

HISTORICAL DUTIES

KANT'S PATH FROM NATURE TO FREEDOM, COSMOPOLITANISM AND PEACE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I reconstruct Kant's account of history as the moral space where the full development of human being's dispositions takes place by moving from nature to the idea of a cosmopolitan rightful condition. By highlighting the key concepts of Kant's writings on history¹, I aim to show that both perpetual peace and a cosmopolitan order are *historical duties*, namely achievements that human species ought to work for in order to substantiate the moral vocation of human nature. I address three main issues. First, Kant's puzzling account of (human) nature requires us to clarify that we can conceive of a "natural" predisposition to morality only in terms of an analogy. Second, I take the notion of right to be the organ of freedom throughout history, as the means to let 1) morality permeate the world of human practices; 2) culture emerge. Third, the continuity between morality and right leads to both perpetual peace and cosmopolitanism as the achievements of human species' moral development.

KEYWORDS

History, Freedom, Moral Agency, Cosmopolitanism, Perpetual Peace.

INTRODUCTION

In the first paragraph of his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784), Kant states that human actions – though also subjected to natural necessity – represent the appearances [*Erscheinungen*] of the freedom of the will

¹ All quotations from Kant's works follow the *Akademie Ausgabe* (AA). All translations follow the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. In particular: *Critique of Practical Reason* (*KpV*, 1788), *Toward Perpetual Peace* (*ZeF*, 1795), *Metaphysics of Morals* (*MS*, 1797) in I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by M. J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1996; *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (*IaG*, 1784), *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (*MAM*, 1786), *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (*ApH*, 1798) in I. Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, edited by G. Zöllner, R. B. Loudon, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2007; *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (*RGV*, 1793), *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*SF*, 1798) in I. Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated and edited by A. W. Wood, G. Di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1996. The page number of the English translation is always presented using brackets ().

and that history consists in a narration of these appearances [*IaG*, AA VIII:17 (108)]. The historical perspective has to be wide enough to grasp a regular course in the development of both the appearances of the freedom of the will and the original dispositions of human species – for these dispositions become actual through agency². To one of the appearances here at stake – The French Revolution – Kant seems to have dedicated the following words: «God, let your servant die in peace, for I have already lived this memorable day!»³.

Kant's enthusiasm famously contradicts his own words in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where no right to revolution is recognized as legitimate⁴. Revolution is not a right for Kant, at least it cannot be a right of the same kind as that of a private property or a testamentary disposition. However, the Parisian events still display a specific kind of historical necessity⁵ which is far more radical than our civil rights, namely the necessity to establish a rightful condition which mirrors specific universal moral principles: equality, freedom, etc. The “appearances” of freedom that took place in 1789 are nothing but some of the means through which freedom becomes actual in the course of history.

As known, the actuality⁶ of the unconditioned causality of freedom relies on moral agency. Our will is authentically free only insofar as it recognizes the bindingness of the supreme command of morality and conforms its subjective maxims to it, thereby making laws out of the latter. The point is not acting without constriction or conditioning but, rather, subjecting the will to the supreme law of morality and legislating through the maxims of the will itself. Self-constriction runs parallel to autonomous legislation⁷.

However, the legislation that follows from morally determined maxims does not coincide with positive right. Our moral maxims do not shape the laws of right directly, nor the latter are mirror images of the former. Moreover, all those laws which come from moral agency have, as far their origin is concerned, nothing to do

² As argued by A. Ciatello (*Kant's Idea of History*, «Epekeina», 7, 1-2, 2016, pp. 1-15), this perspective's width is the reason why Kant's 1784 text is titled *Idea*.

³ These words come from the *Canticle of Simeon*. See L. Ypi, *On Revolution in Kant and Marx*, «Political Theory», 42, 3, 2014, pp. 262-287. In particular, pp. 265 and 283, note 12.

⁴ See *MS*, AA VI:320-323 (463-466).

⁵ See *SF*, AA VII:85 (301-302). The French Revolution is an “occurrence” which demonstrates the “moral tendency in human race”. It is caused by “a moral predisposition in human race”. Kant is even clearer on the complementarity between morality and right, for he states that the moral cause “exerting its influence is twofold: first, that of the *right*, that a nation must not be hindered in providing itself with a civil constitution, which appears good to the people themselves; and second, that of the *end* (which is, at the same time, a duty), that that same national constitution alone be *just* and morally good in itself, created in such a way as to avoid, by its very nature, principles permitting offensive war.”

⁶ See *KpV*, AA V:4 (139); V:47 (178); V:66 (193).

⁷ On this topic see: P. Kleingeld, M. Willaschek, *Autonomy without Paradox: Kant, Self-Legislation and the Moral Law*, «Philosophers' Imprint», 19, 6, 2019, pp. 1-18; P. Kleingeld, *Contradiction and Kant's Formula of Universal Law*, «Kant-Studien» 108, 1, 2017, pp. 89-115.

with our civil rights and duties. Kant has spent significant words⁸ in order to ground his metaphysics of morals on the achievements of the second *Critique*. Yet both the freedom of the will and moral agency follow from the conformity of our subjective maxims to the moral law exclusively. The role of right is different but fully consistent with Kant's account of moral agency.

Right is in the first place necessary for the aforementioned maxim-law conformity does not always take place in a variety of ordinary practices. It goes without saying that the latter do not provide us with moral actions exclusively. Thus, right has to intervene into all non-conformities between our subjective maxims and the moral law:

Resistance that counteracts the hindering of an effect promotes this effect and is consistent with it. Now whatever is wrong is a hindrance to freedom in accordance with universal laws. But coercion is a hindrance or resistance to freedom. Therefore, if a certain use of freedom is itself a hindrance to freedom in accordance with universal laws (i.e., wrong), coercion that is opposed to this (as a *hindering of a hindrance to freedom*) is consistent with freedom in accordance with universal laws, that is, it is right. Hence there is connected with right by the principle of contradiction an authorization to coerce someone who infringes upon it. [*MS*, AA VI:231 (388)]

Without doubt, right has to play this coercive role, but does right play this *negative* role exclusively? Had Kant meant that right is exclusively concerned with preventing or sanctioning practices like rebellion, homicide, summary trials, roundups, exile and beheading, the French Revolution would be the perfect candidate to represent hell on earth, rather than something capable to let Kant live a memorable day in Königsberg.

This paper aims to follow a different path. Right – in a broad sense which includes both specific legislations and political systems – is the organ of freedom in the historical world that human agents share with natural causality. It is through juridical-political achievements and improvements that the natural, rational and moral dispositions of the human species can be developed. More precisely, it is through the rightful constitution of a cosmopolitan order that perpetual peace, namely one of the most challenging tasks of humanity, may be achievable.

Kant's views on history lead us to a comprehensive conception of right. We thus move from the mere remedy to the human inability to act *always and exclusively* according to the moral law⁹ to a complementary account of right according to which the normative development of juridical and political systems mirrors the development of morality throughout history. Within the boundaries of this moral space all human beings – ends in themselves¹⁰ – may act as moral agents whose aim

⁸ See *MS*, AA VI:211-228 (373-382)

⁹ Cfr. *MS*, AA VI:230-231 (386-388).

¹⁰ On the teleological implications of Kant's account of morality see *MS*, AA VI:375-378 (221-225); *KU*, AA V:434-435 (752-757).

is – in the species – to provide morality with what we may call a juridical and political reality. In these terms, right and politics are the organs of freedom in history.

On the one hand, it is only through the moral law that the noumenal causality of freedom¹¹ becomes actual in the same world where also natural causality works. Freedom can be said to become, via moral agency, an *immanent unconditioned* – something which was not allowed by the Dialectic of the first *Critique*. On the other hand, however, right should not be taken as the mere remedy to our inability to act morally, for instead the founding principles of our juridical systems ought to mirror the demands of morality¹² and not simply represent the marks of allegedly unavoidable historical failures. I take this to be one of the major legacies of Kant's philosophy of history.

As an external legislation, right is undoubtedly necessary. But its role is not only negative nor limited to prevention and deterrence. For Kant, the development of human species' dispositions cannot be fulfilled without the development of juridical and political systems which do not come down to specific states' legislations. Whatever any of the latter may command, it relies irremediably on specific cultural and geographical conditions which do not do justice of the fact that *any* human being is an end in itself. The demands of morality which follows from this purposive status are universal. Only a universal juridical framework may be entitled to meet them. Kant has been the first to argue explicitly for a cosmopolitan account of history *and* of right and politics¹³. No particular juridical system may conceive of itself as perfect without a rightful connection with any other juridical system – for the purposive moral status of human beings disregards any distinction. No particular juridical system could ever be detached from the events outside its

¹¹ See *KpV*, AA V:28-29 (162); V:31-32 (165); V:42-50 (173-180), V:114-115 (231-232); V:132 (246); V:133-134 (247). See also *MS*, AA VI:221 (376).

¹² See Y. Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 1980. At pp. 6-7 in the Introduction Yovel's writes that Kant "was interested in history primarily as a moral task rather than as a cognitive object. History is the domain in which human action is supposed to create a progressive synthesis between the moral demands of reason and the actual world of experience. This synthesis should not be confined to singular acts and particular results, but should encompass the whole range of human practical experience. Thus it must serve as a principle of *totalization*, gradually transforming the basic shapes of the moral, political, and cultural world." I find the phrase "reshaping the world" (p. 6) very sharp. Yovel's claim that the highest good is the regulative idea of history (pp. 29-80; p. 125) is an agreeable one and helps us to acknowledge the systematic relevance of this concept in Kant's philosophy. I would stress, in a complementary way, that the constitutive idea of history in its proper sense is that of freedom – from which the goal of the highest good follows. Moral agency, right and politics are its organs, that is – borrowing from the words of Yovel (p. 123) – the "vehicles of progress".

¹³ For a broader and very insightful discussion of this issue see G. Cavallar, *Kant's Embedded Cosmopolitanism. History, Philosophy, and Education for World Citizens*, Kant-Studien Ergänzungshefte, Bd. 183, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2015. Concerning the history and structure of Kant's account of cosmopolitan right it is impossible not to mention the book which is by far the most instructive study on the topic: P. Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism. The Philosophical Idea of World Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2012.

constitutive boundaries, least of all in our contemporary societies. The development of right and political institutions always takes place in a systematical perspective, where all particular legislations are reciprocally – and historically – influenced. The problem is among the most urgent, for the seemingly most consolidated democratic systems of our times are currently facing decisive challenges of global reach precisely because several different juridical agreements and political orientations – though all deal with universal concerns – are at best not aligned, when not openly conflicting. Consider the example of the Dublin Regulation on refugees and the COP-25 (Madrid 2019) agreements on climate change prevention.

Kant's cosmopolitanism runs through three intertwined lines (history, right and politics) for each of them deals – from a very specific point of view – with freedom and morality permeating the world throughout history. The title of the *Idea* can be thus read as a thesis in a proper sense: a systematical and panoptical perspective on human history can do nothing but recognize a course towards the full and complete development of human species' natural, rational and moral dispositions. Cosmopolitanism is thus a *universal*/whose immanence and actuality are among the greatest of human responsibilities, for all particular juridical frameworks and political systems have to be at least aligned as far as the moral purposive status of any human being is concerned. It is no coincidence that the first historical attempts to outline universal juridical principles dealt with fundamental rights¹⁴. Without right, freedom and morality would remain historically unactualized, if not compromised.

History is thus *universal* because the point of view¹⁵ from which we judge it borrows the lens of cosmopolitanism, and *vice-versa*. The word *idea* precisely means for Kant an omni-comprehensive concept which – though it cannot acquire full determinacy – provides history with an interpretative direction. The latter, in turn, helps us to grasp the key elements of events whose historical meaning would otherwise remain less explicit than necessary, as in the case of the French Revolution.

In order to reconstruct Kant's path from nature to cosmopolitanism here sketched, I will address three main issues. The first step consists in making sense of Kant's controversial statements on (human) nature in order to clarify that no nature can take the role of freedom in the development of human species' dispositions. Secondly, by focusing on freedom as the subject of history, I will argue for a

¹⁴ This is the case for the 1776 *United States Declaration of Independence* and the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. See also *ZeF*, AA VIII:350, note (323), my emphasis: Kant mentions “innate and inalienable rights belonging necessarily to humanity” whose validity “is *confirmed and enhanced* by the principle of rightful relations of a human being even to higher beings (if he thinks of them), inasmuch as he represents himself, in accord with the very same principles, as also a citizen of a state in a supersensible world.”

¹⁵ See *SF*, AA VII:83 (300). It is from reason's point of view, not nature's, that we see human affairs “move constantly in their regular course”.

comprehensive account of right: not only as the remedy to non-moral practices but as the organ of freedom, that is the means through which freedom progressively establishes its domain in the course of history. These two steps will lead us to finally argue for cosmopolitanism and perpetual peace as historical duties to be constantly fulfilled. Both are meant to meet – in history – the demands of morality (as following from the moral law and the moral purposive status of any human being) in political and juridical terms.

THE PUZZLE OF (HUMAN) NATURE

Kant's statements on the development of human species' dispositions are far from being crystal-clear. It is therefore important to make sense of Kant's ambiguities in order to get a coherent picture of the developmental path of those dispositions it is meaningful to assume as mirroring the political and juridical development of morality in history. The task is not free from difficulties¹⁶. Let us begin by discussing nature as an allegedly external agent endowed with a certain plan. This account permeates the *Idea*, the *Conjectural Beginning* and *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Each of these texts presents the same controversial point: nature seems to represent an external agent somehow responsible for the development of human species' dispositions, including rational and moral dispositions. This is problematic¹⁷. If we take this at face value, we would basically rely on a kind of destiny. We would be conceiving of ourselves as somehow *being naturally made* for the purposes of civilization and morality. We would therefore be making two assumptions: it is nature that – or, more pertinently, *who* – has planned our development; even our freedom would be nothing but an expression of nature's plan. I think it is possible to avoid these controversial conclusions by focusing on the reasons why Kant appeals to nature and on some related methodological issues.

In the *Idea* we read that nature has an “unknown aim” in the “nonsensical course of human things” [*JaG*, AA VIII:18 (109)]. While the Third Proposition is, on the

¹⁶ One of the most instructive, well-argued and far-reaching interpretive attempts is that provided by K. Deligiorgi, *The Role of the 'Plan of Nature' in Kant's Account of History from a Philosophical Perspective*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», 14, 3, 2006, pp. 451-468. See p. 467: “From a formal-architectonic perspective, then, Kant's use of ‘nature’ can be seen as a matter of critical discipline and as a means of turning our focus away from ambitious and fruitless enquiries into providence and divine justice. However, there is also a substantive gain in speaking about nature, for what motivates Kant's philosophical approach to history in the first place is precisely the need to show that given certain facts about human nature progress in political and moral matters is *possible*.”

¹⁷ P. Kleingeld (*Nature or Providence? On the Theoretical and Moral Importance of Kant's Philosophy of History*, «American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly», 75, 2001, pp. 201-219) explains why Kant appeals both to nature and providence in his writings on history. I find her claim that Kant (p. 204) “shifts from using ‘Nature’ to ‘Providence’ at the point where he shifts his discussion from the theoretical question of the order in history to the moral relevance of the view of history presented in the essay” convincing.

one hand, even more explicit, it causes a relevant question to arise, on the other hand. It states that nature

has willed that the human being should produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical arrangement of his animal existence entirely out of himself, and participate in no other happiness or perfection than that which he has procured for himself free from instinct through his own reason. [*IaG*, AA VIII:19 (110)]

Though Kant clearly states that nature “has willed”, it is evident that what nature seems to have willed is nothing but freedom. Is this possible? One may be tempted to answer positively and recall further statements. After all Kant mentions the “means of nature”¹⁸ in the Fourth Proposition [*IaG*, AA VIII:20 (111)] and again a “hidden plan of nature” in the Eighth [*IaG*, AA VIII:27 (116)] and an “aim of nature” in the Ninth [*IaG*, AA VIII:29 (118)], down to nature’s justification (providence) [*IaG*, AA VIII:30 (119)]. In order to provide a negative answer that I take to be the closest to Kant’s true intention, it may be of help to consider that Kant’s appeal to such a nature is analogical.

Kant establishes an analogy between nature and history: we rationally need to assume a regular course in nature as far as human species’ dispositions are concerned in order to assume that history mirrors the regular course at stake. We are *naturally made* for actually nothing. Any human being may well exemplify Shakespeare’s words: either as a “piece of work”, “noble in reason” and “infinite in faculties”¹⁹ or as Lady Anne saying that “No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity” and Gloucester responding “But I know none, and therefore am no beast”²⁰. Recalling history in place of poetry, are we made for South Africa’s *Freedom Charter* (26th June 1955) or are we made for the massacre in Srebrenica (1995)? *Per se*, any of the two and both. In the first section of the *Religion* (1793) Kant also clarifies that both *good* and *evil* depend on the “freedom of the power of choice” [*RGV*, AA VI:20-26 (69-74)], and that the human being “must make or have made *himself* into whatever he is or should become in a moral sense, good or evil. These two [characters] must be an effect of his free power of choice [...]” [*RGV*, AA VI:44 (89)]²¹.

¹⁸ Among the most relevant, both war and *unsocial sociability* serve nature’s aim, for they let civilization slowly arise. However, what we do in place of war and what we ground in place of a community relying on mere antagonism depends entirely on grounding a rightful condition and a *moral whole*.

¹⁹ W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2.

²⁰ W. Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act I, Scene 2.

²¹ Kant also distinguishes between the predisposition to good and the propensity to evil [respectively *RGV*, AA VI:26-28 (74-76); *RGV*, AA VI:29-32 (76-79)], in order to argue that reason’s laws unavoidably lead to *good*. This does not mean that the *good* follows from reason *naturally*, in the same way as a tree bears its fruits – where the latter cannot choose to do otherwise. The same is true of evil. The relationship is causal – for one could say that our nature entails a disposition to either good or evil, yet conditional: both good and evil follow from what we do, that is from how we act.

No agent-featured nature can be responsible for human species' development. Indeed Kant's argument in the *Idea* aims to legitimately assume as a *Leitfaden* a purposive thread in nature in order to call forth both a rightful condition and cosmopolitanism as the most relevant outcomes of human species' developmental path. What would allegedly be caused by nature, is indeed an entirely human responsibility. The assumption of a regular course of nature, therefore of history, towards a rightful condition and cosmopolitanism, in turn leads us to see that these two tasks represent historical duties, that is the goals we ought to achieve in order to make "a moral whole" out of "a pathologically compelled agreement to society" [*IaG*, AA VIII:21 (111)]. This "moral whole" can have no form but that of the "civil society universally administering right" that Kant mentions in the Fifth Proposition [*IaG*, AA VIII:22 (112)]. It represents "the greatest problem for the human species" and, according to the Sixth Proposition "the most difficult" and "the latest to be solved" [*IaG*, AA VIII:23 (113)].

Again, Kant also says that nature compels human species to achieve this goal and that a "perfectly civil constitution" is the "supreme problem of nature for human species" [*IaG*, AA VIII:22 (112)]. However, it is of the utmost importance to stress that no nature may just give such a gift to human species. Why? Because *what we are* - our alleged nature - is in no way separated from *what we ought to do*. The point is that freedom, not nature, is the subject of history²². Human history is freedom's history, not nature's. By further clarifying this, it is also possible to gain a better understanding of the guarantee of perpetual peace²³ which nature is meant to provide in Kant's 1795 text:

Even from a religious point of view, no nature can take the role of freedom. Though the topic of dispositions would undoubtedly deserve a wider discussion, it lies beyond the aims of this paper. A more detailed study is C. Card, *Kant's Moral Excluded Middle*, in S. Anderson-Gold, P. Muchnik (Eds.), *Kant's Anatomy of Evil*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2010, pp. 74-92. From a methodological point of view, my focus is 1) moral-political; 2) on history, that is on what we ought to do in order to fulfill our moral vocation. The sphere of religion, though an essential part of Kant's whole account of morality and ethics, deals specifically with what we can legitimately believe in and eventually hope for - when the outcomes of our moral efforts and actions seem insufficient or self-defeating. It is the idea of freedom that grounds the supreme principle of practical reason (the moral law), while the idea of God is the object of a mere postulate. The moral worth follows from the moral law exclusively, and even the appeal to God grounds no truly moral motivation - while its idea is required in order to conceive of the highest good as achievable.

²² *MAM*, AA VIII:115 (169): "The history of *nature* thus begins from good, for that is the *work of God*; the history of *freedom* from evil, for it is the *work of the human being*." It seems to me that this sentence allows human historical responsibility to emerge clearly. It also helps to understand that there would be no responsibility in a merely intelligible world, for in such a world there would be no alternative to a condition of full morality.

²³ *ZeF*, AA VIII:360-368 (331-337). On this point I share the claims raised by L. Ypi, *Natura Daedala Rerum? On the Justification of Historical Progress in Kant's Guarantee of Perpetual Peace*, «Kantian Review», 14, 2, 2010, pp. 118-148. See in particular p. 121: "The real problem posed by the guarantee of perpetual peace is not, as sometimes misleadingly suggested, that here Kant has exceeded the limits of Critical theory by accepting a teleological ordering of nature which ultimately

What affords this *guarantee* (surety) is nothing less than the great artist *nature* (*natura daedala rerum*) from whose mechanical course purposiveness shines forth visibly, letting concord arise by means of the discord between human beings even against their will; and for this reason nature, regarded as necessitation by a cause the laws of whose operation are unknown to us, is called *fate*, but if we consider its purposiveness in the course of the world as the profound wisdom of a higher cause directed to the objective final end of the human race and predetermining this course of the world, it is called *providence*^{*}, which we do not, strictly speaking, *cognize* in these artifices of nature or even so much as *infer* from them but instead (as in all relations of the form of things to ends in general) only can and must *add it in thought*, in order to make for ourselves a concept of their possibility by analogy with actions of human art; but the representation of their relation to and harmony with the end that reason prescribes immediately to us (the moral end) is an idea, which is indeed transcendent for *theoretical* purposes but for practical purposes (e.g., with respect to the concept of the duty of *perpetual peace* and putting that mechanism of nature to use for it) is dogmatic and well founded as to its reality. [*ZeF*, AA VIII:360-362 (331-332)]

In invoking *providence*^{*} Kant clarifies that the analogy with the end of a wise creator leads us to assume this end as determining the course of human history. However, this does not mean to abandon to providence as if it were completely senseless to act according to the law of freedom. Instead of clearing the name of providence and nature as merciful forces to which we should show devotion or gratitude, the role of the natural and providential guarantee of perpetual peace concerns exclusively the question of the means, not that of the ends. As it is evident from Kant's words themselves, we still deal with a rational assumption (an analogy) which works as a means for our exclusively moral ends. Said differently, the guarantee, whose object is public right, aims to ensure that right will make war useless – thereby taking war's place – as a means for human species' development. It is no coincidence that Kant states that it is reason, not nature, that which

commits him to an optimistic view of history and to the theory of an intelligent design in the world. The real issue is to understand why a 'guarantee' of perpetual peace is required at all and, if so, whether Kant's thesis on human progress may be coherently disentangled from an a-Critical assumption of providence and still ultimately defended." The role and status of the *Guarantee* have been debated also by L. Caranti, *Kant's Political Legacy. Human Rights, Peace, Progress*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2017, pp. 218-234. While I agree with Caranti on the fact that the *logic of unintended consequences* provides a valuable interpretative tool for several issues in Kant's philosophy of history, I also think that such a logic is incompatible with Kant's claim that nature would have a plan – something which implies *intended consequences*. The fact that *natura daedala rerum* is part of an analogy, in turn, does not mean that it does not have historical, empirical and even material consequences. We may well be able to improve throughout history by relying on self-love and the mere pursuit of happiness but, again, neither the former nor the latter are enough to ground the *moral whole* through which perpetual peace becomes achievable. Kant does not claim that nature will bring perpetual peace but, rather, that we can rationally assume nature as if it will do so. This rational assumption, though by itself non-constitutive of perpetual peace, can be said to be partly constitutive of the trajectory we ought both to give to and to follow in history. See also P. Kleingeld, *Nature or Providence*, pp. 214-218.

prescribes us the moral end [*ZeF*, AA VIII:362 (332)]. Nor it is a coincidence that Kant concludes his argument by stating that what nature does for the purpose of perpetual peace refers to “the end that the human being’s own reason makes a duty for him, hence to the favoring of his *moral purpose*” [*ZeF*, AA VIII:365 (334)].

Assuming nature’s intervention and providence is, in other words, a rational means we are allowed to employ when trying to foster the idea of historical progress. But perpetual peace is a duty [*ZeF*, AA VIII:362 (332)]. Only the law of freedom and practical reason can prescribe it, while the mechanism of nature is in this case a mere means. Nature and providence can have no influence on the performance of duties as far as their moral origin and motivation is concerned, for even the name of God can be no ground for moral agency. Only freedom – not by chance the *ratio essendi* of the moral law – can. From this perspective too, any predetermination, destiny and nature’s intervention is – if not excluded – brought back to its peculiar role: that of a rational assumption, an analogy, perhaps a postulate.

This said, it is still unclear how to manage the seemingly unescapable opposition between (external) nature’s proceeding and human nature’s development, where the latter relies on reason and freedom – which are constitutively purposive and disregard mechanism. The opposition can be solved by appealing to the two worlds where human species is entitled to live, the sensible and the intelligible²⁴. Though this issue is addressed fully in Kant’s most mature reflection on morality and practical reason – and it may therefore seem inappropriate to recall it while dealing with history – it is only by appealing to Kant’s account of morality that we can make sense of his philosophy of history. After all, though the *Idea* and the *Conjectural Beginning* come before the second *Critique*, this is not the case for *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Nonetheless, the latter too appeals to nature in the same terms of the earlier essays. And while all three texts converge on the role of right as the authentic distinctive mark of human species’ development, it is only by recalling Kant’s account of freedom and morality that we can avoid two shortcomings which undermine Kant’s aims themselves. Otherwise, we are compelled either to rely on a wise but hidden plan of nature or be content with a merely negative account of right: as a means to avoid war, as a reasonable compromise coming from *unsocial sociability*.

We cannot conceive of the development of human species’ dispositions towards the rightful condition by relying solely on nature. Kant’s point is that a rightful moral whole, cosmopolitanism, and perpetual peace follows from freedom’s domain – that is morality. Put differently, since nature aims at fully developing all dispositions in any of its species, it is reasonable to assume this aim as playing a role in human history. This is an analogy, by no means the admission that nature has destined our

²⁴ It is also important not to conflate two different meanings of *natural* in Kant’s arguments. *Natural* may well mean either nature’s *natural* aims and interventions as an external agent or human nature’s two *natural* (that is *constitutive*) predispositions: the animal (instinctual) and the rational-moral.

species to the rightful condition. It is in a beaver's nature to build dams; it depends on human freedom to establish a perfect civil constitution. Nature can prescribe no duty to the only species whose members are aware of being ends in themselves.

From a methodological point of view, I do not aim at bringing ideas coming from Kant's mature practical philosophy into play as if they were arbitrary juxtapositions without which we could not make sense of Kant's philosophy of history. Rather, I would stress that the most relevant of these ideas play a constitutive role for Kant's views on history and right already before the second *Critique* – not to mention the *Foundation* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*. For Kant history is the soil where freedom ought to be cultivated and let it bear fruit: right, perpetual peace, cosmopolitanism. But this is no natural event. These are achievements, not gifts. More precisely, historical duties.

In the *Conjectural Beginning* we find the most valuable statements concerning this play of freedom, from which nature's alleged predetermination has to be separated neatly. Let me point to two intertwined issues. In the first place, the fourth and most decisive step in human species' developmental path is taken once human beings understand that they are the authentic ends of nature. However, no human being can be a means, for we are not only nature's ends, but also, and most importantly, ends in ourselves [*MAM*, VIII:114 (167-168)]. Our moral vocation and our rational status are thus double-locked. In the second place, notice that Kant seems to distinguish between two accounts of reason: the instrumental and the teleological²⁵ (*ibidem*). While the former concerns “reason considered merely as an instrument for the satisfaction of various inclinations”, the latter concerns the moral purposive status of any human being and “the restrictions” that reason imposes to the will (*ibidem*). This allows us to distinguish, accordingly, between a negative and a positive account of freedom²⁶. The former is the power to act without and even contrarily to a natural drive, that is the power not to be driven by instinct alone; the latter is instead the power to completely disregard the mechanism of nature and its necessity in order to follow an exclusively intelligible kind of causality²⁷. Such spontaneity is far beyond negative freedom.

We ask: are instrumental reason and negative freedom enough to ground a society? Sure. But nothing more. They are unable to solve the most decisive

²⁵ See A. Ferrarin, *The Powers of Pure Reason. Kant and the Idea of Cosmic Philosophy*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2015, pp. 19-22. Without this distinction, it is unavoidable to assume an “emergence of reason” (O. O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason. Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1989, p. 21). The problem of *emergence* is that there must be something out of which reason would emerge. This is incompatible with reason's spontaneity and teleology.

²⁶ See *MS*, AA VI:213-214 (375).

²⁷ See *MS*, AA VI:216 (371): “But it is different with the teachings of morality (*Sittlichkeit*). They command for everyone, without taking account of his inclinations, merely because and insofar as he is free and has practical reason. He does not derive instruction in its laws from observing himself and his animal nature [...]”.

problem of human species with which the *Idea* makes us acquainted, that is to let human species move from “a pathologically compelled agreement to form a society to a moral whole”. A new “mode of thought is required”, Kant says in the *Idea*, according to which the ability to make *moral* distinctions overcomes those predetermined dispositions allegedly given by nature [*IaG*, AA VIII:21 (111)]²⁸.

Back to the *Conjectural Beginning*, it is no coincidence that Kant mentions Rousseau’s problem “of how culture must proceed in order properly to develop the predispositions of humanity as a *moral* species to their vocation, so that the latter no longer conflict with humanity as a natural species” [*MAM*, VIII:116 (169)]. No doubt that human species belongs to nature as any other animal species on earth. However, this does not imply that our *natural* dispositions come from this animal status exclusively. Again, we are not *naturally made* for anything as far as culture and morality are concerned. It thus makes no sense to take literally, that is constitutively, Kant’s statements that nature has grounded two dispositions in us: the natural and the moral [*MAM*, VIII:117-118, note (170)]. The only plausible way to accept that nature has grounded even moral dispositions would compel us to admit that nature is capable of freedom. While this may be a viable route, it is not one taken by Kant. He can only require us to assume nature as if it gave us reason and freedom, since we know that nature proceeds in an analogous way with any of its species.

At the same time, one should not be tempted to think that, according to this picture, human history is the outcome of our intelligible nature exclusively. History is the place where freedom becomes actual through moral agency²⁹ and right in the same world we share with natural causality, by no means a merely intelligible world. There would be no right in the latter, no evil to fight, no improvement to be undertaken. These are human species’ duties *in history*, namely where our sensible and intelligible nature coexist. Said differently, history is where culture may arise as a unity between nature and freedom.

Besides an agent-featured nature and right as an historical goal and achievement, the third element which the three essays at stake share is indeed culture: as the result of civilization in the *Idea*³⁰, as increasing in parallel with morality in *Toward*

²⁸ See also *RGV*, AA VI:47-48 (92): “But if a human being is corrupt in the very ground of his maxims, how can he possibly bring about this revolution by his own forces and become a good human being on his own? Yet duty commands that he be good, and duty commands nothing but what we can do. The only way to reconcile this is by saying that a revolution is necessary in the mode of thought but a gradual reformation in the mode of sense (which places obstacles in the way of the former), and [that both] must therefore be possible also to the human being.”

²⁹ The tension between the a-historicism of the moral law and the temporal development of morality throughout history is no insurmountable contradiction. Some of the best pages on this issue are in P. Kleingeld, *Fortschritt und Vernunft. Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 1995, pp. 206-210.

³⁰ *IaG*, AA VIII:26 (116): “We are *cultivated* in a high degree by art and science. We are *civilized*, perhaps to the point of being overburdened, by all sorts of social decorum and propriety. But very

*Perpetual Peace*³¹, as a “second nature” in the *Conjectural Beginning*. The latter occurrence is particularly relevant and revealing. To be precise, the phrase “second nature” literally occurs in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, where Kant refers to established habits and “hereditary maxims”³², so rooted that they become constitutive of character. In the *Conjectural Beginning* we read that natural predispositions suffer, on the one hand, the advancement of culture, while on the other they also hinder culture (for they belong to an entirely natural condition) [MAM, AA VIII:117-118 (171)]. This will last until “perfect art again becomes nature, which is the ultimate goal of the moral vocation of the human species” (*ibidem*). This *art becoming nature* is nothing but the idea of a moral unity between what we ought to do and what we are, between the intelligible (rational-moral) and the sensible (instinctual) side of our nature, between freedom and nature. The idea of culture, to which right and politics also belong. Here it is freedom or, as Kant puts it, our moral vocation, that which determines our renewed nature.

This second nature alone may fill “the void in creation” Kant mentions in the *Idea* [IaG, AA VIII:21-22 (112)]. Though Kant here appeals again to the means of nature (unsocial sociability and selfish pretensions) as causing the development of human species’ dispositions, it is beyond any means of nature to gain the *full and complete* development of those dispositions which ground morality and right. For sure, nature plays a role with its means, but these are only necessary, not sufficient. The intelligible causality of freedom is required as well, for our moral vocation may well be said to be unnatural in many regards: it compels us to disregard sensible inclinations, to give up desires and ambitions, to make great efforts and even to contravene any convenience-assessment. It is our moral vocation what makes human nature constitutively and irremediably *naturans*. The full and complete development of dispositions nature aims to achieve in any of its species is not entirely in nature’s power as far as the human species is concerned. Being human is, according to this picture, a responsibility to be constantly fulfilled in history

much is still lacking before we can be held to be already *moralized*. For the idea of morality still belongs to culture; but the use of this idea which comes down only to a resemblance of morals in love of honor and in external propriety constitutes only being civilized.”

³¹ *ZeF*, AA VIII:380 (346): “[...] the moral principle in the human being never dies out, and reason, which is capable pragmatically of carrying out rightful ideas in accordance with that principle, grows steadily with advancing culture [...]”

³² *ApH*, AA VII:121 (233); VII:312 (408). *Second nature* also occurs at IX:445 (*Lectures on Pedagogy*, p. 440 in *Anthropology, History, and Education*), where Kant mentions shared principles that grant uniformity among human beings. The following lines belong to the same page: “Many germs lie within humanity, and now it is our business to develop the natural dispositions proportionally and to unfold humanity from its germs and to make it happen that the human being reaches his vocation. Animals fulfill their vocation automatically and unknowingly. The human being must first seek to reach his, but this cannot happen if he does not even have a concept of his vocation. It is also completely impossible for the individual to reach the vocation.”

through moral agency, by improving rightful institutions, by granting perpetual peace and establishing a cosmopolitan order.

FREEDOM AND RIGHT

Having clarified that freedom is the true subject of history, it is now important to discuss right as its organ from a comprehensive point of view. Right is both the necessary remedy to non-moral practices (the shield of external freedom), and the means through which morality permeates the world. For sure, right can be said to be the end of history. However, the only true end of history, of morality, of the system of pure reason in general is the human being as an end in itself, that is *under moral laws*. Right can be taken as an end only because we need it as a means for achieving freedom, namely as its organ. The final end of history is moralization, not mere civilization³³.

In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant provides the universal ground-principle of right, according to which any action

is *right* if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law. [*MS*, AA VI:230 (387)].

Kant calls right's legislation *external*, for it does not appeal – directly and constitutively – to the moral law and the conformity between the law and the subjective maxim. Positive laws concern the external legality of an action – as being permitted and included in a shared normative framework – not the moral determination of the will. In these terms, legality may be completely detached from morality [*MS*, AA VI:219 (383)]. Right does not command moral duties. Rather, right merely deals with hindering all hindrances to right itself – as far as external freedom is concerned.

For example, if one would decide to help someone who is in need of assistance and if such an agent would be hindered by another's violent agency (by someone who would not tolerate giving help to people from other countries or of different religious beliefs), there would be a conflict between two free choices. From the point of view of right, these two actions were not simply mirroring two different but equally valuable choices, for only help-giving can be said to be compatible with any other choice according to a universal law, while violence cannot. Violence would in this case represent a hindrance to an action (help-giving) which would not, instead, hinder anything at all. Right has nothing to do with the base motivation of help-giving. Either our agent is helping because he or she wants to be seen and publicly

³³ See *ApH*, AA VII:324-325 (420). Kant states here that we are destined *by our reason* to moralization, civilization and culture. See also AA IX:451 (*Lectures on Pedagogy*, p. 445 in *Anthropology, History, and Education*).

praised (heteronomy) or because he or she thinks it is his or her moral duty to help (autonomy), right is concerned with the external freedom of the action exclusively. According to this picture, positive laws can be said to have nothing to do with moral maxims.

However, as stated, this picture is not exhaustive. Right does not run out in this negative role exclusively. According to Kant's historical writings, right can be said to be the organ of freedom. Too often Kant's moral thought suffers the stigma of a *morality of good intentions*. Thus, less attention than needed is paid to the fact that freedom is – according to Kant's most mature practical philosophy – a noumenon which can be actualized, precisely through moral agency, in the world that human beings share with natural causality. To think that the full actuality of freedom in history depends – entirely and exclusively – on maxims that have been conformed to the moral law means to detach the field of morals from the field of right and politics – something that Kant does not take into account in his views on history³⁴. By separating the spheres of morality and right so sharply, the role of history would be almost completely overlooked. No doubt that any action which relies on the conformity between the subjective maxim and the categorical imperative is a moral action, but the moral status of individuals is just a step towards a wider and more radical account of the moral development of human species in history. We need right, and not merely as a means. We ought to work for a cosmopolitan rightful condition which would not only remove all hindrances to external freedom but also allow human species to fulfill its moral vocation, for a human being is an end in itself³⁵. By borrowing and rephrasing some famous words from the first *Critique*, one could say that morality without right (and politics)³⁶ is blind. Analogously, right and politics without morality are empty³⁷.

While this account does not compromise at all the negative function of right as hindering all hindrances to external freedom, it shows that right itself would lose

³⁴ Cfr. P. Stern's *The Problem of History and Temporality in Kantian Ethics*, «The Review of Metaphysics», 39, 3, 1986, pp. 505-545. At p. 527 we read that “Kant does not adequately clarify the nature of the relationship between political-legal and moral development in any of his so-called popular essays on the philosophy of history”. Not only is the opposite quite true, however Kant's writings on history also show that he did not conceive of two separated and parallel *developments*.

³⁵ These are, after all, the founding principles of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

³⁶ Deeper insights on the connection between morality and politics in Kant are provided by L. Fommesu, *Politik als Moral*, in M. Mori (Hrsg.), *Vom Naturzustand zur kosmopolitischen Gesellschaft. Staat – Souveränität – Nation*, Springer, Wiesbaden 2017, pp. 169-189; L. Krasnoff, *The Fact of Politics: History and Teleology in Kant*, «European Journal of Philosophy», 2, 1, 1994, pp. 22-40.

³⁷ In his *Kant on Ethical Institutions* («The Southern Journal of Philosophy», 57, 1, 2019, pp. 30-55) J. DiCenso appeals to Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and its ideal of religious institutions, which may mediate between the ethical and the legal-political domains. While the necessary assumption of a higher moral being (God) may well play an ideal role in fostering the constitution of community where ethics and politics harmonize, I think that Kant's account of history provides a less ideal and more concrete, historical option: cosmopolitan right.

strength and efficacy once fully identified with this negative function. A variety of inhuman practices have been and are legally, that is juridically, permitted in a variety of social contexts: from honor killing to religious persecutions. These examples are even too glaring to be effective. What about not being able to check in to a hospital due to positive laws that state that healthcare is a commodity, eventually related to one's place of birth? What about financial speculation being regulated in order to be left completely free to increase social and economic inequality? Should we say that laws of this kind are meant to protect private property and the free market? Should we justify this even for the arms trade? Practices like these are, according to Kant's view of historical development, targets to hit. They are actually obstacles – but still juridical obstacles – to human species' moral development³⁸. Should we choose to tolerate them by appealing to external freedom, we would unavoidably limit right to merely formal constraints – that is to make it impossible to conceive of the moral development of human species' dispositions. Whenever and wherever human beings are not treated as ends in themselves, no formal constraint may demand to count as universally valid and accepted. It would then be unmoral not to rebel³⁹ or not to try changing positive laws⁴⁰.

³⁸ Consider for example Kant's prophetic words on the “new invention” of public debt as a burden from which only a “future large state body” can free nation states themselves [*JaG*, AA VIII:28 (118)].

³⁹ I think it is not a question of having or not a moral or a legal right to rebellion but, rather, of following the demands of the moral law. No established or juridically legitimate authority is free to disregard the moral status of any human being as an end in itself. In her *On Revolution in Kant and Marx*, L. Ypi states that: “we would have to shift focus from the writings in which Kant explicitly rejects the right to revolution against legitimate governments to those in which the historical process leading to the establishment of rightful political relations is thought to contribute to humanity's moral emancipation” (p. 268). As long as we stress that “moral humanity's emancipation” does not mirror an overarching rational necessity in history, I concur. On this point I also agree with K. Westphal (*Kant on the State, Law, and Obedience to Authority in the alleged 'Anti-Revolutionary' Writings*, «Journal of Philosophical Research», 17, 1992, pp. 383-426): “Kant's ultimate grounds for membership in and obedience to actual states are *pragmatic*, conditional, and rest only indirectly on his fundamental moral principles. On these broader principles, one is obligated to obey an actual, imperfect state only to the extent that obedience to it serves to improve one's moral character. If a regime is so corrupt that it degrades its citizens' characters more than anarchy or the grave hazards of revolt, then Kant offers *no* grounds for contending that anyone is obligated to obey it.” (p. 411). See also A. R. Bernstein, *Civil Disobedience: Towards a New Kantian Conception*, in L. Krasnoff, N. Sánchez Madrid, P. Satne (Eds.), *Kant's Doctrine of Right in the Twenty-first Century*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2018, pp. 140-160.

⁴⁰ Similarly, by appealing to less striking but still extremely relevant examples, climate change is also caused by controversial juridical agreements shared by a variety of institutions, including states. Right may be somehow free to disregard scientific evaluations, but nature would still present the bill. No matter how stubbornly states and institutions react to the always increasing intensity of storms, hurricanes and floods by adopting too timid normative dispositions: nature will follow its own laws. And while the human species is undoubtedly able to alter a variety of natural environments and events, it is beyond our possibilities to alter the laws of physics, thermodynamics and entropy.

HISTORICAL DUTIES

As already mentioned, history represents for Kant the space where human species' dispositions develop. These dispositions can be said to be natural according to two different senses. *Natural* may refer to either nature in general – insofar as human species is a species among others equally driven by instinct – or to human rational capacities and moral vocation as constitutive of human nature. Due to both reason and freedom, we properly distinguish ourselves from other species.

In the Second Proposition of the *Idea* Kant indeed states that reason's projects extend far beyond natural instincts⁴¹. What are the historical and political implications of such a statement? Kant may want to clarify in the first place that those projects developed by reason according to specific rational capacities – which include the possibility of moral agency – are completely different from the activities and skills required in order to build a dam, for example. In other words, to ground a state is not the same as to construct a building – for the latter cannot disregard those laws of physics we call *natural* in a very specific sense. However, this does not mean that human rationality coincides with human nature in its entirety. Had Kant meant that we can completely disregard our own sensible nature and instinct, there would even be no need to establish a moral law – for agency would be affected by no non-rational motives. Right would be required even less.

It is important to stress here that while reason's projects can disregard the natural order, their actuality in history cannot. The fact that human beings are citizens of two worlds – the sensible and the intelligible – means that it is our responsibility to bind them by letting the noumenal causality of freedom – which belongs to the intelligible world – establish its domain in the same space that is also ruled by natural laws (the sensible world)⁴². It is also with right and political institutions that this synthesis between nature and freedom takes place in history. The utopias proposed by More and by Campanella were actual state of affairs if we would do without the non-rational part of human nature. Kant's more general problem is to conceive of the actuality of reason's projects in a world where natural causality applies as well. It is precisely at this point that the actuality of freedom and morality in terms of politics and right throughout history acquires the greatest relevance. Human species' moral dispositions ought to become actual in a world which also follows non-moral and natural laws. But how is it possible to make these dispositions actual where vast amounts of human practices relentlessly take the opposite road? While the Fourth Proposition appeals to *unsocial sociability*, the Fifth clearly points out that the most urgent of human species' challenges – namely the most relevant of

⁴¹ Reason is “a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects.” [*IaG*, AA VIII:18-19 (109)]

⁴² On practical agency see A. Ferrarin, *Saggezza, immaginazione e giudizio pratico. Studio su Aristotele e Kant*, ETS, Pisa 2004, pp. 21, 79-80.

reason's projects – is “the achievement of a civil society universally administering right” [*IaG*, AA VIII:22 (112)]. For sure, *unsocial sociability* plays a fundamental role in moving from nature to society, but only reason and freedom – in terms of spontaneity and teleology – can move human species from pathologically grounded social agreements to a moral whole. From nature and civilization to moralization and culture – including juridical and political culture.

If the question is: how should we fulfill our responsibility? The answer may be: precisely by solving the greatest of human species' problems, the one our *whole and unified* nature is unavoidably oriented to – that is the main aim of reason's projects: making a “moral whole” out of a “pathologically compelled agreement to form a society”. Morality can be *fully* actual only as a *whole*. This means that we cannot be content with just one perfect civil constitution in only one state, nor with very general and allegedly universal juridical addresses, say UN resolutions, which are however always subjected to a variety of further conditions. For example, while environment protection⁴³ is a universal issue and an end for human species, all juridical dispositions currently available are subjected to several economically conditional evaluations. To summarize, while it may be said that environment protection is a universal concern – a human species' end – from a political and juridical point of view the end seems to be to safeguard economic interests which are in no way universal. The means-ends relationship is inverted when right does not work as freedom's organ.

Human species ought to develop rightful authorities whose externality involves no detachment of right from morality. As the *Idea's* Sixth Proposition makes it clear, human beings need a master. The non-rational part of human nature – which belongs to and operates within the range of instinct and sensible needs – makes it impossible to have an exclusively positive account of right. Thus, one might be tempted to see in this need for a master, again, the distinctive mark of the negative account of right. However, human species alone is entitled to have a master that exclusively comes from inside its membership. No other species may demand to dominate human beings. No other species may have a master in the very same sense as political authorities, otherwise there would be no substantial difference between a state and a pack of wolves. Kant's account of moral agency relies on the duty to subject – spontaneously – our maxims to the moral law. Every authentically moral agent is its own master and there is no need to think that our *natural* need for a master means – exclusively – that we need to subject our individual freedom to shared coercive political institutions. It *also* means to be subjected to authority, but this would never be enough to make a *moral whole* out of a pathologically grounded

⁴³ On this issue see T. Svoboda, *Duties Regarding Nature. A Kantian Environmental Ethic*, Routledge, New York 2015.

social contract. As Kant puts it clearly, the problem “of establishing a state [...] is *soluble* even for a nation of devils” [*ZeF*, AA VIII:366 (335)]⁴⁴.

It would be more appropriate to say that any human being needs two masters, not simply one. No doubt that external juridical authorities are necessary, but the purpose for which these authorities are built up would be compromised if there would be no complementary internal (moral) authority⁴⁵. For example, public right may force me to pay my taxes, travel with a ticket, vote in elections and never lie to a police officer. However, I can still decide to spend my time trying not to fulfill these civil responsibilities, finding a way not to get caught and punished. All cultures, even juridical and political ones, always follow from the spontaneity of reason and freedom⁴⁶ in their agreement with nature. The challenge Kant's account of history mounts is to constantly improve all juridical frameworks in order to progressively meet – though irremediably asymptotically⁴⁷ – the demands of morality. And since the latter are universal, right has to reach a universal scope as well. The moral whole Kant refers to points to cosmopolitanism directly: morality cannot be conceived of as fulfilled but as whole; and this whole is a cosmopolitan environment leading to perpetual peace. By no chance Kant calls the latter the “entire final end of the doctrine of right” [*MS*, AA VI:355 (491)], the “highest political good” [*MS*, AA VI:355 (492)] and the “highest cosmopolitical good” [*Refl.* 8077, AA XIX:612]. This should make it clearer why Kant's cosmopolitanism is far from representing a mere utopian project.

Quite paradoxically, one may say that nature somehow condemns human species to be subject to external authorities and, at the same time, it requires us to constantly move towards the idea of a *moral whole*. I think that such an opposition is less sharp than it seems. I think that, according to Kant, it is by building up better juridical and political institutions that we approximate the idea. It is, said differently, by subjecting to external authorities that we constantly improve that we move a step further on the developmental path of our natural and rational dispositions – where the final stage is the *moral whole* Kant mentions. The negative and positive accounts of right are not alternative, but rather complementary. In the same way, any authentic political agency has to be a moral agency as well.

Before concluding, let us take stock. The continuity between morality and right Kant argues for in his writings on history – that is the path from nature to freedom, cosmopolitanism, and peace – consists in the following steps. Already before the second *Critique* Kant deals with the purposive moral status of any human being and addresses the issue of right as both defending and enhancing this status.

⁴⁴ See P. Kleingeld, *Fortschritt und Vernunft*, p. 186. If even devils would, there is no doubt that human beings will.

⁴⁵ See *MS*, AA VI:214 (375-376). Morality deals with “freedom in both the external and the internal use of choice, insofar as it is determined by laws of reason”.

⁴⁶ Cfr. *SF*, AA VII:91 (307).

⁴⁷ Cfr. *SF*, AA VII:90-91 (306).

In these terms, right can be said to be the organ of freedom throughout history, for it is by means of right that the *whole* of human species dispositions develops, and culture emerges. Nature and freedom (and reason) – that is the sensible and the intelligible parts of *human nature* – thus coexist in the historical world. The trajectory we may identify in the latter points towards a cosmopolitan rightful condition – the idea of a world republic [*ZeF*, AA VIII:357 (328)]⁴⁸ – as a means to achieve perpetual peace. Both the former and the latter somehow close the circle, for they represent historical duties whose fulfillment rely on right as freedom’s organ throughout history.

In Kant’s words:

morally practical reason pronounces in us its irresistible *veto*: *there is to be no war*, neither war between you and me in the state of nature nor war between us as states, which, although they are internally in a lawful condition, are still externally (in relation to one another) in a lawless condition; for war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights. So the question is no longer whether perpetual peace is something real or a fiction, and whether we are not deceiving ourselves in our theoretical judgment when we assume that it is real. Instead, we must act as if it is something real, though perhaps it is not; we must work toward establishing perpetual peace and the kind of constitution that seems to us most conducive to it (say, a republicanism of all states, together and separately) in order to bring about perpetual peace and put an end to the heinous waging of war, to which as their chief aim all states without exception have hitherto directed their internal arrangements. And even 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 toward it. For this is our duty, and to admit that the moral law within us is itself deceptive would call forth in us the wish, which arouses our abhorrence, rather to be rid of all reason and to regard ourselves as thrown by one’s principles into the same mechanism of nature as all the other species of animals. [*MS*, AA VI:354-355 (491)]

These words are perfectly coherent with Kant’s theses in *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Peace is something to “be *established*” [*ZeF*, AA VIII:349 (322)] and cosmopolitanism is the only viable way to fulfill this necessity. In particular, The Second Definitive Article for Perpetual Peace addresses the issues of federalism and of the “homage that every state pays the concept of right (at least verbally)” [*ZeF*, AA VIII:355 (326-327)]. The latter, Kant concludes, relies on a “greater, though at present dormant, moral predisposition to eventually become master of the evil principle within him (which he cannot deny) and also to hope for this from others; for otherwise the word *right* would never be spoken by states wanting to attack one another, unless merely to make fun of it” (*ibidem*). These words bring into play the moral root of any rightful development for human species and the necessity of being his or her own master. The “evil principle” does not refer here to a supposed radical

⁴⁸ For a discussion of whether Kant proposes a World republic or a league of nations see: G. Cavallar, *Kant's Society of Nations: Free Federation or World Republic?*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», 32, 3, 1994, pp. 461-482; L. Caranti, *Kant's Political Legacy*, pp. 148-151.

evil *naturally* belonging to human nature but, rather, to the fact that our sensible and instinctual drives – which on a large scale may well cause a war – have to be mastered both *morally* and *juridically*. Though Kant is here dealing with right and perpetual peace, he still has no hesitation in making it clear that “reason, from the throne of *the highest morally legislative power*, delivers an absolute condemnation of war as a procedure for determining rights and, on the contrary, makes a condition of peace, which cannot be instituted or assured without a pact of nations among themselves, a direct *duty*” [ZeF, AA VIII:356 (327), my emphasis].

In some of the last pages of *Toward Perpetual Peace* Kant appeals to a formulation of the categorical imperative by calling it the “principle of right” [ZeF, AA VIII:377 (344)]. It goes without saying that it would be senseless to take this literally and claim that the moral law is, in itself, the principle of right – for morality and right are not, *per se*, the one and the same thing. Rather, I think that Kant refers here to the continuity between morality and right, where perpetual peace is an historical duty requiring a juridical fulfillment. More precisely, cosmopolitan right⁴⁹ belongs to those “technical problems” (*ibidem*) which – as a matter of right – require not only a great knowledge of nature but also, and most importantly, the ability to use nature’s mechanism as means for the proposed end. Freedom makes use of nature’s mechanism for its own purposes, not the other way around. Since right has to meet the demands of morality, that is perpetual peace, right works as freedom’s organ in a space where actual morality is no given reality and in a time following the direction to which we ought to force it. The adjective *human* thus acquires a specific meaning: that of a unity between reason, freedom and nature which is not *naturally* given but has to be constantly pursued as a responsibility.

⁴⁹ As known, in *Toward Perpetual Peace* Kant states that cosmopolitan right is limited to the conditions of “universal *hospitality*”. The reason is that “all human beings” have “the right of possession in common of the earth’s surface” [ZeF, AA VIII:357-358 (328-329)]. This condition is undoubtedly universal but, I think, it is not unconditioned. Rather, it follows from the moral purposive status of human beings as ends in themselves. The human species has a right of “possession in common of the earth’s surface” because it is the only species entitled to claim it. On the Third Definitive Article see L. Caranti, *Kant's Political Legacy*, pp. 151-159.

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