the future can be better than the present. In this respect, it has been noted that Kant’s writing of history has the form of a sermon aimed at those in a congregation nearing despair:

You have no right to abdicate, since you can never be sure that progress is not a reality; it is your duty, your inborn duty, to act *als ob*—as if progress were indeed determined. This is a far cry from the assured, self-satisfied, complacent nineteenth-century feeling with which the term progress came to be associated.<sup>112</sup>

Kant’s aim in offering a proleptic vision of the future is tied to an ongoing faith that we can ascertain a principle in history that “allows us to *hope* that, however deeply concealed their causes may be...we can ultimately discern a regular progression in its

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<sup>111</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Henceforth, KrV.

<sup>112</sup> Frank E. Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 90.

appearances” (IaG 8: 17) in order to defeat what seems like the aimless and meaningless flow of human activities. Therefore, Kant admits that there can be no empirical evidence to support the view that history is progressing towards a certain goal, but rather if a philosophical historian is able to discern a guiding thread behind all these actions and events as a whole, and then via the formation of a rational idea unite them into a systematic account of how history ought to lead, then these ideas can serve as models for rational hope from which to call upon others to join us in the completion of this possible, proleptic vision.

Subsequently, although Kant’s universal history is set up early as an example of how Danto’s main targets write history in the prophetic mode, it is an unfair characterization to imply that Kant’s philosophy satisfies the “substantive” criteria of (i) attempting to truthfully prophesy the future, and of (ii) exhibiting closedness in its idea of historical unfolding. A close reading of Kant’s historical works reveals that he writes neither with firm prophetic expectation nor with a closed stance to historical destiny (toward which a proleptic standpoint would be unnecessary). For example, we can see this in the opening of the *Idea* essay from which Danto draws. There Kant merely expresses the “hope” to discern a “regular progression” to history, as well as to decide “whether it is after all possible to formulate” a teleological conception of universal history” (IaG 8: 17). By the end of the essay, the impression that Kant leaves is not one of confidence or assurance toward the future, but of an optimism which expresses the *reasonable hope* that “man’s destiny can be fulfilled here on earth” (IaG 8:30) by avoiding real historical pitfalls and obstacles to progress. Hence the need for the ideas of reason that can serve as “guiding threads” (*Leitfäden*) in history.

Moreover, I believe that in the Eighth Proposition of *Idea* Kant frustrates any reading which attempts to classify him as operating with prophetic assurance by writing that the discovery of a guiding thread to history can serve to shed our laziness and apathy if we could already possess knowledge of future rewards: “human nature is such that it cannot be indifferent even in consideration of the most remote epoch that shall affect our species, ***if only it can be expected with certainty***” (IaG 8: 27: my bold emphasis: *wenn sie nur mit Sicherheit erwartet werden kann*). In this passage, Kant not only puts forward the notion that if human beings knew for sure the positive returns of their rational nature, they would be enthusiastically motivated to “hasten the arrival of this point in time,” but, also, *that they cannot know this for sure*, and must instead seek out “faint signs that we are approaching this point” (*Loc. cit.*). *If only*, indeed.

Consequently, with such apprehensions explicitly stated, Kant’s *Idea* essay seems easily positioned against Danto’s characterization of how substantive philosophies of history offer assured prophecies of the historical future (NK 9). Far from being a credulous paraclete of Enlightenment optimism or exhibiting a Pollyannaish, facile belief in a brighter future, Kant refrains from playing the assertive oracle because of a harbored unease which recognizes that the satisfaction of human destinal goods might not be achieved. As Reinhart Koselleck puts it, Kant’s philosophy of history “is replete with reservation serving to prevent an overflow into a utopia dispensing with all previous experience.”<sup>113</sup> In other words, Kant’s tempered optimism acknowledges how the ends of rationally justified hope for a better world might fail to obtain, which is more in line

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<sup>113</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 198.

with an acceptance of the vicissitudes of historical openness than an assurance of historical closedness.

Danto's concerns over historical closedness is expressed in how he takes substantive philosophers of history to speak "of the present in the light of a future treated as a *fait accompli*" (NK 9). To treat the future as an accomplished fact implies the idea of historical closure or lack of openness toward the future in its writing and rewriting. As Goehr puts it, "What is always at stake for Danto is the presence of openness. To leave the future open is to make no substantive claim upon it" (NK xli). If substantive philosophers of history see the future as a *fait accompli*, they write history as if it were a closed book, one filled with rigid rather than fluid interpretations. Which, again, is not how Kant writes.

### 3.5 Kant's Philosophy of History Relates an Ongoing Project

Broadly construed, as touched on in chapter two (*Supra*, pp. 39-40), Kant's philosophy of history relates the *poietic* ability that human beings have to make this world according to an ever-approximating movement toward the end of the Highest Good in the world, which is more than a "mere wish;" it is a need arising from reason (KpV 5: 143n). Kant consistently puts forward the *poietic* power of human reason to freely set the goal of making a better world, a goal that is made possible by human autonomy. Moreover, Kant's portrayal of this capacity in his philosophy of can be instructive in providing clues that can lead us to practical conclusions about how to better shoulder the

challenges of history. In this sense, Kant acknowledges the many obstacles, both present and future, that human beings ought to be motivated to surpass.

Subsequently, Danto's worries over historical closure is an interesting, if not odd, concern; especially, because of how Kant's philosophy avoids this classification by specifically stressing the *precarious openness of the future*. In Kant's systematic and historical writings, openness provides as much peril as promise. For example, in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*,<sup>114</sup> Kant acknowledges that human beings might not be able to increasingly approach the ideal of the highest good envisaged in the kingdom of ends, and that in order to promote historical progress we have to unavoidably take responsibility for its achievement "with all of our prudence and moral illumination" (ApH 7: 329).

Consequently, one can see how Kant's writings in both his historical and systematic works actually frustrates Danto's characterization of how he writes in the prophetic manner of knowing a future state of affairs in advance. Moreover, there are similar passages of such openness running through Kant's early writings; for example, in his pre-critical 1755 *Universal Natural History (Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels)*, wherein he writes that "Creation is never completed [*Die Schöpfung ist niemals vollendet*]. Though it has once started, but will never cease. It is always busy in bringing forth more scenes of nature, new things and new worlds."<sup>115</sup> In

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<sup>114</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. Robert Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Henceforth, ApH.

<sup>115</sup> Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, trans. Stanley L. Jaki (Edinburgh: Scottish Academy Press, 1981), 1: 314, 244. Henceforth, ANG.

a telling passage from this work, Kant seems to anticipate the critic that would equate his speculative forecasts with assurance:

I am not so devoted to the consequences which my theory offers that I should not acknowledge how the conjecture about the successive expansion of creation through endless spaces containing material for that purpose cannot fully counter the objection that it is beyond proof. Meanwhile, however, I hope from those who are in a position to appreciate levels of probability, that such a map of infinity, although it touches on a plan that seems destined to be concealed forever from human understanding, will not for that reason immediately be seen as a fantasy, especially when we take the analogy as an aid which must always show us the way in such cases where the understanding lacks the guiding threads of indubitable proofs (ANG 1: 315).

Similarly, this ongoing poetic activity is not only confined to the fecundity of nature, but applies not less to the unfolding of history, wherein the fulfillment of human destiny is always at stake specifically because of an ongoing and open orientation to futurity. For example, in *Theory and Practice*<sup>116</sup> Kant argues that human progress “may at times be *interrupted* but never *broken off*” (TP 8: 309), which is reiterated in the form of a duty which is warranted by rational hope in *Toward Perpetual Peace*:

If it is a duty to realize a condition of public right, and if there is well founded hope that this can be attained, even if only in the form of an **endlessly progressing approximation of it**, then the perpetual *peace* that follows the peace treaties that have been concluded up to now...is not an empty idea, but rather a task which, carried out gradually, steadily moves toward its goal (ZeF 8: 386: my bold emphasis).

Perhaps more famously, this unbroken, ongoing, endless activity is captured in the Fourth Proposition of *Idea* insofar as “unsociable sociability” (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*) reflects the tension between the creative and destructive aspects of human progress (IaG 8: 20-

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<sup>116</sup> Kant, *On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice* in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld. Henceforth, TP.

21). As put by J.B. Schneewind, “Kant allows – indeed, he insists – that progress toward the perfection of the species is nowhere near an end. Our unsocial drives never disappear, even when society improves.”<sup>117</sup> Hence, through many examples from his writings Kant offers a philosophically informed historiographical awareness of a perpetual, open-ended movement toward, but never quite at, historical completion, which is also articulated in the second part of *Contest of the Faculties*,<sup>118</sup> wherein Kant continues much of the work in his previous historical writings with the added contribution of attempting to forecast human futurity.

### 3.5 *Progress in History is a Story of Approximation*

In *The Question Renewed: Is Humankind Continually Improving?* Kant begins by making a distinction between the kinds of predictions and forecasts one can make with regard to (i) natural phenomena using the known laws of nature (as with eclipses of the sun and moon), and (ii) foretelling the future of human affairs and the improvement of the human race (SdF 7: 83). Kant writes that the future of cannot be divined from our understanding and application of physical laws because the willful activity of human bodies is different than the mechanistic movements of physical bodies. Thus, with regard to prophecy, Kant holds that only one endowed with supernatural powers of prognostication could foretell the future with certainty: a power which we mere mortals

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<sup>117</sup> See J.B. Schneewind, “Good Out of Evil: Kant and the Idea of Unsocial Sociability” in *Kant’s Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, eds. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 104.

<sup>118</sup> Kant, *The Contest of the Faculties, Part 2* in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld. Henceforth, SdF.

lack.

However, Kant does believe that we can still make attempts to forecast the future of humanity, though he writes that “whoever plays at prophesy (with neither knowledge nor honesty), from the [priestess of Apollo] to gypsies, can be called a *false prophet*” (SdF 7: 79fn). He does this not from the standpoint of the prophet, however, but rather as a member of a species that possesses the power to affect change in its history through the self-fulfillment of foresight – we can attempt to foretell the future of humanity because we also possess the power (for good or bad) to bring about change in our history: “when the one divining the events himself brings about and arranges the events that he announces in advance” (SdF 7: 80). Moreover, because foresight can work to usher forth the self-fulfillment of the future predictions, such actions must not waiver in their commitment.

In the *Anthropology*, Kant admits that our self-determining freedom carries with it *the capacity to create* a future as directed by the use of the faculty of foresight (*praevisio*), “because it is the condition of all possible practice and of the ends to which the human being relates the use of his powers” (ApH 7: 185-86). Foresight is tied to prediction because it draws from “laws of experience” (ApH 7: 187), unless it claims supernatural provenance, rendering the teller “a specious soothsayer” (ApH 7: 188). Moreover, Kant strongly denies that human beings are capable of prophesying the future, one that is closed-ended (inevitable) by pointing out a fatal contradiction:

All prophecies that foretell an inevitable fate of a people, for which they are themselves still responsible and which therefore is to be brought about by *their own free choice*, contain an absurdity – in addition to the fact that the foreknowledge is useless to them, since they cannot escape from it. For in this unconditional fate (*decretum absolutum*) there is thought to be a *mechanism of freedom*, by which the concept contradicts itself (ApH 7: 189).

This absurdity is aimed not only to false prophets of decline, for example, to the Jeremiahan wails of the old Jewish prophets, but also to false prophets of progress, e.g., plotting politicians who create needs to then satisfy (SdF 7: 80). As we can see, in Kant's philosophy of history, the foundation of progress in history is freedom, which is open-ended and denied *eo ipso* from the fatalism of the prophetic standpoint.

Contra Danto's critique of substantive philosophers of history as trying to tell a "story before the story can be told" (NK 11) or to "write the history of what happens before it has happened" (NK 13), in this and other passages, Kant recognizes that human freedom has as much a positive potential to effect progress in history as it does a negative potential to forestall advancement or usher in decline. Consequently, instead of playing the distant-eyed prophet, Kant foresees that the human power to usher in progress poses a problem for prophetic pronouncements, for precisely what occludes our vision of the future is our freedom to act in good or evil ways. In a passage worth quoting at length, Kant writes:

If the human race, considered as a whole, were found to be moving forward and in the process of progressing even for a great length of time, **one could still not be certain that the epoch of regression is not setting in precisely at this point in time by virtue of the physical constitution of our species.** And conversely, if it is moving backward in an ever-speedier decline toward the worse, one must not despair that this is not precisely the point in time where the turning point (*punctum flexus contrarii*) could be found, whereby the course of the human race, due to

the moral constitution of our species, turns again toward the better. For we are speaking here of freely acting beings, beings who can be *told* in advance what they *ought* to do, but for whom it cannot be *predicted* what they in fact *will* do, and who, when truly bad circumstances prevail, know to derive from the feeling of the afflictions that they have brought upon themselves an even stronger motivation to make things better than they had been before this state.—But “poor mortals (says the Abbot *Coyer*), nothing among you is constant other than inconstancy!” .... **It is our misfortune, however, that we are unable to adopt an absolute point of view when trying to predict free actions.** For this, exalted above all human wisdom, would be the point of view of *providence*, which extends even to *free* human actions. And although man may see the latter, he cannot *foresee* them with certainty (SdF 7: 83: my bold emphases).<sup>119</sup>

In the passage above, Kant argues that we lack a God’s-eye view of history, and given the equal propensity of human action for evil<sup>120</sup> as well as for good, our confidence in prognosticating an accurate picture of the future, especially one of progress, calls for measure and restraint. Moreover, in accordance with the freedom of rational beings, Kant argues in the *Critique* that human beings possess a capacity for actions that are “partly moved and partly restricted by moral laws” (KrV A809/B837), and, as he claims in the *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals*, that the human possession of this moral capacity is actually impossible to deny,<sup>121</sup> for only it allows for both moral correctness and moral error.

However, “even without the gift of prophecy,” and knowledge of a determinate

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<sup>119</sup> See IaG 8: 20 and *Conjecture* MAM 8: 118 in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, Peace, and History* for how progress is always susceptible to interruption and decline.

<sup>120</sup> See Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, eds. Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Rel. 6: 83.

<sup>121</sup> Kant, *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). E.g., in order for reason “to think of itself as practical” (GMS 4: 458).

time, we can in measured and restrained way, still have hope for progress:

In light of circumstances and signs prevalent at present I propose that the human race shall attain this end and herewith also predict, *even without the gift of the prophet's vision*, a progression of the human race from then on toward the better that cannot be completely reversed. For such a phenomenon in human history *will not be forgotten*, since it has uncovered a predisposition and power in human nature the likes of which no politician would have been able to cleverly deduce from the course of events to date. Only nature and freedom, unified in the human race according to internal principles of right, can promise it, *but the time of its occurrence remains indeterminate* and an event of chance (SdF 7: 88: my emphasis).

The indeterminate timeframe of when human history makes good on its promise is its rational nature cannot be tabulated with firm expectation nor by individual experience:

There must exist some experience in the human race which, as an event, indicates that the latter has a makeup and capacity to be both the *cause* of human progress toward the better and (since this is supposed to be the act of a being endowed with freedom) the *agent* thereof. But a given cause allows one to predict an event as an effect if those circumstances that contribute to it prevail. That the latter must prevail at some point can be predicted in a general manner, just as the calculation of probabilities in a game, **but it cannot be determined whether this will occur in my lifetime and whether I will have the experience that would confirm the prediction** (SdF 7: 84: my bold emphasis).

Finally, with regard to Danto's concerns over historical openness, in "What is Enlightenment?"<sup>122</sup> Kant treats the notion of enlightenment as a *perpetually unfinished*, ongoing endeavor. With regard to history, he makes the important observation that the views of one historically situated standpoint cannot bind those of its successors, and that this openness is the very nature of enlightenment and the heart of progress:

One age cannot enter into an alliance on oath to put the next age in a position where it would be impossible for it to extend and correct its knowledge, particularly on such important matters, to clear up errors, or to make any progress whatsoever in enlightenment. This would be a crime

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<sup>122</sup> Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, Peace, and History*. Henceforth, Auf.

against human nature, whose original destiny lies precisely in such progress (Auf 8: 39).

This passage by itself is, I believe, enough to assuage Danto's worries over a lack of openness in Kant's writing of history. By famously stating that we do not live in "an enlightened age," but rather "in an age of enlightenment" (Auf 8: 40), Kant argues that the present age, and subsequent ages, are working toward, but can only approximate, historical completion.

### 3.6 Closing Remarks

The concerns, passages, and interpretations offered above from Kant's writings should serve to refute Danto's characterization of Kant as writing in the closed-ended, prophetic style of substantive philosophers. For Kant, ideas of enlightenment, history, and social progress are fraught with moral frustration, and his historical essays are acutely attuned not only to the vagaries of history, but also to repeated, empirical instances of horrendous inhumanity. Because of these dangers, Kant sets out to apprehend a possible direction to history because the future fulfillment of the species is anything but obvious and full of impediments. However, without such obstacles and challenges, a philosophy of history would be unnecessary to help lead our thinking and acting, and, as I hope to have demonstrated in this paper, Kant's manner of writing in his historical works escapes Danto's association of it with substantive philosophy of history because it values and recognizes historical openness in a *proleptic*, and not prophetic, vision.

## CHAPTER 4

### HOPE, HAPPINESS, AND HISTORY†

*Athenians*: Hope, danger's comforter, may be indulged in by those who have abundant resources. If one already has solid advantages to fall back upon, one can indulge in hope. But hope is by nature an expensive commodity, and those who are risking their all on one cast find out what it means only when they are already ruined.<sup>123</sup>

[Kant's postulate of the immortality of the soul] condemns the intolerability of extant things and confirms the spirit of its recognition. That no reforms within the world sufficed to do justice to the dead, that none of them touched upon the wrong of death—this is what moves Kantian reason to hope against reason. The secret of his philosophy is the unthinkability of despair.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4.1 Hope as Both Absence and Presence

In this chapter, I want to trace the contours of Kant's philosophy of history by following the connections between the constituent roles of 'hope' (*Hoffnung*) and 'happiness' (*Glückseligkeit*) in 'history' (*Geschichte*) by again turning to his systematic and historical works, which are necessary to offering a more nuanced and complimentary understanding of Kant's proleptic vision of historical progress. Specifically, my explication of Kant's views on hope, happiness, and history should succeed in raising questions over an

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<sup>123</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. R. Crawley (New York: Modern Library, 1982), 353 (V. 103).

<sup>124</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 385.

interpretation of the historical justifications for hope, e.g., as seen Yovel's distinction between "wild hope and justified hope" (KPH 108).

Yovel argues that while "Kant tries to keep the notion of hope within the limits of rationalism .... the notion in itself tends to transcend such limits .... it links one to the final goal not through the latter's actuality but through the representation of its possibility" (*Loc. cit.*). Yovel is right to attach hope to a future possibility. The object of hope for this final goal is the happiness merited by bring about the highest good as a moral world, which, because of its ideality, "although hope also affords a particular kind of satisfaction, this satisfaction stems from the abstract possibility rather than the actualization of the desired object" (KPH 109). Yovel is again correct in his appraisal, but I believe that, not just in the form of an abstract possibility, he is leaving out how Kant believes that human beings can take hope from the past and present, as witnesses to signs that can also serve to represent and to support the belief that it is not foolish to work toward the goal of the highest good in the world.

Consequently, this characterization raises questions not only about the possibility for such happiness, whether its advent can be brought about, but also about the stance and commitments one can have in discerning discreet, historical appearances of the object of hope (happiness as the realization of the highest good) as being something present in the world, i.e., as an actual indicator from which we can continue to take and give hope, e.g., as found in Kant's claim that we can take a lead from certain historical events that demonstrate a "moral tendency [,a] character that not only lets one hope for progress toward the better *but rather already is* itself such progress, to the extent that the capacity

for such progress is sufficient for now” (SdF 7: 85, my emphasis).

On my reading, the appearance of such signs refer to immanent instances of happiness, for only morally happy, and hence morally worthy, individuals can create a world for the better. Moreover, not only are such Kantian agents acting from abstract notions of future hope, but are themselves actual, virtuous representations of present happiness itself. Consequently, there appears to be an added basis for historical hope which is more than just an “abstract possibility.”

I first want to orient the chapter with an understanding of how Kant’s connection between happiness and history is inextricably tied to the question of ‘hope,’ one of three seminal and fundamental questions which were famously posed in *The Canon of Pure Reason* of the *Critique*: “All interest of my reason...is united in the following three questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?” (KrV A805/B833). The first question concerns the epistemological limits of the *Critique*, and the second concerns the moral subject matter of Kant’s practical philosophy. Kant answers these questions via the language of self-determination: we can know nature as ordered by human thought, and we ought to act from the self-legislation of moral duties. The third question follows on the heels of the preceding two, “If I do what I should, what may I then hope?” Kant answers this question by positing hope as the satisfaction of human happiness, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul (KrV A811/B839), which finds further expression in the 1788 second *Critique* as necessary postulates for the processive, albeit endlessly deferred, production of the *summum bonum* or highest good (KpV 5: 122-24).

These three questions acquired an added entry that served to enframe Kant's critical project and the question of hope under the rubric of philosophical anthropology. Piggybacking on the thesis of his 1798 *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which described human beings as straddling the realms of nature and freedom as possessors of a unique *capacity* for reason (ApH 7: 321), Kant reiterated this incomparable characteristic in the Introduction to his 1800 *Logic*, wherein he asked a fourth question, "4. What is man?" (VL 9:25).<sup>125</sup> Subsequently, consistent with his description of human being in the early sociopolitical essays (e.g., in the 1784 *Idea* and 1795 *To Perpetual Peace [Zum ewigen Frieden]*), Kant argues in the *Logic* that we can understand human being as a species striving toward the utmost development of its rational capacities, and that all four questions can be classified under anthropology because the question of human being subsumes all the rest (*Loc. cit.*).

These four questions, the Kantian tetrad,<sup>126</sup> interrogate the meaning and relation

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<sup>125</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, trans. Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwartz (New York: Dover, 1974), p. 29. Henceforth, VL.

<sup>126</sup> Absent from this collection of famous questions is the inclusion of another that can, conceivably, subsume all of the rest; namely, a fifth question: What is Life? However, although Kant does not explicitly raise or develop this fundamental question of human life, he does consider the concept of life to reside in, consistent with the theme running through the Kantian tetrad, the spirit of *self-determination*. For example, in his 1766 essay "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer", Kant writes that "life rests on the inner capacity to develop one's self by one's free choice (*Willkür*)" (DSS, 52-53n), which holds uniformly with the view expressed more than twenty years later in the 1788 *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* that (i) life is the capacity of a substance *to determine itself* to act from an internal principle, (ii) of a finite substance *to determine itself* to change, and (iii) of a material substance *to determine itself* to motion or rest as change of its state (MFNS, 105). In *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: the Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1990), Rudolf M. Makkreel questions the latter's third qualification because "Since matter is claimed to be lifeless, it is doubtful whether any material substance can be said to have the capacity to determine itself" (Makkreel, 90). Moreover, in *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Rachel Zuckert notes that for Kant, "it is 'contrary to reason' that 'life should have arisen from the lifeless'" (Zuckert, 125). In other words, Kant believes that life requires a special force, spirit, or power to exist. Life is constituted by dynamic matter, and lifeless matter cannot exhibit what Kant called in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* an "intrinsically purposive form" or self-preserving purposiveness

of human beings and their world, simultaneously natural and moral, and assert that it is the task of philosophy to provide a foundation for hope that is rational, and not blindly wishful or resignedly Panglossian.<sup>127</sup> The crucial distinction being that for Kant there is justification for rational hope that the world *can be improved*, rather than viewing it as already “for the best,” or in irrevocable decline. As Thomas McCarthy writes, “Kant was not willing, as were Augustine and many succeeding Christian thinkers, to leave the earthly city of man to forces of inevitable degeneration and decay.”<sup>128</sup>

Although universal historians like Kant and Augustine attempt to describe a common historical goal for all peoples under a general plan. For Kant, the plan is from nature and its destination points us out of nature. For Augustine, the plan is from God and posits the ultimate goal of Christian salvation as the ending and transcending of history. Subsequently, God’s providence is imposed on history, “the kingdoms of men, their dominations and their servitudes,” as the preordained blueprint that all, without exception, must follow:

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(KdU 5: 421). Subsequently, the answer to the question ‘What is Life?’ involves a response that points to what I call in a developing paper “a *recursive teleology*,” i.e., Life is an end-driven drive wherein the purpose (*Zweck*) of life is life itself.

<sup>127</sup> The reference is to Voltaire’s satirical rendering of Leibnizian theodicy through the character of the metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigologist Dr. Pangloss in *Candide, or Optimism*, trans. Lowell Bair (New York: Bantam Classic, 1981). The character of Candide, by uncritically following the teachings of Pangloss, can be said to have received what Kant calls in the first Critique “*cognitio ex datis*” or cognition from data, i.e., knowledge that has been passed down from others, rather than demonstrating “*cognitio ex principiis*” or cognition from principles (KrV A836/B864), i.e., the critical activity of evaluating for oneself knowledge which has been passed down. Subsequently, we might view Candide as “a plaster cast” (*Gipsabdruck*) of Pangloss, thereby exhibiting what Kant terms in the 1784 *What is Enlightenment?* as either the laziness or cowardice of “immaturity” (Auf 8: 35).

<sup>128</sup> See Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136. McCarthy situates Kant’s proleptic philosophy of history against those of, *inter alios*, Hegel and Marx, both of whom immanentized or brought “back to earth” notions of historical progress.

Thus God is the supreme reality, with his Word and the Holy Spirit—three who are one. He is God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and every body .... He has made man a rational animal, consisting of soul and body .... From him derives every mode of being, every species, every order, all measure, number, and weight .... It is beyond anything incredible that he should have willed the kingdoms of men, their dominations and their servitudes, to be outside the range of the laws of his providence.<sup>129</sup>

In contradistinction to Augustine, it would be a mistake to read Kant's universal history as following the same kind of closed-ended design. Rather, Kant's conception of history is open-ended and can be understood as anticipatory of a better future which we can strive for, even if ultimately we fall short of its fulfillment. Another way of putting this is to say that Kant's philosophy of history, its "idea," does not consider history as it *is*, for the totality of history cannot be known, but only as it appears in order to arrive at regulative principles which can guide human beings toward a moral destiny in which they must take responsibility if it is ever to be achieved. In contradistinction to an Augustinian transcendence of history, the world and history is never left behind, and hope for the goal of future fulfillment in this world always remains.

#### 4.2 *Hope and Happiness: the Highest Good*

The question of hope therefore recognizes not only an absence and but also a presence, namely, the immediate apprehension of a immanent goal for all toward which can lead to a motivation to include in the setting of own personal ends. The question of hope therefore takes on special, *guiding*, significance because it is "simultaneously

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<sup>129</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. 5, Ch. 11, p. 196.

practical and theoretical, so that the practical *leads like a clue (als ein Leitfaden)* to a reply to the theoretical question” (KrV A805/B833); namely, as elucidated by Frederick Rauscher, the “determination of our duties...with... determining causal relations and effects, in this case, happiness.”<sup>130</sup>

Consequently, the attainment of hope as leading to happiness is connected with the highest good. This is why Kant answers the third question of the tetrad by positing *hope as the satisfaction of happiness*: “[A]ll **hope** concerns happiness” (KrV A805/B833). “Happiness,” Kant writes, “is the satisfaction of all our inclinations” (KrV A806/ B834) and is tied to the future attainment of self-interests and desires, i.e., our propensity to be *inclined* toward obtaining one thing vis-à-vis another. Similarly, in the second *Critique*, happiness “is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole existence *everything goes according to his wish and will* (KpV 5: 124). Warner Wick interprets the preceding articulations of happiness by writing in his Introduction to Kant’s *Ethical Philosophy*,

[E]ach person’s ‘interest’ lies in the fulfillment of whatever his many interests happen to be. This Kant calls his happiness. Everybody always seeks happiness in this sense; for here happiness just means the maximum satisfaction of whatever desires one has.<sup>131</sup>

Although Wick is right to identify happiness with personal fulfillment, it is also important to note that in the inauguration of his critical project, which will guide the subjects of practical reason and judgment in his two proceeding *Critiques*, Kant does not stop at these initial formulations. As shown above, because ‘hope’ as the satisfaction of

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<sup>130</sup> See Frederick Rauscher, *Naturalism and Realism in Kant’s Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 157.

<sup>131</sup> Warner Wick, “Introduction: Kant’s Moral Philosophy” in Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Philosophy*, trans. James W. Ellington, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994 [1983]), xxvii.

‘happiness’ follows from, and guides us back to, Kant’s two previous questions of what we can know and should do, we can perceive a sub-question attached to hope, namely, ‘What should I want?’ The question of hope and its subquestion can now be reformulated as, ‘What should I want to hope?’ The answer Kant gives to this hybrid question is that we should want to hope that the satisfaction of our happiness “constitutes the highest good of a world” (KrV A814/B842), i.e., we should want to hope to be “morally worthy” by following practical principles of reason in which *the rational will constitutes the highest good*.

Before proceeding any further, an important distinction needs to be made between two conceptions of the highest good in Kant’s philosophy: one pertains to individuals as realizing happiness in perfect proportion to virtue (see, e.g., KpV 5: 110);<sup>132</sup> the other, which is the focus of this chapter, pertains to the realization of a world made of the actions of such individuals (see, e.g., KrV A808/B836 and RGV 6: 5). The connotation of ‘world’ in (KrV A814/B842) includes both a future world (i.e., a hereafter world), as well as of a future immediate world (i.e., this here world).<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> For instructive analyses of Kant’s conception of the highest good see, Andrews Reath, “Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26, 1988, 593–619; Stephen Engstrom, “The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant’s Moral Theory,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, 1992, 747–80; and Pauline Kleingeld, “What Do the Virtuous Hope For?: Re-reading Kant’s Doctrine of the Highest Good” in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, ed. Hoke Robinson (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995) Vol. 1.1., 91–112

<sup>133</sup> On this distinction, Paul Guyer offers: “Kant’s conception of the highest good in the first *Critique* is often called a ‘religious’ conception rather than a ‘secular’ or even ‘political’ conception of the highest good. Any simple contrast between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ conceptions of the highest good is, however, seriously misleading. Kant’s conception of the highest good in the first *Critique* clearly supposes that morality will be self-rewarding with happiness only in a *future life*....In subsequent accounts, Kant will suggest that we must be able to suppose that morality will produce happiness in *this life*, or more precisely, if not the earthly life of a particular human beings than at least in the earthly course of the human species. So we might distinguish between *future-life* and *present-life* conceptions of the highest good, *transcendent* and *immanent* conceptions, or perhaps most simply between *heavenly* and *earthly* conceptions of the locus where both the morality and the happiness demanded by the ideal of the highest good will be realized.” See

As we have seen, Kant often frames discussions of the highest good as a goal or purpose, one that can be actuated in both an afterworld and in this world. The afterworld goal is described along individualistic lines; the ‘in this world’ goal is described along the lines of community. These distinctive ways of grasping the goal presented by the highest good introduces two stances of duties: one is to oneself – if I do what is required, I can expect to earn the highest good for myself; the other is to others – if I do what is required in community of others, we can expect to earn the highest good for all of ourselves. Fortunately, within the critical and historical writings, Kant alludes to these duties. So, for example, in the second *Critique* Kant argues that the enjoyment of happiness associated with the highest good is one that stands in direct relation to an individual’s own virtue. In this case, each individual person is rewarded for his or her own virtue.

However, in later accounts of the highest good, Kant modifies this individualistic relation to the highest good by claiming that it is something that can be actuated by a community of agents. Moreover, if we understand this account of community as inclusively broad, i.e., consisting of wide, cosmopolitan membership and participation as well as extending over the course of many generations, the goal of the highest good takes the form of a project human beings can work to achieve. Consequently, Kant frames the goal of the highest good as one of progress in history.

Hope is therefore tied to a vision of a world that the principles of reason should lead us to bring about, and it is in this kind of world where the highest good is realized. Consequently, happiness should not be understood only as the satisfaction of inclination,

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Guyer, *The Virtues of Freedom: Selected Essays on Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 284-85.

but also as the realization of the moral ends of virtuous agents.<sup>134</sup> In this sense, happiness obtains when things go right in bringing about the highest good in this world.

Kant's idea that the attainment of this virtuous 'happiness' can contribute to the 'highest good of a world' provides hope because it can be believed of as a real possibility stemming from the capacity of our free, *poietic* power, which works to ground hope as not merely an abstract idea:

I call the world as it would be if it were in conformity with all moral laws (as it **can** be in accordance with the **freedom** of rational beings and **should** be in accordance with the necessary laws of **morality**) a **moral** world. The idea of a moral world thus has objective reality, not as if it pertained to an object of an intelligible intuition (for we cannot even think of such a thing), but as pertaining to the sensible world, although as an object of pure reason. In its practical use and a *corpus mysticum* of the rational beings in it, insofar as their free choice under moral laws has thoroughgoing systematic unity in itself as well as with the freedom of everyone else (KrV A808/B836).

Kant argues that the principles of reason have objective reality in their practical application, "namely, of those actions in conformity with moral precepts which could be encountered in the history of humankind" (KrV A807/B835). Moreover, he further qualifies the answer to how hope is tied to happiness by stating that, "everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct" (KrV A809/B837), which requires one to "Do that through which you will become worthy to be happy" by acting from moral principles that can usher forth a moral world.

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<sup>134</sup> Pauline Kleingeld argues persuasively that the highest good in the world is both the cause and result of virtue. See Kleingeld, "Kant on 'Good', the Good, and the Duty to Promote the Highest Good" in *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Höwing (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 33-49.

The introduction of worth in happiness appears not only to Kant's critical works, but also to the historical essays. For example, with regard to worthiness, Kant writes in the Third Thesis of *Idea* that in man's movement from barbarism to culture, it is as if "nature is utterly unconcerned that man live well, only that he bring himself to the point where his conduct makes him worthy of life and well-being" (IaG 8: 20). In other words, man's self-esteem derives from the moral use of reason, and consistent with the idea of the highest good, that human beings are *worthy* of happiness only insofar as they have produced it themselves, for example, not only in relation to the natural world but also in the creation of just social institutions,<sup>135</sup> through actions which look proleptically to the future via the faculty of reason in creating a better world. Here it might be claimed with Andrews Reath that,

Proper recognition of the role of the secular, or political, conception of the Highest Good in Kant's moral theory allows a more satisfactory solution [to the problem of the role of moral conduct in an imperfect world], which puts the theory in a better light ... The Highest Good, so understood, would be realized through a system of social institutions which supports the realization of certain moral ends. The aim of this system of institutions would be to create conditions which would be conducive to moral conduct, in part by making it fully rational to act from moral principles. This interpretation of the Highest Good sets as the final end of moral conduct a world in which individuals can act from the Moral Law, and in doing so achieve their intended ends.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> See Axinn, "Kant, Authority, and the French Revolution" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul.-Sep., 1971), 423-32. Axinn argues that, "As Kant sees it, historically, the progress of the world, the progress of civilization, is found in an increase in the rationality of human arrangements, not in the personal happiness of the random individual .... He puts his optimism, his confidence, not in individuals becoming moral, but in social arrangements becoming more and more rational" (p. 425).

<sup>136</sup> Andrews Reath, "Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (1988), 619. For other commentators who secularize Kant's conception of the highest good, see John Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory" in *The Journal of Philosophy* 11 (1980), 515-72; Onora O'Neill, "Kant on Reason and Religion" in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 18 (1997), 267-308; Richard Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 152-3; and Thomas Pogge, "Kant on Ends and the Meaning of Life" in (eds.) Andrew Reath, Barbara Herman, and Christine Korsgaard, *Reclaiming the History of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 361-87.

That the question of hope, as expressed in a proleptic anticipation of the *highest good*, is rationally constituted is also articulated by Sidney Axinn as posing the question, “What can I hope, within the limits of reason alone?”<sup>137</sup> This species of hope is neither wild nor blind nor an empty wish in selecting its future objects, as reason is very discerning in serving up hope: “A rational being can scarcely avoid raising the question of the kind of world that he or she would create, in which that creator would be willing to be a member.”<sup>138</sup> The point here is that hope in happiness realized by the highest good in the world is also a practical postulate from a moral point of view, actions following from this postulate are motivated by the objective reality of its goal: “to promote the practically possible highest good, nevertheless presupposes at least that [it] is possible; in the contrary case it would be practically impossible to strive for the object of a concept that would be, at bottom, empty and without an object” (KpV 5: 143). Thus another way of formulating Kant’s response to his three questions can be put in the following conditional form: If I can know nature, and if I can do my duty, I can hope for the fulfillment of my happiness in a moral world which human beings have the real capacity to create by rational means.

Kant’s conception of hope thus requires that our happiness constitute the highest good of a *world* in its active construction, i.e., of active participation (KrV 5: 100) in the creation of a moral world. As Kant puts it in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere*

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<sup>137</sup> See Sidney Axinn, “Kant on Possible Hope: The Critique of Pure Hope” in *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress in Philosophy*, Vol 7, 2000, 80.

<sup>138</sup> See Axinn, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant’s View of Religion* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 68.

*Reason:*

Assume a human being who honors the moral law, and who allows himself to think (as he can hardly avoid doing) what sort of world he would *create*, were this in his power, under the guidance of practical reason - a world within which, moreover, he would place himself as a member. Now, not only would he choose a world precisely as the moral idea of the highest good requires, if the choice were entrusted to him alone, but he would also will the very existence of [such] a world, since the moral law wills that the highest good possible through us be actualized (RGV 6: 5-6)

Kant argues that human beings possess the capacity to bring about the *highest good* in this world that virtuous agents would choose to *create*.<sup>139</sup> Such a *created* would lead to a kind of shared happiness enjoyed by virtuous agents. Shared happiness is essentially what results when a community of agents act from the moral law to respect and to promote the ends that others set for themselves. Happy agents share the willing capacity to put aside inclination and follow the duty to pursue activities that help to usher in the advent of the highest good on earth. In order to eventuate a moral world, human beings must themselves be moral in their actions. In this way, human actions serve both to bolster the goal of the highest good in the future and as exemplars of its agents in the here and now. As Kant relates in a long, but important footnote:

[I]t is one of the inescapable limitations of human beings and of their practical faculty of reason (perhaps of that faculty in all other worldly beings as well) to be concerned in every action with its result, seeking something in it that might serve them as an end and even prove the purity of their intention ... Now, in this end human beings seek something that they can *love*, even though it is being proposed to them through reason alone. Hence the law that only inspires *respect* in them, though it does not recognize this sought-after something as [its own] need, nonetheless extends itself on its behalf to include the moral ultimate end of reason among its determining grounds. That is, the proposition, ‘Make the highest

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<sup>139</sup> For an excellent account of how the highest good is not an otherworldly prize to hope for, but a world that individuals have an obligation to work to achieve, see Kate A. Moran, *Community and Progress in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 71.

possible good in this world your own ultimate end,' is a synthetic proposition *a priori* which is introduced by the moral law itself, and yet through it practical reason reaches beyond the law (RGV 6: 7n).

In this passage, Kant reiterates the crucial claim that while human beings can follow duty (respect from the law), duty does not posit a goal or purpose. So, as will is tied to ends, the highest good is posited as the end human beings ought to will to bring about. So we might add that hope requires that our own happiness, acting out of the guidance of practical reason, be constituted by including the realization of the highest good in our free end-setting, and that to be morally worthy is to act in bring it forth.

Reath relates that discussions of Kant's conception of the highest good is contentious,<sup>140</sup> and it is with good reason that some readers of Kant's association of hope in the *highest good* with happiness might worry that the relationship seems strained. Moral ends cannot be tied to conditional desire, and happiness, as shown above, is described by Kant as the satisfaction of desire, and hence it is associated with the fulfillment of inclination. However, the way around this problem is to consider the social dimension connecting hope to happiness.

#### 4.3 *The Social Dimension of Hope, Happiness, and the Highest Good*

I have already shown how in the *Critique* Kant ties the notion of hope as providing a *clue* to happiness, so we might ask where does this clue lead? The answer is found in hope's practical employment in regard to our moral ends, namely, by agents not

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<sup>140</sup> See Further Reading following Reath's Introduction to KpV, xl.

only promoting their own happiness, but also the happiness in all others. For example, in the second *Critique*, Kant argues:

Let the matter be, for example, my own happiness. This, if I attribute it to each...can become an objective practical law only if I include in it the happiness of others. Thus the law to promote the happiness of others arises not from the presupposition that this is an object for everyone's power of choice, but merely from [the fact] that the form of universality, which reason requires as condition for giving to a maxim of self-love the objective validity of a law, becomes the determining basis of the will (KpV 5: 34-5),

As he does later in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: “When it comes to promoting happiness as an end that is also a duty, this must therefore be the happiness of other human beings, whose (permitted) end I thus make my own end as well” (MS 6: 388).

However, whence the dutiful obligation to pursue the highest good? Fortunately, through the critical and historical writings, Kant alludes to such duties. So, for example, in the second *Critique* Kant ties duty to the twin modes of production and promotion in working to actuate the highest good: “What belongs to duty here is only the striving to produce and promote the highest good in the world” (KpV 5: 126). Duty springs from autonomous adherence from the moral law, and in this passage Kant is stating that we have an active, practical commission to employ the means necessary for bringing about the highest good in *this world*. Kant’s belief that we have a duty to promote the highest good in this world appears especially in the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, but this does not suggest that the highest good is only a transcendent goal. In many instances, Kant qualifies the highest good as a realizable secular goal, if only by approximation.

Moreover, the incorporation of the highest good into one's own end-setting is not only expressed in the critical literature, but also in the historical essays. For example, in *Theory and Practice*, Kant responds to a concern expressed by Christian Garve about inconsistencies between duty and bringing forth the highest good in the world,

[T]his concept of duty does not have to be based on any special end, but rather that it introduces another end for the human will, namely, to strive with all one's powers toward the highest good possible in the world (the purest morality throughout the world combined with such universal happiness as accords with it) .... With this presupposition one only comes to have an object for the ideal of pure reason (TP 8: 279).

Moreover, this claim of the highest good serving as an object toward which we ought to strive, is given further expression as a “*need*” in Kant's footnote to the passage:

**The need to assume the highest good in the world**...is not deriving from a deficiency in moral motives, but one deriving from a deficiency in those external conditions in which alone an object as an end in itself (as a morally ultimate end) that conforms with these motives can be produced (TP 8: 280n: my bold emphasis).

The “need” being described above is a goal for the will. As expressed earlier, duty commands the will to act, but the need to act must already be in place. In this case, the need, the reason to act, is to work as if it is possible to bring about the highest good in this world.

Happiness in history as the advent of the highest good is the satisfaction of this need, here we also keep in mind that rational hope for a better world, in which ‘hope,’ happiness,’ and ‘history, are united, is desired for no other sake than that of reason.

Subsequently, it might also be claimed with Andrew Chignell that in this need,

there might be a kind of moral-instrumental characterization, and this is what gets us back to Kant and the normative aspect of “*dürfen*”: not just what I may hope for, but what I should hope for. Hope on this view is a natural, practically rational result of willing in accordance with the moral

law. The hope in question is that our world will be, if not a ‘moral world’ – one in which everyone freely does the right – then at least a ‘just world’ – one in which virtue is perfectly proportioned to happiness in the life to come.”<sup>141</sup>

In this subjective and intersubjective adoption of promoting worth in ourselves and others, happiness obtains by obeying what one “ought” to hope for, namely, to obey one’s duty to the moral law.

Subsequently, there is a strong moral requirement attached to Kant’s hopeful vision of human flourishing. And even if such a sanguine future (e.g., of perpetual peace) should never come to pass, it is, as expressed in *The Doctrine of Right*, a vision we can adopt as a duty toward which we nevertheless can be committed: “[E]ven if the complete realization of this objective always remains a pious wish, still we are certainly not deceiving ourselves in adopting the maxim of working incessantly towards it” (MS 6: 355).

To anticipate a world thus requires that we believe that *that* world is rationally possible to obtain,<sup>142</sup> or, as Eric Watkins puts it, in the “‘hope of being happy’ in a moral world to come.”<sup>143</sup> Watkins argues that hope “for a different past or present is hope for a

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<sup>141</sup> See Andrew Chignell, “Kant on Hoping for a Miracle” presented at San Diego “Order” Conference, March 2001, p. 29. See also, Chignell, “Rational Hope, Possibility, and Divine Action” in *Kant’s Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gordon E. Michalson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): “It is crucial to see that Kant is not encouraging us baldly to accept that there actually is a necessary connection between virtue and happiness. Rather, the most that rational hope requires is that we Believe that such a connection is really possible” (106).

<sup>142</sup> See, again, Chignell, “Rational Hope, Possibility, and Divine Action” in *Kant’s Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Critical Guide*: “We can’t know that an ethical community is really possible, but once we see that we ought to will it, we have to Believe on practical grounds that it is indeed possible” (116).

<sup>143</sup> Eric Watkins, *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature: Historical Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 206.

metaphysical impossibility.” To hope that past or present events or states of affairs be otherwise is a hollow wish. But with regard to historical hope, which is based on rational anticipation of the future, the past and present can be different in the sense that one can hope that certain actions or states of affairs were motivated and eventuated via the workings of the good will. As David Carr puts it, Kant “asks whether the past can be read in such a way that points to the necessity of a cosmopolitan future and ‘permits us to hope’ that such a future can be realized.”<sup>144</sup> Carr is right to emphasize the unique hermeneutics of Kantian hope because Kant does hold that the past and present are open to instructive interpretation. For example, in the second *Critique* and *Religion*, respectively below, Kant argues that a basis for hope can be read out of one’s *past* insofar as presenting a narrative of one’s progress in virtue. In the second *Critique*, Kant claims,

All that can belong to a creature with regard to hope for this share [in the highest good] would be the consciousness of his tested attitude, so that, *on the basis of the progress that he has thus far made from the worse to the morally better*, and of the immutable resolve which has thereby become familiar to him, he may hope for a further uninterrupted continuation of this progress, however far his existence may extend, even beyond this life (KpV 5: 123: my italics).

And in *Religion*, he reaffirms,

For take a human being who, from the time of his adoption of the principles of the good and throughout a sufficiently long life henceforth, has perceived the efficacy of these principles on what he does, i.e., *on the conduct of his life as it steadily improves, and from these has cause to infer, but only by way of conjecture, a fundamental improvement in his disposition*, he can yet also reasonably hope that in this life he will no longer forsake the present course but will rather press in it with ever greater courage, since his advances, provided that their principle is good, will always increase his strength for future ones (RGV 6: 68: my italics).

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<sup>144</sup> See David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspective on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91. Carr does not cite the source for “permits us to hope,” but it derives from IaG 8: 17.

In both of the passages above, Kant argues that the past can serve as a proleptic *inference* for the future. In the second part of *The Contest of the Faculties*, “The Question Renewed: Is Humankind Continually Improving”, Kant also argues that we can look for, and take an “inference” from, the historical past and present in the form of a “*signum rememorative, demonstrativum, pronostikon*” (i.e., a sign that reminds, demonstrates, and foretells) that can evidence in there being a human “mind-set” which is constituted by a moral disposition (SdF 7: 84-85).

Hence, with regard to the past and present, Kant thinks that we can recognize a proleptic signs which can help to garner hope for the future because they were motivated by (i) rational nature and (ii) moral disposition, rather than mere self-interest and inclination.<sup>145</sup> For example, in the second *Critique*, Kant states that past progress in virtue can offer a basis for hope: “from lower to higher stages...from the progress he has already made from the worse to the morally better and from the immutable resolution he has thereby come to know, he may hope for a further uninterrupted continuance of the progress” (KpV 5: 123). Subsequently, the past and present can provide hope insofar as one can hope that rationality and morality are operating in one’s human affairs: in this way, the past, present, and future are indeed connected with respect to hope by a proleptic vision from which we can *take* in order to *give* impetus to our moral actions; and these are ideas “of the kinds of more humane future for which we may hope, but only if we are prepared to engage ourselves in bringing them about.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See, also, Kant’s discussion of inherent “rational nature” in GMS 4:428-29.

<sup>146</sup> Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, 226.

#### 4.4 Hope as Historical Sign: Not Only as Abstraction but Also An Inference

Thus far I have offered an explication, drawing from various sources in the Kantian corpus, of how Kant sets out to establish ‘hope’ based not only as an expectation for a future state of affairs, but also as from the past and present. Kant, then, offers a dually harmonious representation of hope as a desired object which we can identify via deductive and inductive means, i.e., as abstract and concrete. The idea here is that hope amounts to more than just a yearning for an absent goal. Hope entails that we have grounds to expect the fulfilment of a future because we have felt more than its mere promise by noting its real presence in ourselves and in historical events (however inchoate and fleeting its manifestation within our experience). Subsequently, Kant’s philosophy exhibits a rich elucidation of hope that goes far beyond an abstract appreciation.

Consequently, I believe I have demonstrated how Yovel’s characterization of Kantian hope as offering only a “conceptual” or “psychological” justification fails to appreciate how Kant’s bases for hope are located not only in a deferred notion of a future world, but also, as presented via textual evidence, in the past and present of this world.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, Kant routinely qualifies hope ways that go beyond what Yovel takes to be

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<sup>147</sup> Yovel’s work in this field is undeniably rich and magisterial, but, as already stated in chapter 1, it is hard to overlook certain errors in his grasp of what he calls, Kant’s “peripheral” essays. One example is found in his book’s second chapter, “God and Human Action”, wherein he identifies a change in “Kant’s view of the operative power in history” (KPH 76). Here Yovel writes that Kant shifted focus from the *Idee* essay to his “later” discussions “like *Theory and Practice*, *What is Enlightenment*, and *Religion*” (KPH 77). Yovel should know that *Idee* and *Enlightenment* were published in the same year (1784). *Idee* appeared in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in November 1784, and “What is Enlightenment?” appeared in the same publication one month later, December 1784. See “Notes for *Idee for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent*” and “Notes for *What is Enlightenment?*” in Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 40 and 47, respectively.

“a subjective shortcut to an objective absent object.” For hope is very much in us and around us.

We see this mediation perhaps most clearly in how we have already described how Kant synthesizes hope based on rational thought with hope as experienced through a remindful historical sign (i.e., the aforementioned “*signum rememorative*”). More than just a “conceptual” or “psychological” satisfaction, Kant argues that hope for human progress toward the better must also be tied to some kind of tangible experience: “an event must be sought which indicates...progress toward the better” (SdF 7: 84). Indeed, Kant thinks that he discerned such an event in his discussion of the French Revolution,<sup>148</sup> which, he argues, bore the stamp of such a hopeful sign in evidence of a very special way of thinking (*Es ist bloß die Denkungsart*):

We are here concerned only with the mind-set of the onlookers as it reveals itself *in public* while the drama of great political changes is taking place: for they openly express universal yet disinterested sympathy for one set of protagonists against their adversaries, even at the risk that their partiality could be of great disadvantage to themselves. Their reaction (because of its universality) proves that mankind as a whole shares a certain character in common, and it also proves (because of disinterestedness) that man has a moral character, or at least the makings of one. **And this does not merely allow us to hope for human improvement; it is already a form of improvement in itself, in so far as its influence is strong enough for the present** (SdF 7: 85: my bold emphasis).

Subsequently, with regard to Kant’s justification of hope in his philosophy of history, we can see how such justification is derived both in thought and in experience. Kant argues

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<sup>148</sup> Axinn argues that although the revolution was bloody and full of atrocities, Kant still interpreted it “to be a step in mankind’s approach to the kingdom of ends, to a situation in which there would be perfect dignity and self-determination for every human being.” See Axinn, “Kant, Authority, and the French Revolution,” *Ibid.*, p. 426.

that hope for a better world can be based not only on conjecture and abstract ideas, not only on future expectation for a better world, but also on past and present events that reveal a human moral tendency (*moralische Tendenz*, SdF 7: 84-85), which, as William Galston notes in his important study of Kant and history, is indicative of a capacity human beings have for sociopolitical sympathy based on “principles of right rather than self-interest.”<sup>149</sup>

#### 4.5 Closing Remarks

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to shine a light on the unique interplay Kant draws between hope, happiness, and history by offering a synergistic view to how these ideas interact in a consistently proleptic sense, a sense that takes its clues from theoretical, practical, and historical standpoints. Kant argues that all happiness involves hope, and that the highest good includes happiness. In this sense, happiness is both an end and a result. It is achieved through an intersubjective obedience to promote happiness in oneself and all others. Also, I have shown how for Kant hope is not just a mere abstraction or “shortcut to an absent object,” but is also justified in a uniquely human rational capacity and moral tendency to effect real change in our historical future.

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<sup>149</sup> See William A. Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 29.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEADING THE WILLING: KANT'S SENECA PHRASE

Of those events that happen to man, none occur by accident or chance, but in accordance with a plan so carefully considered, and so stupendous, that it does not overlook even the number of hairs on a person's head .... And the plan of this providential government extends even to caring for the sale of two sparrows for a penny.<sup>150</sup>

Others apart sat on a Hill retired,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high  
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,  
Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.  
Of good and evil much they argued then,  
Of happiness and final misery,  
Passion and Apathy, and glory and shame,  
Vain wisdom all, and false Philosophy:  
Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm  
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite  
Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdurèd breast  
With stubborn patience as with triple steel  
(John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2.557-69)

#### 5.1 *Kant's Idea of Nature in History: Artist or Agitator*

In the previous chapter, I endeavored to expand on the notion of prolepsis in Kant's philosophy of history by focusing on the nexus of 'hope,' 'happiness,' and 'history' to demonstrate how Kant's philosophy offers a rich conception of how the three are unified. Here I noted how the association of 'hope,' the 'highest good,' and 'happiness' seems strained within the context of history. Happiness is described by Kant as the satisfaction of desire, and hence it is associated with the fulfillment of inclination, which appears to

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<sup>150</sup> Origen, *First Principles* (2.11.5) in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, *et al.*, 10 Vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 4: 299.

diminish the pure activity of approximating toward the highest good. However, I also observed that in his critical and socio-political writings, Kant attempts to reconcile this seeming contradiction by arguing that the highest good can serve as both object and “need,” one toward which we can include in our capacity to set ends and, hence, we ought to strive to realize. Subsequently, I argued that happiness in history is the satisfaction of this need, and that rational hope for a better world, in which ‘hope,’ ‘happiness,’ and ‘history are united, is desired for no other sake than that of reason.

Moreover, against commentators who would assign hope merely to an intellectual exercise, I showed that historical hope is also discerned in Kant’s attempt to identify a historical sign (the ‘*signum rememorative, demonstrativum, pronostikon*’) which forecloses on the idea that esperential anticipation for historical progress toward the better is merely a “conceptual” or “psychological” justification of hope. Instead, I argued that Kant blurs the lines of demarcation which would subtend or delimit hope to merely conceptual boundaries by supplying an existing, material component, namely, a “proof” that rational human beings possess a “moral tendency” (*moralische Tendenz*, SdF 7: 84-85) which can affect the future course of history as its active agents. Consequently, Kant is presented as offering a dually harmonious representation of hope for a desired objective (e.g., in one’s own ends and in the end of a moral community which promotes, and approximates toward, the highest good), an objective taken on the belief that such an end is possible to achieve.

In this chapter, I want to examine the *means* by which the fulfillment of hope is obtained, namely, by putting into perspective the way Kant frames the role of nature in

bringing about progress. Specifically, I attempt to satisfy two aims. The first is to qualify Immanuel Kant's use of Seneca's famous phrase, "*fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*,"<sup>151</sup> which appears in two of his socio-political essays,<sup>152</sup> and, given the phrase's repeated use and important placement in the essays, it is curious that it seems to be passed over in the literature;<sup>153</sup> the second goal is to attenuate too strong attributions of the "cunning of nature" thesis in Kant's philosophy of history. Perhaps made most famously by Yirmiyahu Yovel in his influential *Kant and the Philosophy of History*,<sup>154</sup> the cunning of nature thesis describes a sort of perfunctory device, i.e., as a "blind

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<sup>151</sup> "Fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling." Kant's use of the phrase is an altered form of the original; its proper formulation is "*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*." Seneca's phrase is found in Epistle 107 in *Letters from a Stoic* (London/New York: Penguin, 1969), 200. For an account of the source of the Senecan phrase, see M. Marcovich, "On the Origin of Seneca's 'Ducunt Volentem Fata, Nolentem Trahunt,'" *Classical Philology*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (April 1959), 119-121. Marcovich argues that the source for "Seneca's verse" is found in Chrysippus or Zeno, and alludes to an account of a dog chained to a moving wagon, to which the dog can choose to follow along or get dragged. The phrase was also used by Saint Augustine to illustrate the notion of God's providence in *City of God*. See Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettensen, (Penguin, 1984 [1972]), Bk. 5, Ch. 8, p. 189. See also Karl Löwith's use of the phrase in *Meaning in History: The Theological Presuppositions of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 199.

<sup>152</sup> See *Theory and Practice* (1793: 8: 313) and *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795: 8: 365).

<sup>153</sup> Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 96, provides valuable commentary on Kant's teleological reasoning in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, and though she does not examine Kant's use of the Senecan phrase or the meanings attached to 'fate' and 'providence,' she does capture its underlying message that peace will come about "whether we will it or not." Lea Ypi's excellent "*Natura Daedala Rerum? On the Justification of Historical Progress in Kant's Guarantee of Perpetual Peace*" in *Kantian Review*, Vol. 14, 2, (2010), pp. 118-148, shares some of my concerns in this essay over the inherent limitations of viewing nature too exclusively as an historical, agentive force in Kant's socio-political thought. However, instead of examining the Senecan phrase in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Ypi elucidates Kant's use of the Lucretian phrase, "nature, the inventor of things."

<sup>154</sup> Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); henceforth, KPH. Yovel states that he borrows the phrase from Eric Weil's *Problems Kantians* (KPH 140n). See also, Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 54: "a design behind men's backs, a ruse of nature or, later, a ruse of history." As well as, Arendt, "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought" in *Thinking Without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975* (New York: Schocken Books, 2018), who argues that action became "meaningful again...so that history's *trostloses Ungefähr* (Kant's 'melancholy haphazardness') needed a 'ruse of nature' or some other force working behind the back of acting men to achieve any dignity worthy of philosophical thought" (p. 25).

contrivance” (KPH 277),<sup>155</sup> by affirming the idea that “nature itself, *even without the rational will*, is working according to a hidden design, bringing about political progress by means of violence and passion” (KPH 8: my italics). Subsequently, the cunning of nature thesis calls attention to two aspects of nature. The first aspect relates to Yovel’s notion of an automated reflex in human beings or as Kant puts it, as “blind and servile” inclination (KpV 5: 118). However, as Jennifer Uleman notes, citing Kant’s elucidation of inclination in the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*, “inclination is tethered to the gears and springs that constitute ‘the mechanism of the whole of nature’ (KpV 5:87).”<sup>156</sup> The second aspect relates not to fatalistic natural mechanism, but rather to providential natural teleology, namely, as powered forward by the faculty of reason (*Vernunftvermögen*) for “a higher purpose” than that which is destined (*bestimmen*) for animals (KpV 5: 61).

The two aspects of nature, as mechanism and teleology, is also elucidated in the third *Critique*, wherein Kant stresses that mechanism and teleology are not coequal:

[to account) for the very manifest connection of things in terms of final causes we must think a causality distinct from mechanism—viz., the causality of an (intelligent) world cause that acts according to purposes (KdU 5: 389).

On this view, mechanism, on its own, is machine-like and non-purposive.<sup>157</sup> Whereas, progress, whether political, moral, or historical is tied to a providential teleology, which,

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<sup>155</sup> See also, KPH, pp. 8, 140, 143, 153.

<sup>156</sup> Jennifer Uleman, *An Introduction to Kant’s Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 151-52.

<sup>157</sup> See KdU 5: 406: “in a causal connection that does not necessarily [*ausschließungsweise*] presuppose an understanding as cause.” See also, Hannah Ginsborg, “Two Kinds of Mechanical Inexplicability in Kant and Aristotle,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004), p. 36, fn. 5, who points out that “Kant uses the term ‘mechanism’ in the second edition Preface of the Critique of Pure Reason and in the Critique of Practical Reason to refer to causal determination (as contrasted with noumenal freedom).”

presumably,<sup>158</sup> has been placed concomitantly in human beings by nature in order to make use of the former and, thus, is the only aspect of nature that can motivate the actions so necessary to bring about better future states of affairs.

Subsequently, instead of viewing Kant's use of the Senecan phrase as tied solely to the contrivance of blind mechanism, or merely as an ornamental slogan that can be passed over without consequence, I argue that the phrase's appearance in two of his sociopolitical essays is actually an illuminating *aperçu* which can help to frame a complex conception of how nature is both agitative (as fate) and agentive (as providence) in leading and dragging humanity toward its special ends. Fatalistic natural mechanisms play a role in Kant's philosophy of history, often understood as a foolproof prod to progress, but on my reading the so-called "cunning" of nature would be anything but cunning if this part was *ipsum solum* capable of ushering forth progress.

In previous chapters, we have seen how Kant's important contributions to philosophical history include a hypothetical understanding of how nature operates within a historical process that is recognized to culminate in the perfection of the human species. We note this in both his critical work, all of which include important considerations of the relationship between freedom and nature, as well as in many of his considered historical essays; perhaps in no way as explicit as in *Toward Perpetual Peace*.

In this "sketch" (*Entwurf*), which was published eleven years after *Idea*, Kant

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<sup>158</sup> In the third *Critique*, Kant explicitly states that his use of teleological principles are merely posits toward our understanding of nature: "[I]t is an equally necessary maxim of reason not to bypass the principle of ends in the products of nature, because even though this principle does not make the way in which these products have originated more comprehensible, it is still a heuristic principle [*heuristisches Prinzip*] for researching the particular laws of nature, even granted that we would want to make no use of it for explaining nature itself" (KdU 5: 411).

adopts the standpoint of a “political theorist”<sup>159</sup> to argue in the essay’s first two sections that the “desired consequence” of politics is to progress toward a stable and lasting peace (ZeF 8: 343-60). Kant claims that he is only positing a theoretical account which will serve to protect him from any effects his theory might cause: “With this *clausula salvatoria* the author of this essay is hereby invoking the proper form to protect himself from any malicious interpretation” (ZeF 8: 343), and following the statements of six preliminary and three definitive articles of peace among states, in the *First Supplement*, Kant begins to develop his hypothesis of how movement toward the satisfaction of this goal, however approximate and deferred, is accomplished.

As already indicated, here, as in his other sociopolitical essays, Kant offers an assumptive turn toward teleological explanation; namely, that the whole of history should be envisioned under a goal-driven principle in which the human species gradually completes the development of its inherent rational capacities. Moreover, consistent with the introduction of “unsociable sociability” (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*) in the Fourth Proposition of *Idea*, the means which nature employs to hasten the development of inherent human dispositions is a form of antagonism. In concert with the spirit of that earlier work, Kant remains resolute in stating that nature is the “guarantor” of perpetual peace:

What *guarantees* perpetual peace is nothing less than the great artist *nature* (*natura daedala rerum*). The mechanical course of nature visibly reveals a purposive plan to create harmony through discord among people, even against their own will (ZeF 8: 360).

The passage above makes a crucially important claim, but it remains to be seen just how

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<sup>159</sup> Rather than from the standpoint of a “practical politician,” who is engaged in actual politics by proposing policy; while, Kant argues, a political theorist’s assumptions should not be perceived as posing a threat to the state (ZeF 8: 343).

to interpret “the mechanical course of nature,” and the manner in which it shows the artistic hand that is guiding both the voluntary and the reluctant onward to peace. A plausible reading of the passage is that Kant is staying true to the analogical language of *Idea*, for example, that we must presuppose a plan of nature in her design of human beings, *as if* such an intent is behind our creation, lest we be the only organism in all of nature’s poetic portfolio without such a plan.

Martha Nussbaum has commented that this critical passage is as puzzling as it is remarkable:

In this complex paragraph (which is accompanied by an even more complex and very obscure footnote on the different varieties of providence), Kant first states confidently that perpetual peace is guaranteed by nature’s design; following the Stoics, he gives this design the dual names “**fate**” and “**providence**.” Already here, however, there is complexity – for the Latin phrase that characterizes Nature is taken from Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, a work much loved by Kant, but one that resolutely denies that any teleological design is to be discerned in the workings of nature. Kant now goes on to make this uncertainty official, reminding his reader that we must not speak of providence with any confidence, since that would be to attempt to transcend the limits of human nature. In other words, he repudiates the Stoic approach that insists on grounding cosmopolitanism in a securely asserted teleology. In the following paragraph, however, Kant goes straight back to the Stoic picture as if no qualification had intervened (my bold emphasis).<sup>160</sup>

Nussbaum is right to note this seeming uncertainty, for, without taking Kant’s use of

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<sup>160</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1997, pp. 1-25: 16. The essay also appears as “Kant and Cosmopolitanism” in *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal*, eds., James Bohmann & Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997). Here Nussbaum demonstrates the strong influence Roman Stoicism had on Kant’s cosmopolitan theory in *Toward Perpetual Peace*. She argues, however, citing agreement with Bernard Williams, that Kant’s idea of providence is attached to an outdated postulate of “practical hope” which “we are much less likely to accept” (17). Subsequently, Nussbaum’s interest in Kant’s essay is concerned with appraising its contemporary influence. With regard to my interest, however, it is notable how she cites a passage which references the “uncertain” and ambiguous use of the term ‘providence’ (as well as of ‘fate’), but without any attempt to qualify Kant’s use of those important terms.

regulative heuristics into account, not only does any talk of ‘providence’ foreclose confidence, but so does any talk of ‘fate;’ for not only does any talk of providence foreclose confidence, but so does any talk of ‘fate,’ which, like the discussions of these concepts by the infernal philosopher-angels of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,<sup>161</sup> such talk is inconclusive, and, therefore, *endless*.

On the one hand, Kant’s socio-political philosophy is indebted to the Stoic idea of how all human beings are connected in world-citizenry (*kosmopolitês*),<sup>162</sup> but, Nussbaum points out, if judged on his fidelity to Stoic doctrines of nature, Kant appears inconsistent if by natural “design” one includes teleological principles which are not accepted in the Stoics’ conception of nature.

However, while Kant was very much influenced by Stoic thought, borrowing and modifying inherited terms, he uses Stoic ideas and terms in novel ways to suit his own theories. For example, Kant borrows the term “virtue” (*virtus*) from the Stoics to denote “self-mastery” (*Tugend*); however, these ideas, and others, gain currency not by staying loyal to their original meaning and context, but rather by Kant’s employment of

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<sup>161</sup> See, the second epigraph to this chapter.

<sup>162</sup> The Stoic idea of world-citizenship is expressed by Seneca as follows,

Let us grasp the fact that there are two republics [*res publicae*]; one vast and truly “public” [*magnam et vere publicam*] – which contains alike gods and men, in which we do not take account of this or that nook of land, but make the boundaries of our state [*civitas*] reach as far as the rays of the sun: and another to which we have been assigned by the accident of birth (*De Otio*, 4.1).

According to Seneca, the Stoic ideal of cosmopolitanism sees the cosmos as a great city, and that human beings are primarily citizens of this cosmic city, and citizens of the provincial city only secondarily. However, in order to be counted as a member of the cosmic city, one must be the bearer of virtue. The passage above is from Seneca, *On Leisure* [*De Otio*] in *Seneca: Six Essential Texts* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media, 2016), 171. See also, Malcom Schofield’s translation in Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999 [1991]), 93.

the terms in his own ideas of dutifulness and the kind of autonomous self-mastery which is not only required to legislate the Categorical Imperative, but also, as expressed in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, as the moral strength (*fortitudo moralis*) to overcome obstacles presented by heteronomous forces.<sup>163</sup>

Similarly, one notes how in the second *Critique*, Kant attempts to correct his predecessors from “ancient Greek schools” (namely, the Epicureans and Stoics) on the relation between virtue and happiness (*Glilckseligkeit*).<sup>164</sup> So, while Kant shares with Stoic thought many ideas on the relation between human beings and their “true city,” e.g., understood here as a community of virtuous people united by a common law (either cosmic [for the Stoics] or moral [for Kant]), concerns over whether those ideas remain faithful to their source, or whether they should be accepted by contemporary cosmopolitans, risks losing a sense for how Kant uses such ideas to provide coherence, and not confusion, to his own work. Subsequently, Kant’s borrowing of certain Stoic terms is not an egregious misappropriation of thought because he also encodes such notions as ‘fate’ and ‘providence’ with different meanings in order to support his own cosmopolitan theory: the latter is understood as creating the teleological “design” from which cosmopolitanism and higher ends of humanity are actuated from an underlying potency; while the former is not *poietic*, but mechanical and agitative, for it merely

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<sup>163</sup> See, MS 6: 380 and GMS 4: 426fn.

<sup>164</sup> See, KpV 5: 111-13. For informative articles on the relation and contrast between Kantian and Stoic ideas of virtue and happiness, see John M. Cooper’s “Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and ‘Moral Duty’ in Stoicism” and J.B. Schneewind’s “Kant and Stoic Ethics” in J.B. Schneewind and Jennifer Whiting, eds., *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Briefly, Cooper looks into the root of Stoic physical and metaphysical theories which inform their the ideas of virtue and happiness; Schneewind evaluates aspects of Kantian and Stoic ethics against such commentators as Julia Annas to maintain the contrast between Kantian duty and Greek happiness.

*compels* through mechanism, i.e., blind necessity. Because of their ambiguity, there appears to be danger of passing over the terms with critical effort.

For example, Lucien Goldmann, in his excellent study of Kant, seems to conflate the terms ‘fate’ and ‘providence’ for our understanding of cosmopolitanism:

Similarly, the most important category of the philosophy of history is the idea of a higher form of the human community and of society, the society of citizens of the world, perpetual peace, the perfect civil constitution, a league of nations and so on. Both ideas are the expressions of a higher community, qualitatively different from that which exists today. The difference is that whilst we look to the kingdom of God *in eternity*, as a result of our actions and with the assistance of God, the society of citizens of the world is anticipated *for the future*, as a result of our actions and **with the assistance of the ‘plan of nature’ which we call fate or providence.**<sup>165</sup>

The risk here is to view the notion of ‘fate’ as coterminous with providence. As I will show in the following sections, Kant’s use of these two terms concerns not merely a contribution to understanding what I refer to as Kant’s *Senecan phrase*, but also to raising more general issues about the status and force of nature in his historical work.

We see, then, how an understanding of Kant’s socio-political use of the space (medium) and place (role) of nature to reveal its “plan” demands careful analysis in order to discern the subtle intent of Kant’s conceptual moves. For example, how are we to understand nature’s own complexity? Does nature itself have different properties within a part/whole constituency? Are natural mechanisms inventive? Do the stirrings of natural mechanism create or do they merely disturb a higher aspect of nature to enact its own *poietic* hand?

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<sup>165</sup> Lucien Goldmann, *Immanuel Kant*, trans. Robert Black (London: New Left Books, 1971), 215. First published as *Mensch, Gemeinschaft und Welt in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants* (Zürich: Europa-Verlag, 1945). My bold emphasis.

In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant states that rational reflection on history shows that the “mechanical course of nature visibly reveals a purposive plan to create harmony through discord among people, even against their own will” (ZeF 8: 360). In some ways, what Kant does in the 1795 *Toward Perpetual Peace* is to assert what was merely implied in the 1784 *Idea*.<sup>166</sup> In the former, the revelations of nature expressed by Kant make this purposiveness apparent, while in the latter these instances of nature’s “will” and are less apparent, as Kant’s aim in *Idea* is to bring these forces to our historical awareness as a “clue” or “guiding thread” precisely because they are not so obvious:

Individual human beings and even entire peoples give little thought to the fact that they, by pursuing their own ends, each in his own way and often in opposition to others, unwittingly, as if guided along, work to promote the intent of nature, which is unknown to them, and which, even if it were known to them, they would hardly care about (IaG 8: 17).

Although the essays are written more than a decade apart, they are unified in how Kant’s thoughts remain expressed in the language of a teleological notion of universal history. Although writings of philosophical historiography range widely in how they explicate different notions of progress and in their use of distinctive idioms of expression (e.g., as conveyed by, among others, Augustine, Vico, Condorcet, Turgot, and Hegel), they all view history as the unfolding of a “providential” design.

Hence Nussbaum is right to question Kant’s idea of ‘providence’ in *Toward Perpetual Peace* because within the context of Kant’s contributions to universal history, the ideas of fate and providence disclose the primary source (the first cause), the means (the efficient cause), and ultimate end (the final cause) of historical fulfillment, but not

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<sup>166</sup> For example, Kant is quite explicit in *Idea* that teleological principles are posited for the sake of seeing whether a species-specific historical account “could be given” (IaG 8: 17) to avoid acquiescence to the idea that human history is naught but an anomic, absurd course (which is unacceptable to reason).

without discrimination.<sup>167</sup> Subsequently, my aim in the sections that follow will be to offer critical consideration on how Kant's idea of providence is best understood in its relation to nature, and also to question certain interpretations by some commentators who discern Kant's rational presuppositions of having to posit nature as an agentive force (as an analogical heuristic)<sup>168</sup> too strongly.

Specifically, my chapter is set up against interpretations that put forward the so-called "cunning of nature" thesis,<sup>169</sup> such as expressed by Yovel in the idea that "nature itself, *even without the rational will*, is working according to a hidden design, bringing about political progress by means of violence and passion" (KPH 8: my italics). Nature itself, without recourse to the rational will, is mere mechanism, so we have to consider how mechanism, which is incapable of revealing the causal connections among phenomena, can lead to progress. Additionally, the "cunning of nature" thesis is expressed ambiguously in Hannah Arendt's reading that Kant accords to nature a kind of agentive<sup>170</sup> power within human history in which progress follows a preset, natural cause:

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<sup>167</sup> For example, in the Ninth and final Thesis of "Idea" Kant writes that the discovery of a guiding thread to history would serve as "a *justification* of nature, or rather of *providence*, [and] is no insignificant motivation for choosing a particular point of view when regarding the world" (IaG 8: 30). As we will see ahead, *providence* is the justification of nature because it uses a certain aspect of human nature to arrive at its ultimate purpose. So, in *Idea*, the 'guiding thread' discerned from nature directs us not solely to politics and culture, but rather to the higher end of moral humanity.

<sup>168</sup> Kant explicitly states that his use of teleological principles are merely posits toward our understanding of nature: "[I]t is an equally necessary maxim of reason not to bypass the principle of ends in the products of nature, because even though this principle does not make the way in which these products have originated more comprehensible, it is still a heuristic principle for researching the particular laws of nature, even granted that we would want to make no use of it for explaining nature itself" (KdU 5: 411). For a considered study of Kant's use of analogical language as a *heuristic* device to be used when talking about knowledge of a reality which reason cannot attain, see Vaihinger, "Kant: The Fundamentals" in *The Philosophy of As-If*, Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Yovel borrows the phrase from Eric Weil's *Problems Kantians* (Paris, 1963).

What matters in history, whose haphazard, contingent melancholy [Kant] never forgot, are not the stories, not the historical individuals, nothing that men did of good or evil, but *the secret ruse of nature* that caused the species to progress and develop all of its potentialities in the succession of generations.<sup>171</sup>

The cunning of nature must be understood as providence and not as bare mechanism insofar as sensual inclination and antagonism is not ‘cunning.’ The idea here is that through such blind, slavish mechanisms, human beings are roused from laziness and complacency to develop their rational capacities – e.g, via the dynamism of unsociable sociability found the Fourth thesis in *Idea* (IaG 8: 21-2).

On my reading, interpretations of Kant’s philosophy of history which view the cunning or ruse of nature as causing progress through an imagined capacity to play an invisible hand in the establishment of politics veer close to suggesting an implicit form of the “Lazy Argument” (*argos logos*), which itself was waged against the Stoics, and states that if all is determined beforehand, then there is really no reason for human beings to exert themselves toward their ends.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Commentators on Kant’s philosophy of history agree that Kant’s semi-anthropomorphizing of nature “as though nature were a quasi person with a will and intention” is problematic and puzzling. See, Harry van der Linden, *Kantian Ethics and Socialism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 100. See also, Louis Dupré, “Kant’s Theory of History and Progress,” *Review of Metaphysics* 51 (1998), 813-28; and David Lindstedt, “Kant: Progress in Universal History as a Postulate of Practical Reason,” *Kant Studien* 90 (1999), 129-47.

<sup>171</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1982]), 8. My italics. Hencforth, LKPP.

<sup>172</sup> While the original attribution to the “Lazy Argument” is unknown, Chrysippus is most formally recognized as lobbing the charge. See, e.g., Ricardo Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005): Salles lists Origin and Eusebius as other sources (10). See also, Cicero, *On Fate* in *The Stoics Reader: Writings and Testimonia* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008), pp. 106-109; Dorothea Frede, “Stoic Determinism” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 202-03; and Anthony Kenny, *Ancient Philosophy: A New History of Western Philosophy (Vol. 1)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): “[The *argos logos*’s] purpose was to show that if determinism was true, there was no point in doing anything whatsoever” (195).

If nature itself, as a covert, secret force, is capable, *in se*, of bringing about political progress, why should human beings be motivated to historical action? Moreover, when examined from the standpoint of value, as in suggesting historical progress, nature is not only incapable of ushering forth the good, and it equally incapable of creating evil, for both good and evil require agents have the capacity for morality, which lies outside of nature's purview. Or again, does a reading of Kant's philosophy of history that views nature as compelling human beings to unwittingly follow along, without the employment of reason, as suggesting in the so-called cunning of nature, lead to a form of quietism? Frederick Beiser takes note of these issues in Kant's socio-political essays and questions whether his use of providential language is a betrayal of his principle of autonomy: "It would be a hypostasis of our powers to assume that some higher agency can realize for us what we should do for ourselves."<sup>173</sup> As put clearly by Lea Ypi, "If we...argue that what guarantees the possibility of moral progress in the world is the way in which nature intervenes teleologically to transform the human species, we end up undermining the spontaneity of the categorical imperative and depriving human beings of moral responsibility."<sup>174</sup> And finally, Kant writes that if indeed nature has intended that human beings should arrive at their perfection solely through mechanism, it would have been unnecessary for the will to have been left free, which runs counter to nature's objective (IaG 8: 19).

Consequently, it seems uncontroversial, if not obvious, that the formulation of a

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<sup>173</sup> See Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 53-54.

<sup>174</sup> See Lea Ypi, "Natura Daedala Rerum? On the Justification of Historical Progress in Kant's *Guarantee of Perpetual Peace*" in *Kantian Review*, Vol. 14: 2 (2010), 118-148, 129.

“plan” and its subsequent following, by the willing and unwilling, requires more than blind mechanism; namely, it requires an impetus to develop and follow reason, which I find aptly conveyed by Robert Louden as follows:

[I]f we were to over-objectify these [heuristic, teleological] clues and construe them as guarantees of progress, we would undermine our own moral freedom and responsibility, as well as remove the background of uncertainty that is essential to hope. We would simply acquiesce to the allegedly objective natural purposes and historical tendencies within and around us, rather than work actively to realize our ideals.<sup>175</sup>

Similarly, too strong of an interpretation of the “cunning of nature” thesis would seem to infringe on Kant’s proleptic view of history insofar as political movement, even if only political in its most rudimentary form, to say nothing of morality, is guaranteed solely by natural mechanism, from whence would impetus toward forging a simple political body derive? Teleology is what is regulative, not mechanism.<sup>176</sup> Here it is again worthwhile to note that while the *Idea* essay argues in its Seventh and Eighth Theses that nature’s end<sup>177</sup> with regard to the human species is the establishment of a civil society based on republican institutions (IaG 8: 24-8), Kant has already stated, in a key passage, that his main goal is to describe and explain the ends of rational wills “that extends beyond the mechanical organization of their animal existence” (IaG 8: 19),<sup>178</sup> i.e., a movement away from following instincts (the sensible) toward the willing of rational ends that can and ought to be promoted in ourselves and others (the supersensible).

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<sup>175</sup> See Robert Louden, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the Enlightenment Still Elude Us*, 218.

<sup>176</sup> See, e.g., KdU 5: 404, 429.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. the distinction between nature’s ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*) of culture from its final end (*Endzweck*) of moral humanity in the famous §§82-84 of the third *Critique* (KdU 5: 426, 433) is closely examined in chapter six, *infra*.

Kant's language in describing nature's aims is purposefully analogical:

We cannot actually have cognitive knowledge of these intricate designs in nature, nor can we infer their actual existence from it, but...we can and must attribute them to objects only in thought [*hinzudenken*] so as to conceive of their possibility on an **analogy** with mankind's productive activities [*Kunsthandlungen*]" (ZeF 8: 362: my bold emphasis).

However, even allowing for Kant's propitious use of fictive and metaphorical flourishes<sup>179</sup> to posit presumptive starting points and ends, is nature to be understood as an "artist," or rather, should it be viewed as an agitator, as an exploiter of instinct, for the skillful creations of reason? Instinct, for example, which is explained in *Conjectural Beginnings* as employed by the original couple for the self-preservation of their animal ways of life, is inadequate to the task of choosing a higher, human way of life. Instinct is a natural mechanism, is given to heteronomous laws devoid of the "rational will," is shared with other animals who themselves lack rationality, and is used for the sake of satisfying natural inclinations. According to Kant, what instincts cannot do is foster progress, political or otherwise, which, because progress is forward-looking, requires "the ability to form a conscious anticipation of the future" (MAM 8: 113). It is one thing to be governed by instinct as the primitive natural mechanism of human behavior, it is another thing to expect that such natural mechanisms can produce political progress, however inchoate. As helpfully illustrated by Henry Allison, Kant not only resisted reductive attempts "to explain the nature and behavior of organic beings in purely mechanistic

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<sup>178</sup> Note also that for Kant, the political advances of the Seventh and Eighth Theses, namely, the establishment of a civil constitution based on republican principles and a covenantal federation of world states, correspond roughly to "a point barely halfway through its development" in history (IaG 8: 26).

<sup>179</sup> Kant's frequent use of analogical and metaphorical language are, on my reading, much more than literary *aperçus*. Thus my efforts in this chapter are in sympathy with Pauline Kleingeld's view that given the way Kant organizes his historical writings "in terms of what Nature does and wants, saying that this talk is metaphorical, instead of enabling us to disregard it, makes its proper interpretation more pressing." See, Kleingeld, "Nature or Providence?" 202, *ibid*.

terms, he also repudiated the alternative account of such beings as machines and, therefore, as products of (divine) art or, as he put it, as ‘an analogue of art’ (KdU 5: 374; 246).”<sup>180</sup> The inadequacy of mechanism and instinct for forming political life might well *agitate* for the capacity of reason to take on the task of establishing higher ways of human life, but only reason can determine progress; for natural mechanisms cannot will, much less lead or grieve (*natura non constringitur*).

The so-called cunning of nature is also tied to Kant’s notion of unsociable sociability. On my reading, it is a mistake to attribute to unsociable sociability too much emphasis on the “unsociable” aspect, as if it were the sole guarantee to progress. If this were the case, then Kant could have written that the means to progress in history is ‘unsociability,’ without its attendant ‘sociability.’ But, of course, Kant did not write this; rather, he frames human unsociability merely as a means toward a greater end. In his essay on “Kant’s Philosophy of History,” Allan W. Wood offers the following interpretation, which I feel supports my own:

Unsociable sociability develops along with the same faculty of reason that enables us to know that it is evil; both are products of society. Acting from our propensity to unsociable sociability is something we do freely, and for which we are to blame. But there is natural purposiveness in unsociable sociability—in other words, nature employs this propensity to further the development of the predispositions of the human species [...]. Yet as a mechanism for developing human predispositions, unsociable sociability reaches a limit at the point where human conflict disrupts the stable life of civilization that is needed for the preservation and further development of human faculties. If life and property become insecure, then people have no opportunity to perfect themselves and no incentive to accumulate products of labor, which may be taken from them before they can be enjoyed. At a certain point, therefore, nature’s end of endlessly developing the predispositions of the human species requires a stable and ordered society, a condition of peace with justice. When civilization reaches this point,

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<sup>180</sup> See Henry Allison, *Essays on Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 243.

natural purposiveness requires another device alongside unsociable sociability to balance its counterpurposive effects. This device, which Kant introduces in the Fifth and Sixth Propositions of “Idea for a Universal History,” is the establishment of “***a civil society which administers right universally***” (IUH 8:22). This civil society, characterized by a coercive power protecting rights and property, is the political state. **It is a voluntary creation of human beings themselves and is subject to ideal rational principles (of right or justice) that people are capable of recognizing and obeying**; but in promoting the full development of our species predispositions, the establishment of a political state also accords with natural teleology.<sup>181</sup>

The emphasis above lies in Wood’s identification of the breaking point, which will require a rational “counterbalance: “beyond a certain point this device can continue to operate toward nature’s end only if it is counterbalanced by a humanly created order of peace with justice within the political state and between states” (254). Kant himself seems to put this matter to rest by speaking to an in-built resistance to unsociability. It is in this resistance that,

[T]he first true steps are taken from brutishness to culture, which consists, actually, in the social worth of human beings. And here all of the talents are gradually developed, taste is formed, and, even, through continual enlightenment, the beginning of a foundation is laid for a manner of thinking which is able, over time, to transform the primitive natural predisposition for moral discernment into definite practical principles and, in this way, to ultimately transform an agreement to society that initially had been *pathologically* coerced into a *moral* whole (IaG 8: 21).

Such things as “continual enlightenment,” “thinking,” and “moral discernment,” are the true guarantors of progress, and the transforming motives for forming a “moral whole” in the world, not mechanically ordered inclinations.

Consequently, because the problems of the cunning of nature and unsociable sociability center on the question of determining forces, their ideas are rendered with a

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<sup>181</sup> Allen W. Wood, “Kant’s Philosophy of History” in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 252. My bold emphasis.

view to inevitability, and, indeed, as we have seen above with Nussbaum's misgivings over the use of 'providence' in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant employs this very language in his socio-political work, using a scarcely cited<sup>182</sup> rendition of Seneca's famous phrase, *fata volentum ducunt, nolentum trahunt*" (fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling). It is to this very use of the phrase that I will turn to next, and I will argue that while the second clause of the phrase can be understood as operating within Kant's notion of 'fate,' the first half of the phrase does not.

#### 4.2 Kant's Senecan Phrase

As I have stated, Kant's use of what I am referring to as the Senecan phrase, "*fata volentum ducunt, nolentum trahunt*" appears in two of his major socio-political essays,<sup>183</sup> which, given its repeated and memorable use, I find that a lack of commentary on this phrase is indeed curious. Some commenters, like Elisabeth Ellis, do capture the phrase's underlying meaning of inescapable compulsion, but there does not seem to be much discussion about the distinction between what Kant means by fate and by providence. Subsequently, in addition to attempting to qualify the scope of the "cunning" or "ruse" of nature thesis, my work in this section aims to clarify the significance and contributions of this phrase as it appears in Kant's historical essays.

Kant first uses the Senecan phrase in his 1793 *Theory and Practice*, followed by its reappearance in his 1795 *Toward Perpetual Peace*. In the earlier essay, which begins

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<sup>182</sup> Although they both engage Kant's idea of 'providence' in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, neither Nussbaum nor Kleingeld investigate Kant's Senecan phrase.

<sup>183</sup> See *Theory and Practice* (1793: 8: 313) and *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795: 8: 365).

in defense of alleged inconsistencies between Kant's ethics and his doctrine of the highest good made by Christian Garve (TP 8: 278-82), the phrase appears at the conclusion of Section III, which addresses the question of whether human nature, imbued with an equal capacity for good as well as for evil, is something that should be loved or loathed (TP 8: 307).<sup>184</sup>

My reading of the phrase indicates that its introduction in the essay serves two purposes. One is to describe how conflicts and disputes disrupt a pathological inborn obstinacy by forcing human nature to formulate resolutions to social and political problems. As Kant puts it, "which compels one in a direction one does not wish to go (*fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*)" (TP 8: 313). However, the phrase is not so one-sided as to center exclusively on natural compulsion. Rather, the other purpose for the phrase, with respect to this ineluctable pressure, frames the possibility for certain aspects of human nature, understood here as a free, moral, and progressive, to work toward the realization of a cosmopolitan ideal among "men and nations," even if such a reality might require a very long time to obtain or perhaps never be fulfilled. For immediately after stating the Senecan phrase, Kant writes:

In this human nature is also brought into consideration, which, ***since respect for right and duty are still animate in it***, I cannot or do not want to regard as so sunken in evil that moral practical reason cannot, after many unsuccessful attempts, ultimately triumph over evil and show it [i.e., human nature] to be worthy of love (*Loc. cit.*: my bold emphasis).

In this latter instance, the Senecan phrase, and its gesture toward resolution, is not

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<sup>184</sup> Section III of "Theory and Practice" (1793) is aimed against Moses Mendelssohn, who Kant charges with putting forward the kind of Abderitism that is later outlined in the second part of *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798): e.g., cf. (TP 8: 307-08) and (SdF 7: 82). In *Conflict*, Abderitism is the term for the third and most foolish conception of history, the one which remains at a standstill after so many ups and downs that it is described as akin to Sisyphean futility.

attached solely to conflicts urged by the mechanisms of human nature, but is affixed to an elevated and distinctive character which Kant believes merits admiration; namely, a special aspect of human nature that *cannot escape*, within the fullness of time, its general obligation or duty to foster progress. As Pauline Kleingeld persuasively argues: “Because [Kant] conceives of the ideal state as a ‘republic’ of free and equal self-legislating citizens, and because he justifies this ideal in terms of the individual right to freedom, *defending a right to coerce an unwilling state into a federation would paradoxically violate the freedom of the people in the act of trying to secure it.*”<sup>185</sup>

As we can see in Kant’s adumbrating the hopeful elements that he would revisit five years later in the second part of his 1798 *Contest of the Faculties*, this early use of the Senecan phrase in *Theory* suggests that even though “Human nature seems nowhere less worthy of love than in relations among entire peoples” (TP 8: 312), there is an element of human nature which not only takes up the cause of historical progress amid the harmful risks that such actions might incur (SdF 7: 85), but also looks upon such morally good actions in the belief that they are “possible (*in praxi*) and that it *can exist*” (TP 8: 313).

Consequently, if understood in this context, my interpretation of the Senecan phrase looks beyond the confined context of nature by recognizing another component to its meaning, namely, by understanding the phrase as a comment about *the* indispensable element of human nature (i.e., reason) that cannot forswear having to work toward moral improvement; in other words, by an obligation to work out of, and toward, the dignity of

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<sup>185</sup> See Pauline Kleingeld, “Kant’s Moral and Political Cosmopolitanism,” *Philosophy Compass* 11/1 (2016), 14-23: 17.

humanity as an end in itself. If, as the phrase states, the “willing” are being led toward the ends of rational humanity (the same ends to which the “unwilling” are being dragged), then their free choice to follow that end needs no covert, heteronomous force. Hence, my preliminary reading of Kant’s use of the phrase seems to limit the scope of nature’s “cunning.” Fate, as natural compulsion, can be understood as dragging the unwilling because in such cases the battle between individual inclinations coerce recalcitrant wills to seek some form of compromise out of a higher sense of self-interest, but ‘fate’ does not seem to be needed by the willing to willingly follow rational ends, for the willing do not need to be coerced, but rather are led by respect for right and morality. Moreover, because the “unwilling” are caving to higher demands, it seems that the rational will must already be in place to free human beings from less-than rational interests. Subsequently, it is not that the unwilling are bereft of the rational will, but are “unwilling” to obey its command.

Hence, my preliminary reading of Kant’s use of the phrase seems to limit the scope of ‘fate,’ since, as it is described by Kant as sensuous compulsion, can be understood as dragging the unwilling because in these cases the battle between individual inclinations coerce the unwilling to seek some form of compromise, but ‘fate’ does not seem to be needed by the willing to willingly follow rational ends, for the willing do not need to be coerced, but rather are led by respect for right and morality.

The Senencan phrase appears for a second time two years later in Kant’s 1795 *Toward Perpetual Peace*, wherein it is placed within the context of how nature fosters and safeguards man’s progress toward cosmopolitan peace. This placement of the phrase poses a challenge for our interpretation because it follows the question of how nature

itself worries the problem of perpetual peace, which has been already described by Kant as flowing from a design from “that great artist nature” (ZeF 8: 360). However, my reading of the phrase attempts again to limit the scope of this characterization by showing that peace can be guaranteed by nature only if nature is understood not as mere mechanism, but as teleology, for, as I have argued, mechanistic elements of human nature do not design, is not *poietic*, is not forward-looking, and thus cannot produce the ends of reason as progress in history. Consequently, as I have argued in previous sections, nature alone, if understood as the mere mechanism of human instinct and inclination, is incapable of bringing about progress, much less the ends of humanity.

On my reading, which recognizes constraints and limitations on nature’s ability to bring about human progress stands against the claim that nature, without need of the rational will (hence presumably guided by instinctual impulse), can succeed on its own to effect a basic level political progress. Arendt’s invocation the Senecan phrase in ascribing to nature a guileful stratagem that brings forth political progress, “Fate guides the willing ones, it drags the nonwilling along: *Fata ducunt volentum, trahunt nolentum*...But for Kant, it is not fate; it is *progress*, a design behind men’s backs, *a ruse of nature* or, later, a ruse of history” (LKPP 54: my italics), thus requires more explanation to show how fate not only cajoles, but also *guides*. Consequently, it is with consideration to how ‘fate’ is understood within the context of nature and the Senecan phrase, that I focus on in the next section by arguing that Kant uses ‘fate’ not to refer to nature’s creative power, but rather that ‘fate’ refers to what I have already described as agitative natural mechanisms, which alone, without the rational will, are insufficient to bring about historical progress.

#### 4.3 Kant's Analogues – Fate : Providence :: Mechanism : Teleology

As shown above, Kant employs the Senecan phrase in two of his socio-political essays. He uses the ancient saying that ‘fate leads willing, and drags the unwilling’ to highlight not only an uncomfortable compulsion that human beings would rather resist but are unable to avoid, but also an equally unavoidable *rational* employment, one with “respect for right and duty,” which is what ultimately vindicates human nature by leading to the creation of progress and better world circumstances. However, the phrase, briefly invoked by Arendt receives little if any explicative development in the literature. I have shown how in *Theory and Practice*, Kant uses the Senecan phrase to convey two senses, as both compulsion and a redeeming power of rational human nature; and also how in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the phrase is set within the power of nature to guarantee peace. However, in what sense are we to understand which elements of nature are leading the willing and dragging the unwilling?

The Senecan phrase itself claims that it is “fate” which both leads and drags. *Fate* is traditionally understood as a predetermined course of events that cannot be offset; for example, as rendered in the example and character of death in the story of a Samarran Appointment, which conveys the message that one cannot escape one’s fated future.<sup>186</sup> Fate is thus understood as inevitable. But what exactly does Kant mean by ‘fate’ in his

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<sup>186</sup> The reference is to William Somerset Maugham’s retelling of an ancient Babylonian story in his last play *Sheppey* (1933), in which Death relates the ineffectuality of escaping one’s fatal end. See W. Somerset Maugham, *Sheppey* in *Selected Plays* (London: Penguin, 1963). See also the more famous epigraph to John O’Hara’s *Appointment in Samarra* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 3.

sociopolitical writings?<sup>187</sup> Is it a final destination which cannot be escaped? Fortunately, although it seems to be passed over in the literature, Kant is quite clear about what he means by ‘fate.’ After stating that mechanical processes point to something higher than themselves, in the First Supplement of *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant very quickly offers an answer to this problem which remains consistent with his previous explanation in *Theory* by introducing a distinction by what he means by fate and providence, spelling out first his conception of fate: “if understood to be the compelling force of a cause whose laws of operation are unknown to us, we call it *Fate*” (ZeF 8: 360-61). Understood in these terms, ‘fate’ is a forceful, provocative cause.

As a compelling cause, ‘fate’ is seen as creating problems which it alone cannot solve. Fate, for example, as an antagonizing force, leads to war, but it would be wrong to conclude that war, on its face, leads to or causes progress and peace. While fate is unavoidable insofar as all of humanity have mechanical compulsion which not only persist, but these blind “gears and springs” reappear in the same ways, i.e., as the blind “gears and springs” of natural inclinations of which there is no escape. As Friedrich Schelling would write a year before Kant’s death, “One can escape fate only in one way: by throwing oneself into the arms of providence.”<sup>188</sup> In other words, fate itself remains stagnant; fate does not itself improve. As Kant writes immediately after introducing the fate-providence distinction, “for in reflecting on the relations of effects to their cause, human reason must remain within the bounds of possible experience” (ZeF 8: 362). Here

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<sup>187</sup> Pauline Kleingeld’s excellent examination of Kant’s providential language in the political essays mentions the term ‘fate’ but does not explore its meaning in the essays. See, Kleingeld, “Nature or Providence?” Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 61.

Kant is stating that no thesis of progress can be valid from a factual point of view; however, notions of progress can be presumed from a moral point of view.<sup>189</sup> As I have already shown in chapter three (*supra*, p. 87), nature has value only insofar as it serves as a means to human reason and freedom.

This is a view Kant has consistently maintained, for example, as demonstrated in his early writing on natural catastrophes:

Man is not born to build everlasting dwellings on this stage of vanity. Since his entire life has a far nobler aim, how well does this harmonize with all the destruction fit into this which allows us to see the transience of the world in even those things that seem to us the greatest and most important and to remind us that the goods of this world cannot provide any satisfaction for our desire for happiness! I am in no way implying that man is subject to an unchanging fate of natural laws without respect to his particular virtues. That same supreme wisdom from which the course of nature derives that accuracy that requires no correction, has subordinated lower purposes to higher ones, and in just those intentions in which the former has often made the most significant exceptions to the general rules of nature in order to attain those infinitely higher aims that far surpass all the resources of nature, in those intentions the leaders of the human race will also prescribe laws in their government of the world to regulate even the course of natural things (I: 460-61).<sup>190</sup>

The passage above would find its correlate more famously in the Third Proposition of 1784 Idea essay:

Nature has willed that human beings produce everything that extends beyond the mechanical organization of their animal existence completely on their own, and that they shall not partake in any happiness or perfection other than that which they attain free of instinct and by means of their own reason (IaG 8: 19).

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<sup>189</sup> See, e.g., Howard Williams' argument that, "We have to suppose perpetual peace is the inevitable outcome of natural mechanism in human society when attempting to act in accordance with justice. Yet we cannot assume that this progress is in fact an inevitable outcome when we dispassionately observe human society." See Williams, *Kant and the End of War: A Critique of Just War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 29.

<sup>190</sup> Immanuel Kant, *On the Causes of Earthquakes on the Occasion of the Calamity that Befell the Western Countries of Europe Towards the End of Last Year* in *Kant: Natural Science*, trans. Olaf Reinhardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

In these two passages, separated by nearly thirty years, Kant's teleological view of nature is reemphasized and re-demonstrates that teleology is subordinated to a higher purpose, namely a moral purpose, without which there is no value in nature whatsoever.

As the latter passage shows, fate, as an agitating force, not only is linked to natural disasters and challenges, it is also tied to mechanism, and, therefore, cannot be a basis to self-esteem e.g., in how nature is parsimonious in bestowing human beings better natural predispositions in order to force them to develop "rational self-esteem" (IaG 8: 20) for their rational products. Manfred Kuehn calls Kant's Third Proposition the "principle of human self-reliance in happiness and perfection."<sup>191</sup> The principle to which Kuehn alludes is not grounded in natural mechanisms such as instincts, for self-reliance and perfection will be the result of human reason. As Kant puts it, "[Human beings] were intended neither to be led by instinct, nor to be supplied and instructed with innate knowledge; they were intended to produce everything themselves" (IaG 8: 19). Animal needs are satisfied in nature by their endowed instincts; however, human beings, while also possessing instincts, need an added endowment to produce the satisfaction of their distinctive needs, that being reason.

Subsequently, just as there are different needs in animals and humans, human values and animal "values" are different and species-specific. It therefore seems *as if* nature wants human beings to live distinct from the way animals live: nature "gave [man] neither bull's horns, nor the lion's claws, nor the dog's teeth, but only his hands" (IaG, *Loc. cit.*). In complete accord with his earlier views in *Idea*, in *Toward Perpetual Peace*

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<sup>191</sup> Manfred Kuehn, "Reason as Species Characteristic" in *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, eds. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 73.

human values are also described as residing on a higher plane because “nature wills irresistibly that right ultimately attains supreme authority” (ZeF 8: 367). And the way that nature “wills” that right, duty, and “reason’s own end” are attained is through the “mechanism of nature, in the form of selfish inclinations” (ZeF 8: 366). Here, then, is what Kant consistently means by ‘fate:’ it is the unavoidable clash of particular “selfish inclinations” which will drag the unwilling through compulsion because they either refuse to follow reason or are in a state incapable of following the rational will.

In contrast to fate, Kant proceeds to define a higher cause that subsumes fate, one “which is directed toward the objective final end of the human species and which predetermines this course of events in the world, this plan is called Providence” (Zef *Loc. cit.*). This is a very important passage, and it bears repeating that Kant’s use of ‘nature,’ ‘fate,’ and ‘providence’ serves as a *heuristic* means to describe what can be hoped for morally but not known factually. For example, it seems clear at this point, that *providence* is introduced by Kant to denote the unfolding of a rational plan. Because this plan is described as emanating from nature, but not as mechanism, which is not rational, *providence* can be understood as a purposive plan, i.e., the concept of *providence* functions analogically as a regulative principle of teleology, and, as a regulative principle of purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*). As Kant argues in the third *Critique*, the notion of purposiveness presupposes an intelligent designer who is capable creating a thing into subsistence as a possibility and into existence as actuality (KdU 5: 220).

A teleological judgment is one in which we compare something “as it is with one of what it ought to be” (KdU 20: 240). This comparison is thus analogical and regulative, for it allows us to reflect on something like nature (or history) *as if* how it

ought to be (KdU 5: 411). In order to make sense of the workings of nature as a whole, because of the limitations of human reason, we have “to add” a concept of a supreme cause (KdU 5: 447) to our thinking, and in this way we can represent events in nature to ourselves as purposive. This is what I take Kant to mean in *Toward Perpetual Peace* when he describes his analogical use of the notion of *providence* in nature:

The use of the word *nature* is also...more appropriate for denoting the limits of human reason (as reason, regarding the relation of effects to their causes, must confine itself within the limits of possible experience) and *more modest* than the expression of a *providence* that is knowable to us. With an expression such as Providence one presumptuously fits oneself with the wings of Icarus, in order to approach the secret of inscrutable intention (ZeF 8: 362).

In this passage, Kant reminds us that the consequences of Icarus’ hubris proved disastrous. We use the metaphorical language of ‘nature,’ ‘fate,’ and, ‘providence’ not with any firm knowledge of their certainty, but merely to posit an analogy with how such things as nature or politics or history “ought to” appear to reason. Consequently, the way I read these terms in Kant’s provocative account suggests that he employs a division of labor to describe how a purposive design ought to be understood: viz., through a relationship between *fate* (nature’s agitating provocations, tied to sensible inclination) and *providence* (the final end of rational humanity, tied to the supersensible), namely, that from a practical point of view, the former can be used for the sake of the latter. As Kant puts it, “for example, in the view of the concept of a perpetual peace and duty to work toward it by using that mechanism of nature” (*Loc. cit.*).

It would seem, therefore, that consistent with his earlier socio-political essays, when Kant introduces nature within the context of perpetual peace, he is not referring to

it only as mere mechanism or blind, natural necessity, which is relegated to mere external contingency.<sup>192</sup> Instead, nature is shown to have two aspects, it is both artist and agitative: in the latter, it is human mechanism, i.e., actions from particular inclinations; in the former, aspect as “purposiveness in the course of the world... understood as the underlying wisdom of a higher cause” (ZeF 8: 361). This distinction finds previous elaboration in the third *Critique* (KdU 20: 219), wherein Kant conceives of nature over and above mechanical necessity by making a crucial distinction between causality (mechanism) and technique (teleology), the latter of which is the only one capable of bringing forth nature’s creative power.

Hence, when Kant introduces the Senecan phrase in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, he has these two aspects in mind in his description of nature’s “will:”

When I say that nature *wills* that this or that ought to happen, I do not mean that she imposes a *duty* upon us to act thus (for this can only be done by practical reason acting free of compulsion), but rather that she *does* it herself, regardless of whether we will it so or not (*fata volentum ducunt, nolentum trahunt*) (ZeF 8: 365)

Subsequently, on my interpretation, the “great artist nature” creates by using the agitating compulsions of ‘fate’ toward the ultimate fulfillment of its providential end, which, I believe, finds corroboration in Kant’s previous description of this dynamic in *Theory*:

The end of *humanity* as an entire species, that is, the attainment of its ultimate destiny through the free use of its powers, as far as they extend, will be brought by providence to an outcome which the ends of *human*

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<sup>192</sup> In the *Prolegomena*, natural necessity is characterized by its conditioned contingency, or as “blind natural necessity:” [S]ince all natural necessity in the sensible world is always *conditioned*, in that it always presupposes the dependence of one thing on another, and since unconditioned necessity must be sought only in the unity of a cause distinct from the sensible world, *although the causality of that cause, in turn, if it were merely nature, could never make comprehensible the existence of the contingent as its consequence*; reason, therefore, by means of the theological idea, frees itself from fatalism—from blind natural necessity both in the connection of nature itself, without a first principle, and in the causality of this principle itself—and leads the way to the concept of a cause through freedom and so to that of a highest intelligence (Prol 4: 364: my italics).

*beings*, considered separately, work against. For precisely the opposition of the inclinations among one another from which evil arises, provides reason with free play to subjugate them altogether and, rather than evil, which destroys itself, to make the good, which, once it exists, preserves itself, dominant (TP 8: 312).

Hence it is nature as teleology that Kant introduces in as providing a providential plan, which is attached to a form of internal rationality – the artistic hand from which the ends of peace and humanity can only be derived. Ends, by definition, cannot be actualized by natural mechanism. Mechanism is mute when it comes to providing an account of progress. Rather, ends or purposes are actualized from teleology: viz. the ends that are “willed” by nature, namely, the teleological development of our predispositions (*Anlagen*) and, most importantly, our capacity (*Vermögen*) of reason:

Hence reason can use the mechanism of nature, in the form of selfish inclinations, which by their nature oppose one another even externally, as a means to make room for reason’s own end .... Nature wills irresistibly that right ultimately attains supreme authority (TP 8: 367).

Mechanism of nature, for example, wars, incite humanity to develop more lawful institutions for peace through the use of its reason (KdU 5: 433). Ultimately, Kant sees that both aspects of nature, as teleology (providence) and mechanism (fate) are integral to his use of analogical language in nature’s “guarantee” of peace.

We can see, then, that the “cunning of nature” thesis, as “the dialectic of blind forces” without recourse to the rational will, is incapable to guaranteeing progress (KPH 140). The so-called cunning of nature is impotent in bringing about progress, for progress can only be ushered by the rational will. Thus it might be claimed with Katerina Deligiorgi that,

if we look to history with our moral interests foremost in mind, then the appeal to nature provides us with grounds for hope in so far as reason as a

capacity is natural to human beings. The development of this capacity, however, is something that takes us away from nature, enabling us to judge nature itself by a value that is not nature but morality.<sup>193</sup>

And although her commentary on the distinction between fate and providence is brief, my reading in these pages is ably supported by Kimberly Hutchings,

In his essay on perpetual peace, Kant distinguishes between the concept of fate and the concept of providence within history (VIII: 361-362; 108). Both concepts involve the assertion that there is a necessity involved in the workings of nature in history. Fate implies a causal necessity, pushing us in a direction unknown. Providence is a teleological concept, involving the idea that there is purpose in history, ‘the underlying wisdom of a higher cause’, so that history is explicable in terms of its end. **As Kant’s readings of historical development demonstrate, it is the concept of providence that most obviously structures his account.** However, it (providence) does so, as Kant quite clearly states, only by virtue of the philosopher’s judgement, choosing to interpret history as if it were progress. This attribution of an end and direction to history is analogous to the role of teleological principles of reflective judgement in the understanding of nature as outlined in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*.<sup>194</sup>

#### 4.4 Concluding Remarks

My efforts in this chapter have incorporated an explication of Kant’s Senecan phrase, skeptical concerns over too strong of an attribution to the “cunning of nature” in guaranteeing historical progress, and an attempt to shed light on Kant’s use of the terms fate and providence in his historical essays. I have argued that while natural mechanisms play a part in Kant’s idea of progress, the so-called “cunning” of nature would be

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<sup>193</sup> See Katerina Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005), 465.

<sup>194</sup> Kimberly Hutchings, *Kant, Critique and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 53. My bold emphasis.

anything but cunning if this was the only part of nature that Kant had in mind. Kant's use of the Senecan phrase fits within the framework of his socio-political thought, but, as I have tried to show, some qualification is required to limit the scope of 'fate' to sensible mechanism.

*Fate*, as compelling inclination, say, a force like war, is merely the first step toward peace, which will require reason, as the arch human telos from *Providence*, to take over and lead. Although human beings might be blind to "nature's plan," when Kant introduces nature as positing a purpose, he is categorizing nature not as fate or mere mechanism, for mechanism cannot plan, but rather as providence, i.e., as that which *guides* the development and functioning of an organism or other system. Lastly, the much talked about "guarantee" of perpetual peace is not underwritten by nature, but rather, as I have argued in this chapter, by a human rational capacity that makes use of natural inclinations for the sake of progress. It is, as aptly stated by Allen W. Wood, Kant "falls back on the moral duty we have to promote the end of perpetual peace, and to hope, on practical or rational religious grounds, that the end will be achieved. ***It is this rational hope, more than any theoretical expectation, that he emphasizes as the 'guarantee' of perpetual peace*** (PP 8:360–62)."<sup>195</sup>

Moreover, the notion of prolepsis is also shown to operate in Kant's Senecan phrase in his political essays points us in the direction forward to a cosmopolitan world wherein the fulfilment of our highest rational capacities can be fulfilled. Kant's use of the Senecan phrase thus captures the reciprocal dynamic between his encoded meanings

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<sup>195</sup> See Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Philosophy of History" in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, 258. My bold emphasis.

of 'fate' and 'providence' within the context of nature's "guarantee," but without a concomitant grasp of their division of labor, its full significance can remain elusive and puzzling.

## CHAPTER 6

### HISTORICAL HOPE SUPPORTED BY TELEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

If there is any science necessary to the human being that the human being truly needs, it is that which teaches him properly to fulfill and hold the position that has been assigned to him in creation, and from which he can learn what one must be in order to be a human being....and, however small or imperfect he may then find himself, he still will be quite good for his assigned post, because he is neither more nor less than exactly what he ought to be (BZB 20: 45-46).<sup>196</sup>

An organized product of nature is that in which everything is an end and reciprocally a means as well. Nothing in it is in vain, purposeless, or to be ascribed to a blind mechanism of nature.<sup>197</sup>

If there is no goal in the whole of history of man's lot, then we must put one in: assuming, on the one hand, that we have need of a goal, and on the other that we've come to see through the illusion of an immanent goal and purpose.<sup>198</sup>

#### 6.1 *Teleology as Regulative Grounds for Hope.*

In the previous chapter, I examined what I called the “Senecan phrase” in two of Kant’s political essays to explicate his notions of “fate” and “providence” toward drawing distinctions in nature between mechanism (fate) and teleology (providence), the latter of which can offer us a clue or regulative principle to be able to reasonably anticipate an historical future conducive to reason’s ends.<sup>199</sup> Against, interpretations of Kant’s philosophy of history which view “nature itself” as cunningly capable of ushering forth historical progress, specifically, through the tendency of the unsociable sociability and

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<sup>196</sup> Immanuel Kant, Remarks in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, eds. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 96-97. Henceforth, BZB.

<sup>197</sup> Kant, KdU 5: 376.

<sup>198</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Nachlaß Summer 1886–Spring 1887, KSA Vol. 12, Section 6, p.9 in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967).

<sup>199</sup> See, e.g., KdU 20: 219, wherein Kant conceives of nature over and above mechanical necessity by making a crucial distinction between causality (mechanism) and technique (teleology), the latter of which represents nature’s creative power.

guaranteed antagonism described in the *Idea* and *Peace* essays, I argued that, by definition, these mechanisms alone are not able, *on their own*, to bring forth historical progress.<sup>200</sup> Ends cannot be planned or actualized by mechanism, which also seems to place limits on willful human agency. Consequently, I relocated the capacity to deliver historical progress from a capacity of mechanism to the teleological development of human reason, which might well be stirred by the “blind dialectic” of necessity and inclination, but is itself the sole, estimable agent of progress via its teleological development; subsequently, in my attempt to demonstrate how Kant views nature under two aspects, i.e., as both *artist* and *agitator*, it might be claimed with Howard Williams that “Man progresses...both because of, and despite, nature.”<sup>201</sup>

In this chapter, I want to lend further support to the arguments in the my previous chapter by showing how Kant’s teleological understanding of progress in his essays on history is further developed in the *Critique of Teleological Power of Judgment*; especially in §§82-84, where history and culture are explicitly judged to be teleological using the external principle of purposiveness: a principle that is the extended version of the principle of absolute or inner purposiveness that we must employ in judging organisms. I do this by providing a close reading and explication of the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, and my aim in doing so will allow me to articulate an oft-cited failure on Kant’s part to demonstrate the full significance of teleological principles in his

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<sup>200</sup> My aim throughout the present and previous chapter has been to attenuate the force of the guarantee thesis by viewing teleological principles as regulative ideals we can adopt as guidelines, but even allowing for this, Paul Guyer argues that the guarantee of progress thesis, e.g., toward peace, seems incompatible with, if not undermined by, Kant’s doctrine of radical evil. See, e.g., Guyer, “The Possibility of Perpetual Peace,” in Luigi Caranti (ed), *Kant’s Perpetual Peace: New Interpretative Essays* (Rome: Luiss University Press, 2006), 143-63.

<sup>201</sup> See Howard Williams, *Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 2.

historical essays.<sup>202</sup> Much of what is presented in this chapter will seem familiar to scholars of Kant's philosophy. Kant's teleological is widely studied and explicated. However, the practical application of teleological judgment seems to me to be the *raison d'être* for Kant's efforts, and on this matter there appears to be a space open to write on its connection to fostering hope. Consequently, with regard to my dissertation's focus on the different proleptic aspects of Kant's philosophy, I argue that teleological principles can be *used* with specific application to foster hope in historical progress. Specifically, I believe that Kant's development of teleology in history can bolster hope to avoid the acceptance that the shaping of the future is completely out of the reach of human hands, and that it would indeed be a betrayal of hope to forfeit the notion that there are teleological principles operating in history thereby resigning ourselves to the lawless and aimless "dismal reign of chance" (*trostloses Ungefähr*: IaG 8: 18), a caveat that humanity can ill afford to dismiss..

The second part of the third *Critique* is a remarkable attempt by Kant to analyze history and politics as fields of inquiry where a type of reflective judgment and its regulative principle of external purposiveness indeed proves *useful*. Specifically, as I have shown in previous chapters, regulative principles can serve as guidelines to follow, much like the "guiding thread" in *Idea* which Kant uses to confer a rational expectation that this world of ours can be improved (IaG 8: 30). The question that naturally follows

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<sup>202</sup> See, e.g., Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005): "The teleological theory...offers guaranteed progress toward the same political goals, but without the conscious effort of human actors. Little wonder, then, that the teleological theory attracts even Kant's adherence, as it enables optimism to flourish in the face of the most pessimism-inducing reality .... Kant makes a series of attempts in his political philosophy to bridge the realms of freedom and nature. His teleology is one of the most serious of these, and even its failures illuminate Kant's goals and methods" (43). Ellis seems to offer a strong reading of nature's "guarantee" of historical progress. One which is susceptible to my arguments in Chapter Five, for there is no such blind optimism or iron-clad guarantee in Kant's philosophy.

is to ask how such useful clues are derived. On the one hand, Kant argues that we do not have good reasons for *knowing* that there will be progress in history, on the other hand he does believe that we have grounds, underwritten by teleological principles, for *hoping* that the human species is approximating toward its rational destiny. The balance of this chapter aims to answer the question for the teleological grounds of such hope, which will help to clarify how Kant's more nuanced notion of teleology in the third *Critique* can serve to orient our thinking in ways to anticipate and contribute toward obtaining historical progress.

## 6.2 *How is Teleological Judgment Useful?*

In the third *Critique*, Kant consistently argues that teleological judgment is indispensably useful, but not in virtue of actually explaining anything. He consistently holds that our explanatory models of nature must always be mechanistic, even though there can be no iron-clad guarantee we can complete the task prescribed by this “regulative” principle of mechanism (KdU 5: 383). A teleological judgment takes the form of “S is for the sake of P” wherein S is a means toward the purpose of P. However, Kant also argues that human beings are incapable of discerning nature's purposes, and so are left with positing as-if scenarios for such ends as useful guides: in other words, teleological judgment serves as “a heuristic principle for researching the particular laws of nature, even granted that we would want to make no use of it for explaining nature itself” (KdU 5: 410).

The notion that teleological judgment can be useful is examined by Kant in the Appendix to the third *Critique*, which is a consideration of a helpful application of the principle of teleology, and this can only be done after one has explained and determined the use and boundaries of the principle of purposiveness. In this way, the Appendix illustrates how the principle of purposiveness *can be put to empirical use* with a certain cautiousness proper to Kant's *critical* endeavors.

In the three *Critiques*, the section on the Doctrine of Method aims to show *the application* of the *a priori* principles of reason with a view to their scientific cognition. For example, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this method is configured in terms of a *plan* that can be made with the *materials* that one gained in the Analytic and the Dialectic (KrV A707/B735). In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argues that the pure practical principles of reason *do not* lead to a science with a method, but instead here the doctrine of method is understood "as the way in which one can provide the laws of pure practical reason with access to the human mind and influence on its maxims, that is, the way in which one can make objectively practical reason subjectively practical as well" (KpV 5: 151).

However, in the *Critique of Judgment*, there is no doctrine of method for taste, for its principles do not lead to any form of cognition or the furnishing of laws. Subsequently, the methodology of teleological judgment is unique in the sense that teleology does not belong to any science, but rather offers a *propaedeutic* to metaphysics by supplying regulative principles of final causes. In order to be complete, a critique of teleological judgment must show the manner in which (i.e., the method by which) nature

can be judged in accordance with such principles, and this will prove to have a negative utility, insofar as teleology does not extend our cognition of our nature (KdU 5: 418).

Consequently, in order to make sense of the claims in the Appendix, we need to retrace a few steps back to see in what sense the regulative principle of external purposiveness is indeed indispensably useful. I start here at §75, wherein Kant took pains to remind his reader of the fact that the concept of an objective purposiveness of nature is *a critical principle of reason* for the reflecting power of judgment, and “critical” here means a regulative one arising out of the peculiar constitution of our cognitive faculties. In this important section, Kant makes a key distinction between internal and external purposiveness by distinguishing between an objective (internal) purposiveness of organisms, which absolutely require teleological judgments, and a relative (external) purposiveness that require a teleological conception of nature as a whole. In his discussion of what exactly necessitates a teleological judgment in organisms, Kant argues that we cannot but judge and understand those beings as natural ends, and that the principle of purposiveness can also be extended to our judgments about “nature as a whole” (KdU 5: 397-98).

However, just because organisms are teleologically understood, it does not mean that nature *as a whole* is also a giant organism. Indeed, Kant further explains that while objective purposiveness is already an absolutely necessary maxim for the study of organisms, as a guide for the study of nature as a whole it remains a useful principle, but not an absolutely necessary or indispensable one:

It is in fact indispensable for us to subject nature to the concept of an intention if we would even merely conduct research among its organized

products by means of continued observation; and this concept is thus already an absolutely necessary maxim for the use of our reason in experience. It is obvious that once we have adopted such a guideline for studying nature and found it reliable we must also at least attempt to apply this maxim of the power of judgment to the whole of nature, since by means of it we have been able to discover many laws of nature which, given the limitation of our insights into the inner mechanisms of nature, would otherwise remain hidden from us (KdU 5: 398).

In this passage, Kant argues that because we have profited much from the principle of teleology in studying organisms, it seems reasonable to apply it to the whole of nature, at least as a test to see if we can discover more than just *mechanistic* natural laws. The idea of a unified system in our investigation of nature can serve as a useful guide for us because it allows us to identify certain relationships of interconnectedness that are not explicable by means of categorial explanations. Here, Kant is careful to clarify the distinction between the status of teleological claims with regard to organisms and the entirety of nature: even though we must be able to at least try and see if teleological principles can help our investigation of nature as a whole, it is not the case that we have thus proven that nature as a whole is teleological or purposive: “But with regard to the latter use [for nature as a whole] this maxim of the power of judgment is certainly useful, but not indispensable, because nature as a whole is not given to us as organized” (*Loc. cit.*).

Consequently, because even the mere thought of organisms demands that we make use of a concept of intention and final ends, particular organisms justify the use of the principle of purposiveness, whereas nature as a whole does not justify such a judgment because nowhere is it possible for us to experience nature as a whole. If we recall the distinction between mechanism and teleology, what all this suggests is that

teleology, in the case of studying organisms, gives us so much more than a mere mechanism; moreover, if we take this as a clue (*Leitfaden*), it *promises* to give us more in our research into nature as well. This is what the Appendix to teleological judgment investigates, and its use value presents itself to us as an inferential clue. By critically positioning teleology outside of the proper principles of theology and natural science, Kant seeks after an experimental application of this principle as a regulative maxim of research not only for studying nature, but also by correspondingly showing that investigations into human history *can also benefit* from such analysis, which is examined in the next section.

### 6.3 Teleological Principles Contribute to Historical Hope

The distinction between the principle of purposiveness employed in judging organisms and nature as a whole, corresponding to Kant's earlier discussion of the absolute (internal) and relative (external) purposiveness in §63, becomes operative again in §§ 82-84 on the philosophy of history. According to Kant, the field of historical inquiry does not deal with organisms *per se*, but with a conception of nature as a whole and the *external relationships* among organisms – human beings in particular. Thus, teleological language employed here will be *useful*, but not indispensable, in forming certain judgments. In other words, whatever human beings, as end-setting organisms, form out of their innate skills and capacities (*viz.* culture and its progression in history) will be able to be judged as teleological, thanks to the use of the principle of external

purposiveness, for culture and history are forms of external relations among human beings.

In §82, Kant begins by distinguishing again between *external* and *internal* purposiveness. The former signifies a relationship where one thing serves another as a means to an end (KdU 5: 425), this is the relative purposiveness that by itself justifies no absolute teleological judgment. For such relationships, it is useful but not indispensable to employ a concept of purposiveness. Here, on the one hand, Kant offers examples of external purposiveness that include soils, air, and water *only when they are taken in relation to organisms*. When we consider these elements in relation to mountains, for example, we cannot say that they are externally purposive for the mountains to pile up, for the reason that mountains, by themselves, do not require teleological explanations.

On the other hand, in relation to internal purposiveness Kant writes,

Now if one asks why a thing exists, the answer is either that its existence and its generation have no relation at all to a cause acting according to intentions, and in that case one always understands its origin to be in the mechanism of nature; or there is some intentional ground of its existence (as a contingent natural being), and this thought is difficult to separate from the concept of an organism: for once we have had to base its internal possibility in a causality of final causes and an idea that underlies it, we also cannot conceive of the existence of this product otherwise than as an end. For the represented effect, the representation of which is at the same time the determinative ground of its production in an intelligently acting cause, is called an *end* (KdU 5: 426).

So if the answer to the question of why something exists comes from referring to some intentional ground of its existence, it is difficult to conceive of this thing other than as an organism or a natural end, i.e., as a product of nature that is internally purposive. In other

words, if we can *only* explain why something exists in terms of final causes, we must conceive it as an end, thus as internally purposive.

Furthermore, if the purpose of this being is to be found in itself, such an organism is called a ‘final end’ (*Endzweck*), outside of nature’s domain, namely, as free and autonomous. Kant then goes on to contrast the concept of the final end of nature with that of the ‘ultimate end’ (*letzter Zweck*), which refers to a being for whom all other beings can be seen as a means. As Henry Allison puts it, “for Kant ascribing an ultimate end [*letzter Zweck*] to nature presupposes a final end [*Endzweck*] of creation, which takes us beyond anything that nature itself for all its “cunning” can bring about.”<sup>203</sup> These concepts are crucial to Kant’s philosophy of history as he works it out in the third *Critique*, for human being is an *internally purposive* organism whose ultimate end is the development of their rational capacity in culture, not in nature, at least insofar as the external relations between people are concerned (KdU 5: 425).

Subsequently, with regard to Kant’s teleological treatment of history, it is important to look into how one of these natural ends involves having certain limitations, while the other is seemingly unlimited. For example, what is an ultimate or a final end of nature? Moreover, how can we judge any being in nature to be that final end? To begin with, it should be clear that a final end cannot be dependent for its nature on heteronomous forces, that is, as conditioned (i.e., limited); instead, a final end must be autonomous, unconditional or unlimited (KdU 5: 426).

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<sup>203</sup> See Henry Allison, *Essays on Kant*, 245. See also Kristi E. Sweet, *Kant on Practical Life: From Duty to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 186-87, for a very clear and helpful explication.

However, it is possible to conceive of human being, as a natural being, as the *final end* of creation, for whom everything else is a means. Kant argues that the human being “is the final end of the creation here on earth, because he is the only being who forms a concept of ends for himself and who by means of his reason can make a system of ends out of an aggregate of purposively formed things” (KdU 5: 426). We should keep in mind that such judgments about what is good for what end are always about external purposiveness, and thus need to be evaluated on the basis of whether or not it is useful to conceive of nature and the relationships among natural beings in this way (KdU 5: 427).

Therefore, there is no objective criterion by which we can judge the order of organisms, so to speak, and decide what is the ultimate end of creation. Kant arrives at the provisional conclusion that human beings must be the ultimate end of nature by asking the question for whom the mineral kingdom is good (KdU 5: 426). It turns out that it is good for the animal kingdom to sustain itself, and this leads him to those for whom the animal kingdom is good, namely to human beings. Even though positing an ultimate end of nature is necessary for the sake of a system of all organisms in accordance with ends, Kant argues that experience shows that there is no reason why human beings should be the ultimate end of nature. It is equally possible and logical to start with the mineral kingdom and end with human beings, as well as start with human beings and end with the mineral kingdom: “And thus the human being, however much he might be valued as an end in a certain relation, would in another relation in turn have only the rank of a means” (KdU 5: 427). That is to say, we have no experience of nature’s special care of human beings or of a sign that human being is a special case. As Kant again puts it, “nature has not made the least exception to its generative as well as

destructive powers, but has rather subjected him to its mechanism without any end” (*Loc. cit.*).

Indeed, Kant continues to point out that the first thing that needs to be shown to be purposive, the habitat of human beings, is subject to the mechanism of nature to such a destructive extent that we find no reason why human beings should not be subordinated to the mere mechanism of nature that acts quite unintentionally. It is suspicious that the human being, even though her understanding saves her from nature’s destructive forces from time to time, is above or beyond the reign of the mechanism of nature (KdU 5: 428). What does this mean? Kant argues that while experience does not show us that human beings *are* the final ends of nature, the requirement of a teleological system of nature grants us the reflective judgment that human beings *be thought as such (in reflection)*.

The human being is not the ultimate end of nature because we can reflect on nature in various ways hierarchically, but if we hope to explain the external relationship between such organisms and a teleologically conceived nature, we must make such a judgment. We cannot conceive of a necessary hierarchy in the teleological consideration of things by means of experience; however, this does not mean that nature only exhibits mechanistic tendencies and human beings should be subsumed under the mechanism of nature. This would destroy the ability Kant believes human beings have to think of themselves as free and independent. If we were not able to imagine a different kind of causality that is not mechanical, we could not have explained organisms. Thus, because we have no insight into the determination or origin of these beings, we cannot say that such and such a being *is* the ultimate end of nature; however, that does not mean that we

can never have sufficient grounds *to reflectively judge* a certain kind of being to be the ultimate end. For theoretical purposes, the maxims of reason suggest that such an ultimate end is necessary, and it grants us the regulative claim that human being is this ultimate end of nature. For we risk going we go too far in thinking that everything in the world happened by mere mechanism or we fall into an inescapable regress where we cannot explain the purpose of certain things without referring to another thing, and the purpose of that in some other thing, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Therefore, Kant believes that we have sufficient cause *to judge* human being as the final end of nature and not only as a natural end. This point is crucial, because we must keep in mind while reading the rest of the Appendix that even though we cannot say that human beings *are* the final ends of nature (because that is neither revealed to our minds in experience and neither can we feel it as such), they still *ought to be judged* as such, due to the presumptive requirement of a teleological system of nature, via a methodological requirement of reflective judgment.

The fact that human beings are end-setters themselves provides us with a much needed heuristic clue. This fact by itself does not prove that human beings *are* the final ends of nature, but it makes it more probable *and useful* for us to consider *the relationship* between the existence of human beings and nature as a whole, which Kant comes to call *culture* or *history* in an externally purposive manner. It is *useful* to reflectively judge human beings as the ultimate ends of nature, because such a reflection at least theoretically *makes it possible* to conceive of history as a teleological whole, and this *contributes* to historical hope insofar as it practically helps us identify how human beings can pursue the attainment of their moral goals. In this way, such a reflection is

useful insofar as it shows us how history can be understood in ushering forth a better, more moral, more virtuous world. Which I take to be Kant's overarching aim in his philosophy.

#### 6.4 Human Being as the Final End of Nature

Kant argues that based on the basis of the principle of external purposiveness, it is possible for human beings to think of themselves as the final ends of nature, because from a theoretical perspective, the fact that human beings are themselves organisms that are capable of setting their own ends. Kant takes this capacity to provide a useful clue to pursue an entirely teleological consideration of their place within an order of other organisms in nature as a whole. While there is no ontological justification for thinking that we *are* the final ends of nature, I have shown how such a judgment is nevertheless useful, for based on the idea that we are ourselves end-setters, we can tentatively understand that we should be thought of as the final end of nature. This way of understanding ourselves is indeed a *useful* clue if we are to have any hope to sort out the relationship between human beings (as ends) and nature (as means).

In §83, we find out about what it really means for human beings to be judged as the final end of nature here on earth. To reiterate, a final end of nature is an organism “in relation to which all other natural things constitute a system of ends in accordance with fundamental principles of reason, not, to be sure, for the determinative power of judgment, yet for the reflecting power of judgment” (KdU 5: 429). That is, human beings are the final ends of nature, because reflective teleological judgments must conceive of

the system of nature in a way that subjugates it to our end-setting capacities. According to Kant, there are *two ways* in which this external relationship between the final end of nature (human beings) and other organisms can be figured: the ultimate end of nature can either be fulfilled by nature itself, in the form of *happiness*, or by human beings using nature through their aptitudes and skills, which would constitute *culture*. Therefore, *happiness* is the end of nature which is possible through the claimed generosity of nature itself, whereas *culture* as an ultimate end of nature can be developed by the capacities, predispositions, and talents that human beings possess. In what follows, I will explicate Kant's thoughts on happiness to then explain his conception of culture.

Happiness is a thorny issue because of how Kant equates it with caprice and vacillation:

The concept of happiness is not one that man abstracts (say) from his instincts and hence gets from himself as animal. Rather, it is a mere *idea*: the idea of a state of his, an idea to which he tries to make that state adequate under merely empirical conditions (which is impossible). Man himself formulates this idea; and since his understanding is tied to imagination and the senses, he formulates the idea so diversely and even changes the concept so often that nature, even if it were subjected completely to man's choice, still could not possibly adopt a definite and fixed universal law that would [keep] it in harmony with that wavering concept and so with the purpose that each person chooses (KdU 5: 430).<sup>204</sup>

The point being that human beings really have no idea what goals they wish to pursue; moreover, even if they made up their minds on what desires to fulfill, happiness would not be satisfied, at least in the long term, because other desires would emerge. What is more, nature does not promise that human beings will achieve happiness::

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<sup>204</sup> See the second *Critique* for Kant's formulation of happiness as "is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole existence *everything goes according to his wish and will* (KpV 5: 124).

Nature, on the other hand, is very far from having adopted him as its special darling and benefited him in preference to the other animals, but has in fact spared him no more than any other animal from its destructive workings: plague, famine, flood, frost, or attacks from other animals large or small, and so on. What is more, man's own absurd *natural predispositions* land him in further troubles that he thinks up himself, and [make him] put others of his own species in great misery through oppressive domination, barbaric wars, etc., and [so] man himself does all he can to work for the destruction of his own species. Hence even if nature outside us were utterly beneficent, its purpose would not be achieved in a system of nature on earth if that purpose aimed at the happiness of our species, because nature within us is not receptive to it (*Loc. cit.*).

The idea that human beings are far and away from being nature's "special darling" is strikingly similar to what is explained in further detail in the third proposition of Kant's *Idea* essay. There, Kant says that nature seems to have taken pleasure in exercising the strictest parsimony in doling out her natural gifts to human beings, as well as adumbrating the inevitable hardships ahead:

Nature seems to have taken pleasure in its own extreme economy in this regard, and to have provided for their animal features so sparingly, so tailored as to meet only the most vital needs of a primitive existence, as if it had intended that human beings, after working themselves out of a condition of the greatest brutishness to a condition of the greatest skill, of inner perfection in their manner of thought, and hence (to the extent possible on earth) to a state of happiness, should take the full credit for this themselves and have only themselves to thank for it. It thus seems as if nature has been concerned more with their rational *self-esteem* than with their well-being. For in the course of human affairs, humans are confronted with a whole host of hardships. It seems, however, that nature was not at all concerned that human beings live well, but rather that they work themselves far enough ahead to become, through their behavior, worthy of life and of well-being (IaG 8: 20).

In other words, nature did human beings no favors with regard to their natural allotment. Moreover, whatever advantages human beings could eek out it natural predispositions, these same attributes would threaten to ruin whatever what was gained,

e.g., via self-interested inclination, violence, insecurity, in short, the antagonism of “unsociable sociability,” with emphasis on “unsociable,” which are attributed to nature.

On this account, happiness cannot ever be an end of nature because there would be no end to satisfying its many demands. Nature would completely subordinate human beings to her domain. However, Kant argues that “As the only being on earth that possesses reason and which therefore has the capacity to freely set ends for itself, he is indeed properly regarded as a master of nature” (KdU 5: 431), human beings can be thought as the final ends of nature only insofar as they bring about their own goals by using these willful and teleological capacities, thus subjecting nature to their own wills, goals, and rationality. As Kant puts it, human beings “must have the understanding and the will to give both nature and himself reference to a purpose that can be independent of nature, self-sufficient, and a final purpose” (*Loc. cit.*).

This is an enormously important point. Happiness cannot be the ultimate end of nature, because it does not require the development of the innate rational capacities that we have and it does not cohere with the idea that we are the ends of our own existence: happiness is a state of fulfilling certain ends that change rapidly from one moment to another and better attained by instincts and inclinations. Thus, human being can be the ultimate end of nature only on the condition that she herself can bring about her own ends independently of nature, thus employing her rational capacities in order to *prepare* her to be a final end of nature, i.e., a moral end. It is clear from the above analysis that happiness cannot be a moral end. The other possibility, “that which nature is capable of doing in order to prepare him for what he must himself do in order to be a final end,” seems to be “the formal, subjective condition, namely the aptitude for setting himself

ends at all and using nature as a means to appropriate to the maxims of his free ends in general” (KdU 5: 431). This is what Kant calls *culture*:

The production of the aptitude of a rational being for any ends in general (thus those of his freedom) is culture. Thus only culture can be the ultimate end that one has cause to ascribe to nature in regard to the human species (not its own earthly happiness or even merely being the foremost instrument for establishing order and consensus in irrational nature outside him) (*Loc. cit.*).

That is to say, *culture* must be the ultimate purpose of nature for human beings, because it is something to which they themselves can contribute by means of their skills and abilities. Judging the relationship between human beings and nature by means of the principle of external purposiveness, we have come to assume that human beings are the ultimate ends of nature due to their capacity to freely set ends and purposes for themselves. They can use nature as a means for any ends in general in order to make something out of it. In other words, in order to develop their innate predispositions, skills, and capacities further, human beings make contributions to culture, guided by the ends that they themselves posit.

What exactly does Kant mean by culture and how is this concept related to history? To answer this question, we need a better understanding of the relationship between culture and history. In what follows, I turn to consider the relationship between these matters by connecting in Kant’s third *Critique* and his earlier *Idea* essay. By “culture,” Kant does not only mean what we would today understand by it, such as things that pertain to the arts, letters or manners; rather, it should be taken in a more general sense as the process by means of which human beings leave their mark in the world. For example, agriculture or civil institutions would be parts of culture. As the ultimate end

of nature, culture refers to the end-setting capacity of human beings insofar as their innate predispositions are formed and developed through skill and discipline toward certain goals that they themselves posit. History, in this sense, is a recording of these developments in culture, though not just an empirical recording of them (this would be empirical history) but a unified account of these developments with respect to an end, as in the case of philosophical history.

The end of history should be conceived in such a way as to enable us to trace the development of the innate predispositions of human beings. This is the way in which Kant's philosophy of history takes the form of moral history. And yet, we can separate his commitments to a moral history from his theoretical commitments to such historiography. In terms of Kant's historiography, we would be investigating the methodology by which we interpret and understand past events and whether or not they reveal a unity or a meaning that coheres with our goals. For Kant, this unity or meaning has to do with a teleological interpretation of nature and the development of our inborn capacities, as I have already shown in the *Idea* essay. However, the reasons *why* we are justified in terms of attributing to history any unity at all and why we should presuppose a progress of culture or development of our capacities reveal the theoretical commitment, namely the usefulness of the principle of external purposiveness. His view of culture as the motor of history still assumes this regulative teleological principle, and it is this theoretical commitment that requires further investigation.

For Kant, not every kind of culture helps to develop the innate predispositions of human beings. A *Culture of discipline*, which is the negative condition whereby inner

desires are remolded and trained, is supposed to prepare our inner nature for morality, thus it is in some ways a precondition for the further development of culture (KdU 5: 431). On the other hand, a *culture of skill*, which is the reforming of one's outer environment, is "the foremost subjective condition of aptitude for the promotion of ends in general." Here it seems that Kant attaches more importance to the latter form of culture, namely to the culture of skill, than to the former, for the culture of discipline is merely a negative condition that relates to the morality of the individual, not to history. Thus history conceived as a teleological whole is the domain of the culture of skill, the ultimate end of nature.

The distinction between history conceived as a teleological whole and Kant's moral goals is explicit in the example of war that is central to the conception of culture at stake here. In §83 of the third *Critique*, Kant attributes important roles to war and social conflict, both of which are unmoral means, in the development of culture. This reference to the war-like tendencies of human beings and social antagonisms in nature parallel the fourth proposition of the *Idea* essay in terms of the language of "unsociable sociability" of human nature. In the fourth proposition of *Idea*, Kant had singled out the "unsociable sociability" of human beings as the means by which the development of human capacities can be realized in history, and here in §83 of the third *Critique* he posits, similarly, that inequality among people and the misery of hardships, oppression, and war are the means by which skills can be developed in the human race. According to this conception, a certain type of bifurcation of people leads to cultural advancement in a society. People in the majority produce the necessary elements of culture, science, and art and oppress the minority; though after a while, problems start to develop on both sides and such an

existence becomes unsustainable. Such social antagonisms and bifurcations originate from our unsociable sociability, and this type of social conflict, while it may not lead to war, causes a friction between the two classes in terms of their goals. Those in the majority grow dissatisfied with themselves, and those who are maintained in a state of oppression, bitter work, and little enjoyment, start to get tired of the violence imposed on them by the majority. This miserable condition is seen by Kant as the *facilitator* by means of which this conflict or war is eventually overcome. As unpleasant and miserable as this condition might be, it is,

Connected with the development of the natural capacities of the human species, and the end of nature itself, although it is not our end, is nonetheless attained. The formal condition that must be satisfied in order that nature can attain this end, its final aim, is a constitution that governs the relations of human beings among one another, and in which the damage to freedom that results from the mutually conflicting exercise of freedom is opposed by a lawful force embodied in a whole, which is called *civil society*; for only in such a society can the greatest development of the natural predispositions occur (KdU 5: 432).

Out of this “glaring misery,” which, in Kant’s terms, describes the empirical conditions human beings find themselves in due to their unsociable sociability, a lawful order *should* arise, and this order *should* be constituted such that the freedoms of each person and the state are guaranteed. Kant here goes on to say that something horrible like:

War, just as much as it is an unintentional attempt on the part of human beings (prompted by unbridled passions), is also a deeply concealed, perhaps intentional attempt of the most supreme wisdom, if not to establish, then at least to prepare lawfulness along with the freedom of states and thereby the unity of a morally grounded system of states. And despite the most horrible sufferings that it imposes on the human race and the perhaps even greater sufferings brought on by the condition of being constantly prepared for it during peacetime, war nonetheless constitutes another motivating force (while the hope for a people’s happiness in a state of peace becomes more remote) for developing, to the highest degree possible, all the talents that serve culture (KdU 5: 433).

Thus, if we look at the present conditions of social conflicts and antagonisms in which we find ourselves, we can conclude that it is not to our interest to continue these wars, but to put an end to it and unite around a civil order. Kant sees this as *useful* because we are granted the claim that a lawful order should arise out of these hostile conditions only when we reflect on history and politics teleologically, that is, as areas whose purpose is to give rise to the full development of our rational innate capacities. Thanks to this teleological view, we can posit that a suitable civil condition is the one where we give up fighting and come together as a lawful society.

It should be clear from the above analysis that the requirement of a lawful constitution of states does not arise out of moral considerations; rather, such a civil society can be conceived as the end of history only when we reflectively judge nature as a whole and the relationships between human beings in teleological terms. The social conflicts that preceded this condition of lawful togetherness are not moral, strictly speaking, and those should be thought of as the first steps towards the development of our capacities. These capacities can be best developed in a civil society, which we can conceptualize thanks to our regulative teleology. In the Fourth proposition of *Idea*, social antagonism within a society is also defined as the way in which the development of all innate capacities will come about, “*insofar as this antagonism ultimately becomes the cause of a law-governed organization of society*” (IaG 8: 20).

This antagonism and the human qualities that give rise to it are “far from admirable in themselves;” however, without discord and inequality, human capacities “all human talents would thus lie eternally dormant” (IaG 8: 21), and for this reason, nature should perhaps be thanked. Human beings, Kant writes, desire concord, but nature wills

discord is the means by which we can achieve concord: if nature did not give us any severe opportunities whereby we can test and improve our natural capacities, we would live an Arcadian existence of peace and plenitude, but such an existence would be as valuable as that of an animal, because we would not be free, end-setting creatures. Rather, human beings would be “as good-natured as the sheep that they put out to pasture, would thus give their own lives hardly more worth than that of their domesticated animals” (*Loc. cit.*).

Subsequently, in his writings in *Idea* and the third *Critique*, social conflicts and inescapable antagonism take center stage in reflecting on the contributions to the final ends of humanity via the products of culture and history, and this is facilitated by a teleological consideration of nature as a whole. For example, this teleological conception makes possible for us to take into account the possible and actual consequences of war, something that cannot enter into moral considerations. In *Idea*, for example, Kant admits that the consequences of war are uncertain and destructive, therefore undesirable:

Ultimately, war itself will not only become such an artificial undertaking, or one the outcome of which is so uncertain for both parties: the after-pains which the state suffers because of war, through the ever-growing burden of debt (a new invention), the repayment of which becomes immeasurable, will also make war such a dubious activity that the reverberations which upheaval in any one state in our part of the world, so linked in its commercial activities, will have in all other states, will become so clear that these states, compelled by the threat to their own security, albeit without legal standing, will offer themselves up as judges and thus ultimately prepare everything for a future political body the likes of which the earlier world has never known. Although this political body exists presently only in a very rough, rudimentary form, it is just as if a feeling is nevertheless beginning to stir among all the members who have an interest in the preservation of the whole. **And this gives us the hope** that, after a number of structural revolutions, that which nature has as its highest aim, a universal *cosmopolitan condition*, can come into being, as the womb in which all the original predispositions of the human species are developed. (IaG 8: 28, my bold emphasis).

Consequently, “cosmopolitan condition” or cosmopolitan state, i.e., the necessary political state of affairs conducive to promoting progress, is constructed by human beings who will have to work to resolve the social conflicts in a lawful, free society. However, such progress does not emerge because human beings initially understand that engaging in war is immoral but because they cannot afford the threats and aftereffects of war. Consequently, a lawful civil state is not at first a moral goal, but one that needs to be seen as the purpose of history and politics in order to prevent the harmful consequences of war. The lawfulness of states in a condition of self-promoting freedom is the *hope* that can be maintained only *if* we reflectively judge that nature can be conceived as a teleological *whole*, with the ultimate end of bringing about the development of the innate capacities of human beings through culture of skill. Under such considerations, war helps to bring about this end out of the selfish inclinations of human beings not to be harmed. In *Idea*, Kant similarly makes a distinction between a moral community and a “pathological” one, or determined by impulses by the senses. He points out that by means of interpersonal and geopolitical antagonism,

And here all of the talents are gradually developed, taste is formed, and, even, through continual enlightenment, the beginning of a foundation is laid for a manner of thinking which is able, over time, to transform the primitive natural predisposition for moral discernment into definite practical principles and, in this way, to ultimately transform an agreement to society that initially had been *pathologically* coerced into a *moral* whole (IaG 8: 21).

The hope conveyed in these passages is as follows: although the first forms of society are created for *pathological* reasons, for example, for the sake of ending antagonism and war because of its detrimental consequences, it stands to expect that this initial society will

provide the conditions out of which a *moral* society, based on respect and dignity, will arise. Although Kant does not use the vocabulary of final and ultimate ends in *Idea*, there is still an instructive distinction at work between a natural development of our capacities in a pathologically constituted civil society and as developing in moral community. Culture, by itself, does not make us moral beings: it *prepares* us to be moral agents by means of providing opportunities to develop all our rational capacities.

Thus, the culture that Kant favors, both in the *Idea* and in the third *Critique*, i.e., a lawful civil society in a cosmopolitan world order, provides hope insofar as it should be conceived as the *idea* for a universal history to the extent that nature provides the medium in which rational beings can develop their capacities, and such a cultural requirement also aids us to eventually fulfill our moral goals, the highest of these goals *in politics* being perpetual peace on earth. Such a culture of cosmopolitanism *should* provide the basis for a moral community insofar as we are trying to represent nature and history to ourselves as a whole in order to arrive at a historical narrative, and to mark out the necessary political institutions, though by itself such a cosmopolitan condition has nothing to do with moral considerations: it will not guarantee that we will act morally, it is first required by a teleological understanding of nature, in order for us to have a historical narrative that accords with our goals.

Culture is a means to an end, so we must not confuse morality with culture. For Kant, even in the *Idea*, as in the third *Critique*, there is a difference between civilization or culture and moral maturity: “For the idea of morality is part of culture. But the use of this idea, which leads *only to that which resembles morality* in the love of honor and

outward decency, comprises only mere civilization” (IaG 8: 26; my italics). In this passage, Kant argues that the idea of morality is only a mimetic semblance because culture is powered by the antagonism or unsociable sociability found in society, and not by nobler feelings for peace.

Kant’s idea is that the social antagonism among the members of a society *should* eventually give rise to a lawful condition, a civil society, both in the *Idea* and in the third *Critique*. In the Eighth proposition of *Idea*, the notion of a rightful constitution is put forward as another means to an end, namely, as the only possible condition within which all natural capacities of human beings can be developed, and in a kind of follow up in the third *Critique*, civil society is seen as a necessary *condition* under which alone nature can attain this its final aim, “*as the only condition in which nature can fully develop all of its predispositions in humankind.*” (IaG 8: 27). In complimentary fashion, Kant also writes in §83 of the third *Critique*:

For only in this constitution of human relations can our natural predispositions develop maximally. But this constitution requires something further, even if human beings were intelligent enough to discover it and wise enough to submit voluntarily to its constraint: a *cosmopolitan* whole, a system of all states that are in danger of affecting one another detrimentally (KdU 5: 432).

Thus, the requirement of a “cosmopolitan whole” comes along with the regulative teleological presupposition that the ultimate purpose of nature is the complete development of all innate capacities of human beings. This teleological presupposition, we should remember, is based on the principle of external purposiveness. It seems that then the idea of a cosmopolitan world order becomes another presupposition, one that is based on the principle that nature does nothing in vain, a teleological conception (KdU

5: 376). Consequently, a civil state the resulting cosmopolitanism are not moral requirements. Although morality entails that social antagonism be dissolved, the moral law itself does not stipulate its remedy. Specifically, morality does not express prerequisites for forming a civil state; instead, such preconditions are provided by the teleological considerations of nature and the human beings, which we can then hope results in moral development.

### 6.5 *The Final Purpose of Nature as a Guide to Hope*

The consideration of human beings as the final purpose of nature is seen in §84, wherein Kant revisits the idea of the final purposes of nature. A final purpose is defined by Kant as “that purpose which needs no other as the condition of its possibility” (KdU 5: 434). This is an unconditional purpose, and thus cannot be found in nature: as Kant puts it, “For nothing in nature (considered as a being of sense) has, within nature itself, a basis determining it that is not always conditioned in turn” (KdU 5: 435). Kant also writes, however, that if we assume a final cause to all these relations, then we can ask why a thing exists, i.e., what is its inner purpose? Recall that we are here making reflective judgments about the final purpose of nature using the principle of external purposiveness. Subsequently, Kant concludes that the final purpose of nature within the human being as a moral being.

The result is that nature is considered as a means for the ends human beings set for themselves, i.e., the only ones capable of being a final end “to which all of nature is teleologically subordinated” (KdU 5: 436). Only within the autonomous human being is

there a capacity for unconditional legislation with regard to their end-setting. Such an idea of the human being as the final purpose comes from a moral perspective, while the assertion that culture is the ultimate purpose of nature is established by a teleological perspective.

At this point, I should like to make two points before I conclude this chapter. The first is that there is a difference between history conceived as the culmination of natural purposes and as that of moral purposes: for a conception of history as the culmination of natural purposes, we must conceive of the human being as natural, as beings who possess capacities that ought to be developed via a *culture of skill*. This is what it means for human beings to be judged as the ultimate ends of nature, and for this, universal history or the history of the human species as a whole, conceived as an approximation to a cosmopolitan world order, is theoretically useful. This insight helps to develop a conception of history as the culmination of moral purposes. Here we conceive of the humanity as a *moral*, as capable of setting ends, and give itself the moral law. This is what it means for human beings to be judged as the final purposes of nature, and lends itself to a universal history that not only is theoretically helpful, but can also postulate moral reasons for adopting such a stance.

The second point is that the advancement of culture first culminates in a state of antagonism and social conflict, which should then succeed in promoting the idea of a civil society and a cosmopolitanism, and that this idea can help lead us to become moral agents, which is the final purpose of nature. History refers us to the development of all our rational capacities through a *culture of skill* and does not inherently have a moral meaning. While this suggests that a motivation to be moral and thus constitute a moral

community is the underlying assumption in a teleological philosophy of history, we have to avoid claiming that history only has a moral significance. Recall that Kant has argued that we cannot make empirical, factual claims with regard to the course of historical events but rather is only spelling out the suppositions of a teleological philosophy of history that can guide us to adopt moral motivations in its development.

### 6.6 Concluding Remarks

My aim in this chapter was to show that Kant's writings on teleological judgment reveals a hopeful aspect, one in which reflective judgment can provide a view to humanity as the final end of nature and one in which its moral vocation can be fulfilled. Kant's teleological philosophy serves as a heuristic with practical application, one in which human beings can take hope for a better world. To show how Kant's use of teleological principles can offer hope to human beings, I explicated relevant passages from the third *Critique* and from *Idea* to connect important notions of a teleological understanding of history, which ultimately posits regulative principles that are not indispensable to such an understanding, but also *useful* for theoretical and practical interests.

On my reading of the third *Critique* and *Idea* in this chapter, I have supported previous arguments that there is no *guarantee* for either peace or that the formation of a cosmopolitanism condition in which human rationality will develop. Political ends such as cosmopolitanism becomes a requirement for history and thus is seen as the goal of historical developments *only because* a teleological conception of history shows it *useful*

to generate the hope that working toward its achievement can serve as a means for securing peace. A teleological account of nature and history as a whole is a indispensable reflection that rests on its regulative grounds that can be practically employed to usher in the advent of a better world.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

*At bottom, optimism* is the unwarranted self-praise of the real author of the world, namely of the will-to-live which complacently mirrors itself in its work. Accordingly *optimism* is not only a false but also a pernicious doctrine, for it presents life as a desirable state and man's happiness as its aim and object. Starting from this, everyone then believes he has the most legitimate claim to happiness and enjoyment. If, as usually happens, these do not fall to his lot, he believes that he suffers an injustice, in fact that he misses the whole point of his existence; whereas it is far more correct to regard work, privation, misery, and suffering, crowned by death, as the aim and object of our life (Schopenhauer, WWV II, Ch. XLVI).

How can anyone dare to speak of the earth's destination? There are no goals in infinite time and space: *what is there is always there*, in whatever form. There is no way to figure out what kind of metaphysical world there is supposed to be. Mankind must be able to stand on its own without leaning on anything: the enormous task of the artists.<sup>205</sup>

In the previous chapter, I provided an explication of Kant's philosophy of history makes two important assumptions: first, it assumes that there is a teleological system is working toward the implicit end of humanity, and, second, that this goal can only be fulfilled via complex social interaction in which a common good can be attained. As Kant relates in *Theory and Practice* human beings are charged with a special duty to influence progress in history (TP 8: 309), a high commission which cannot be forsworn. As we have seen from various points of Kant's philosophy, his notion of history posits a fixed and consistent viewpoint upon which agents are able to see themselves as morally called upon to participate in the project of worldmaking.

As I have shown, for Kant, the significance of history is not underscored in any one area of his writings, but rather must be interpreted and understood from the whole of his work. In this dissertation, I have worked to display how Kant's writings on history

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<sup>205</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Philosopher" in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, Daniel Breazeale, ed. and trans. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), 42.

are richly developed through conceptual, historical, metaphorical, teleological, political, and moral lines. Taken together, I hope to have been able to elucidate how a broad investigation of Kant's philosophy of history is useful in leading us to perceive Kant's encompassing and progressive picture of ourselves and others in the natural and moral worlds that human beings occupy. Subsequently, I have paid attention to Kant's reflections on history from the relatively slim to the relatively large works, and I believe that a careful engagement with the so-called minor or "peripheral" texts as well as with the major or central works provides for a richer portrait of ideas that can help lead to a fuller understanding of Kant's notion of history.

To summarize some of the work I have offered in this dissertation. By examining the faculty of reason in its employment of the transcendental ideas, I not only tried to provide an answer to Yovel's skepticism that reason and history can find a bridging principle, but also how Kant's notion of the ideas of reason provide practical guidance or clues that can serve as models to bolster a rational anticipation of more just historical states of affairs. By then turning to Danto's use of Kant to begin his attack against substantive philosophers of history, I was able not only to show deficiencies in Danto's reading of Kant, but, more importantly, to show how a proleptic philosophy of history is needed because progress in history is not assured, and progress is not inevitable, which requires the standpoint of a philosophy of hope. By addressing interpretations which take Kantian hope to be abstract, I presented textual support for an argument that hope is very much in the world, as both past and present, from which human beings can take an inferential clue that they can take in order to give hope to the future. By attempting an interpretation of Kant's use of a Stoic phrase in his political essays, I offered plausible

reasons to deny too-strong readings of the so-called cunning of nature thesis in ushering forth historical progress on its own power. And by closely examining Kant's forceful portrait of teleology in history, I was able to use my explication to show not only how teleology is indispensably useful in our understanding of history, but also, conversely, how it that history is indispensably useful for understanding teleology.

Consequently, throughout various chapters I have shown how human beings are able to identify themselves as members of a world with agentive autonomy, in which each member can play an active part in ushering the advent of better world. Another common thread joining this dissertation's chapters runs through Kant's understanding of hope as a practical principle which rests on a regulative assumption of historical progress, itself based on the idea of nature as a teleological whole with humanity standing as its highest achievement.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the third *Critique* stands out in its explicit emphasis on teleology. Teleological principles serve to concretize Kant's "research program" of positing regulative ideas in the investigation of biological organisms. Since Kant takes it as self-evident that human cognition "is incapable of providing an explanatory ground for the generation of organized beings" according to mechanical laws alone (KdU 5: 389), he subsequently allows us to employ teleological principles for explaining these phenomena according to the assumption of purposes, or, as he puts it, "based in an entirely different kind of original causality" (KdU 5: 388), i.e., as that of final causes. Teleology therefore is not meant to replace mechanical explanations, but rather to reconfigure them under "a critical principle of reason for the

reflecting power of judgment” (KdU 5: 397) or as a “guideline for considering things in nature” (KdU 5: 379).

However, Kant does not restrict the scope of teleological assumptions to the study of natural organisms because the *need* to satisfy reason’s theoretical interest also underlies his turn to teleology in history. As I noted when I turned to examine the *Idea* essay, the assumption of natural purposiveness in the unfolding of human affairs enables us to investigate patterns of activity that would otherwise appear entirely random, and thus leaving us devoid of hope. In an expressive manner almost identical to his language of teleology in the third *Critique*, Kant writes that “although we are too shortsighted to understand the secret mechanism of nature’s organization, this idea may nonetheless serve as a guiding thread with which to describe an otherwise planless *aggregate* of human activities, at least in the large, as a *system*” (IaG 8: 29). By positing the notion of there being guiding threads in history, and I identified five senses of such, Kant believes that regulative assumption of teleology can subsequently aid us in promoting not only our natural, but also working toward our rational ends. Here it is worth noting that the free willing of human action is a condition of hope, for as Kant writes in the third *Critique*, humans are not automatically nature’s final end – rather, they have to work to occupy that position.<sup>206</sup> Since these ends are ultimately moral, however, it can be difficult to separate reason’s theoretical and practical interests in teleological history.

However, as I previous showed in chapter three, in the *Canon*, Kant’s explicit answer to this normative question is “Do that through which you become worthy to be happy” (KrV A808/B836), a command more concretely stated in the second *Critique* as

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<sup>206</sup> See KdU 5: 431 and IaG 8: 19.

an injunction to “make the highest possible good in a world the final object (*letzten Gegenstande*) of all my conduct” (KpV 5: 129). In this way, hope enters as an attitude towards the possibility of this purpose; that is, hope for the eventual realization of the highest possible good in the world. For Kant, insofar as the efficacy of this pursuit requires the postulation of a world amenable to moral conduct, hope is also the manifest stance of practical belief in a teleologically-ordered universe. Thus understood, hope enables us to maintain our duty to act in conformity with the *idea* of the highest good, and yet as much as hope is empowering, it also acts to remind us of our limitations, for the full realization of our aims is beyond the reach of our experiences, i.e., “the abyss of the mystery regarding what God may do” (RGV 6: 139).

The mystery to which Kant alludes is to that of providence, a plan that is not solely attributed to divine origin, but also, analogically, to nature. As I demonstrated when turning to examine Kant’s analogical use of nature in his work, the practical interest of reason is realized by attributing of purposiveness to natural mechanisms, namely, their use for political and moral progress. Kant argues that such mechanisms of progress only make sense to humans if the teleological course of history in nature is thought by attribution to providence, i.e., “a predetermining creator of the world” (ZeF 8: 361n). Still mysterious, and although we can have no demonstrable proof of providence, nevertheless does Kant use the concept of reflective judgment to express providence in the greater framework of moral ends. At the end of *Idea*, for example, Kant writes that “such a *justification* of nature—or, better, of *providence*—is no unimportant motive for adopting a particular perspective in observing the world” (IaG 8: 30). As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, *Providence* is Kant’s term for how sense human events in the world are

ultimately impelled by a purposive power for the sake of realizing humanity's moral vocation moral perfection of humanity, which can only be carried forward by reason (Zef *Ibid.*).

Although Kant repeated argues that a human being's engagement is always bound to the limits of experience, the scope of human experience is indeed rich and rewarding. As I hope that my efforts in this dissertation has shown, a broad, though synergistic and consistent examination of the many elements of Kant's proleptic philosophy of history can also be rewarding, though the present work can hardly consider itself to have scratch the surface. As this work winds down, like Kant's notion of history, it views itself as fundamentally incomplete and ongoing. If nothing else, Kant's legacy to future thinkers is to have them constantly work toward improvement, to ask whether we should continue the project of self-critique, to inquire whether there is a teleological conception to history, and, what is more, to question what is lost if we abandon this model. We see this idea explicitly stated in various passages. For example, for Kant history is teleological through a reflective act of *eisegesis*, i.e., because we must read teleology into it, rendering the idea of progress as an "heuristic fiction" serving reason's practical interest. Indeed, in the historical essays, although Kant stresses the regulative nature of teleological history, we can also note in many passages that his speculation "is mere opinion and hypothesis,"<sup>207</sup> and inviting other reflections from philosophical minds, well versed in history, to improve on his idea for a universal history should they detect deficiencies in Kant's version (IaG 8: 30).

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<sup>207</sup> See, e.g., TP 8: 311 and ApH 7: 331.

While my efforts here do not constitute an improvement of Kant's philosophy of history, I do believe that I have contributed to an improved understanding not only on how to configure his proleptic thought in history, but also in trying to correct for certain lacunae in the literature. In these pages, I have shown how Kant's proleptic vision of history integrates concerns across diverse human spheres with one main goal in mind: how to conceive of history as a whole with the practical aim of promoting the rational and moral development of human beings, more just political institutions, and peaceful global relations.

In closing, the Kantian philosopher of history needs to look into history from a variety of angles, some are guided by ideas, and some are provided by teleology, both of which require an understanding of history *as if* she can interpret the whole. She needs to search and to discover clues that are able to lead her toward putting together a hopeful story about a possible direction to history, but never to the point of confident confirmation. Human destined goals might be subverted, requiring willful participation in achieving such ends. However, the search for these guiding threads will prove useful in providing the regulative ideas and principles that can be employed in working to achieve the ends of reason in a world virtuous agents should want to create, which is exactly what a proleptic philosophy of history hopes for all of mankind.

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