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Thesis

**Kantian Philosophy of History: Teleology, Anthropology and Cosmopolitanism in
“Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim” (1784)**

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Abstract

This thesis is a work in the history of philosophy and philosophy of history of Immanuel Kant. It provides a reading of Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784) as a theoretical philosophical history which is intended to be practical. The thesis may be broken down into five parts. In the Introduction, the argument of the *Idea* essay is introduced and summarised. In Chapter One (Universal History), a definition of universal history as a theory of the natural teleology of human action is defended. In Chapter Two (Social Antagonism), the counterintuitive concept of unsociable sociability is explained as a mechanism for human development through conflict. In Chapter Three (Cosmopolitan Constitution), the concept of the civil constitution is explained as a step towards the cosmopolitan political order envisioned by Kant. In the Conclusion, the thesis is summarised and a brief philosophical evaluation of the *Idea* essay is proposed.

Statement of Originality

I, the author, hereby declare that this thesis, having been written for the purpose of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research in Philosophy at Macquarie University, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the thesis itself, and has not been submitted to any other educational institution for the purposes of any other academic awards or degrees.

Signed: _____

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09/10/17

Yet in such a precinct as civil union is, these same inclinations have afterwards their best effect; just as trees in a forest, precisely because each of them seeks to take air and sun from the other, are constrained to look for them above themselves, and therefore achieve a beautiful straight growth; whereas those in freedom and separated from one another, that put forth their branches as they like, grow stunted, crooked and awry. All culture and art that adorn humanity, and the most beautiful social order, are the fruits of unsociability, through which is it necessitated by itself to discipline itself, and so by an art extorted from it, to develop completely the germs of nature.

Immanuel Kant
Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim

Introduction

In his essay, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784), Immanuel Kant attempted to provide a philosophical way of looking at human history that could make sense of the seemingly random state of human affairs under a coherent philosophical framework. Kant believed this framework should be compatible with the causally determinate laws of natural mechanisms as well as the morally necessary laws of human freedom.¹ Although a minor work, the *Idea* essay has attracted some debate as to its status within the Kantian canon. Whether the essay is intended to be a theoretical piece, which functions as mere description of how human history may play out, or a practical piece, which calls human beings to act morally in order to achieve the cosmopolitan constitution, affects how scholars have understood Kant's philosophy of history. The *Idea* essay is, in fact, the first example of a systematic attempt by Kant to write about human history from a philosophical point of view. Therefore, any reading of it will inevitably affect the way one looks at the rest of Kant's philosophy of history and the themes pertaining to it after 1784. A new analysis of the *Idea* essay under a view of it as an application of a theory of natural teleology, whereby nature has a purpose or aim of perfect moralisation through political cosmopolitanism for the human race as a rational species, seems like a justified project for both the history of philosophy and philosophy of history.

This thesis will provide a reading of Kant's *Idea* essay based on a wide understanding of Kant's historical and philosophical context, especially Kant's early anthropology and

¹ This essay, which in German is entitled *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, is found in the collected German works of Immanuel Kant, *Kants Gesammelte Schriften: Akademie-Ausgabe*, 29 vols., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1902-, vol. 8, pp. 15-31, hereafter abbreviated in parentheses as AA with volume and page numbers separated by a colon, i.e. (AA 8:15-31). This work has been translated into English most authoritatively in the Cambridge Edition, Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim', in Robert B. Louden and Gunter Zöller (eds.), *Anthropology, History and Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 107-120, which is consistently the edition referred to throughout this thesis. All references to the *Idea* essay in this thesis will be indicated first by the English translation, followed by the relevant section of the *Akademie-Ausgabe* in parentheses after the manner described above.

metaphysics. The thesis is orientated around three major concepts that Kant employs at key points in the essay: universal history, social antagonism and the cosmopolitan constitution. A number of auxiliary concepts also facilitate the discussion of these larger themes: nature, freedom, sociability, cosmopolitanism and teleology. These serve as key markers for the logic of Kant's argument and are integral to the comments provided in this thesis. Given a reading of these concepts, their mutual relationship in the essay and their nature according to the wider canon of Kantian writings on nature, freedom, anthropology, politics and pedagogy, this thesis ultimately takes the view that Kant's philosophy of history represents an applied theoretical anthropology based on a theory of human nature as a rational being who is predisposed to develop his reason in accordance with a teleological conception of nature. Seeing as the *Idea* essay is couched within Kant's critical views of natural determinism and human freedom and in the formative and theoretical principles of practical anthropology, I propose to offer in this thesis an innovative synthesis of the two, broad representative positions taken by scholars, namely, the theoretical and the practical readings, in a hope to synthesise these readings into viewing the *Idea* essay as a theoretical philosophy of history that may be applied in prospect. This view ultimately favours a practical reading. However, it preserves the insights of the theoretical reading in a way that other practical readings do not, and thus seems to the author to be both theoretical and practical. I will call this reading 'synthetic.'

The two representative positions taken by Kant scholars are as follows. The theoretical reading takes the concept of an 'idea' in Kant as a critical postulate of reason, which refers to a relation of logical concepts, which has no necessary application in the world. This view places no hope in the potential that the content of the *Idea* essay could ever be considered an accurate representation of human moral and political life. It therefore regulates Kant's universal history to a kind of speculative logical exercise in human

anthropology. The practical reading, on the other hand, points to the Ninth Proposition as having some hope that the moral and political philosophy introduced throughout the bulk of the *Idea* essay might be implemented by taking the point of view of human history defended in the essay itself. This view is prescriptive. Kant is not simply describing how human history will unfold. He is also commending certain moral and political activities which he believes will be conducive to achieving the aim of nature. I also think there are more things that one can point to to think that Kant thought of his philosophical theory about history as having an application to the world. Physical analogies derived from examples from the natural world illustrate concepts Kant thinks are relevant to what he is saying, thereby grounding his theoretical position in the natural world itself. These physical analogies serve as markers from which to infer Kant's beliefs about the behaviour of the human species in aggregate. This is significant for understanding the logic of Kant's universal history and will be referred to in the thesis later.²

Kant wrote his essay in ten parts, consisting of an Introduction and nine propositions. Each proposition is a single sentence numbered in the ordinal form.³ This is then followed up by a few paragraphs by way of clarification and explanation, which fleshes out and argues for each proposition. The beginning of the essay sets the foundation for the discussion by pointing out that there is an apparent conflict between nature and freedom. This is derived in part from the critical discussion of the nature of freedom in relation to natural laws. For Kant, the conception of freedom is a practical and moral principle that is necessary for a conception of human beings as rational beings. In the *Idea* essay, human freedom is indicative of human reason. However, it is in tension with natural determinism. Kant wants to hold both to the moral necessity of freedom and the role of nature in shaping human beings to be what we are

² Representatives of the theoretical reading include Allen W. Wood and Burleigh Taylor Wilkins. Representatives of the practical reading include John H. Zammito and Joel T. Klein. However, Ileana Beade represents a synthesis position, which is similar to the position defended here.

³ This convention has been retained throughout this thesis. So instead of saying, "Proposition One," I will say, "The First Proposition," and so on for them all. I will retain their capitalisation.

teleologically. In the *Idea* essay, Kant sees human history as a means of explaining how that might work, and he postulates that both the role of nature and the role of humanity converge in the process of the moralisation of the species. Thus, Kant suggests that human beings have a purpose in history and this historical purpose is by virtue of the hidden aim of nature that has purposed human beings to become a certain way as a species, namely, perfectly moralised beings through political community.

This purpose may be seen through the following brief summary of the argument of the *Idea* essay. The existence of natural predispositions of reason in the First Proposition and the Second Proposition, and the existence of human free will and the cleverness, wisdom or prudence of the species, is indicative of the fact that human beings have a purpose. Yet the rational predisposition is not perfectible in the individual, but only in the species. Social antagonism or unsociable sociability, which is introduced in the Fourth Proposition, asserts that we see find ourselves as individuals desiring to assert ourselves ambitiously against our fellows, yet also as members of a community knowing that we must restrict our immediate freedom by certain laws for the sake of the freedom of all. By extension we may apply socially antagonistic principles of individual and society respectively to the state as a whole as well as to the set of all nation states, which are often driven to war and conflict because of various ambitions, yet which desire international peace. Therefore, we have a dilemma, as spelled out in the Sixth Proposition. We desire perfect peace and freedom, yet we need a law implemented perfectly fairly and consistently by a master of perfect justice that constrains us. The solution seems to be a cosmopolitan condition of state security where the principle of equality is the law, as explain in the Seventh Proposition. Thus, according to the Eighth Proposition, universal history may be defined as the progress of humanity towards the cosmopolitan constitution. Finally, as the Ninth Proposition is anxious to clarify, such a universal history is not at odds with empirical history. Rather, universal history is a

perspective on empirical history that encompasses the future in order to make sense of the past and the present, and is also a philosophical point of view that will contribute to the completion of the hidden aim of nature.

The *Idea* essay thus evidently begins with natural predispositions of human beings and locates the development of these natural properties in communities of human beings. The implication is that humans are communal beings whose capacities are achieved through the antagonism of the human society both on the individual and state-level which makes necessary the formation of a law for the race as a whole under a cosmopolitan constitution of universal justice. This cosmopolitan constitution is actually the coming to fruition of a hidden plan of nature, and the role of philosophy is to provide a coherent model of world history so as to make possible the realisation of rational capacities of human nature through cosmopolitanism. Kant therefore seeks to present human history in normative terms according to which human beings are compelled by duty to act in such a way so as to serve the end of nature over time. Kant's essay is thus both theoretical and practical—a form of applied, theoretical anthropology. It is theoretical in the sense that it provides a logically and metaphysically coherent model of a history of the future and practical insofar as it commends human actions which are conducive to that future. I will thus defend a reading of Kant's essay that synthesises the strengths of existing theoretical and practical interpretations of his universal history. Universal history thus conceives of human life as invested with all different kinds of properties so as to compel it, through reason and freedom, to form a law for the race as a whole under a cosmopolitan constitution of universal justice, and universal history is the philosophical point of view which makes such a conception of humanity possible.

I am arguing that Kant's *Idea* essay represents an applicable theory which Kant believed was correct and useful in some sense. It will be apparent from this statement that I fall more to the side of the practical reading of the essay. However, my reading is not

identical to existing practical readings. This is due to the fact that my thesis depends on a consideration of the anthropological theory underpinning the normative judgements made in the essay. By implication, if the *Idea* essay is practical at all, that practicality is heavily founded on theories that are most likely to be false on a modern understanding of humanity and the world. Therefore, it is possible that the *Idea* essay represents a false claim. Nevertheless, it is a very interesting practical application of theoretical philosophy of history. What I am claiming is that the *Idea* essay per se is a theory—an anthropological theory—but that the *Idea* essay concludes by saying that this theory may be applied in a political context. Therefore, I argue, Kant's philosophy of history is the *Idea* essay represents an applicable teleological anthropology.

This has interesting implications for our understanding of human nature and society. By thinking of ourselves as beings as having a natural purpose, then we could use a philosophical history such as Kant's to construct descriptions of humanity as being conceived under a framework of design. Provided we then had views of human society conceived under such a framework, that would inform a narrative which may support different political policies. In Kant's case, the natural predispositions of humanity towards morality informed a view of human history as progress towards moralisation, which for Kant involves political cosmopolitanism. At certain junctures within the essay, Kant therefore commends certain laws and governmental structures which include the existence of the cosmopolitan model of society for the betterment of humanity. It would be an interesting use of philosophical history in the modern world were we to think through public policy in light of views of human nature, and legislate accordingly. This thesis does not endeavour to commend any such theory of human nature or public policy as such, so this theme will not be developed here. But it seems relevant for the purposes of research to comment on the potential practical relevance of this kind of philosophical research for others to consider.

It seems appropriate at this point to make a note about the methodology and structure of the thesis. Kant scholars differ in how they approach his texts, and this naturally influences the conclusions that scholars come to about them. Whereas most Kant scholars seem more inclined to take a systematic approach to reading Kant, according to which all the works Kant wrote are to be included as logically relevant to the meaning of any given Kantian text at hand, I am inclined to take a historical approach. My approach privileges anything written prior to or roughly contemporaneously with the *Idea* essay in 1784 as being appropriately representative of the stage of Kant's thought at the time of writing. This methodology seems preferable for understanding Kant in his own context and stage of thought. It also serves the purposes of more systematic readers, given the undeniable importance of the gradual intellectual development of historical philosophers over time for understanding the development of their philosophical system. I do intend to remain cognizant of the fact that Kant's philosophical development was an ongoing process. Thus, themes of the *Groundwork*, for example, which was published in 1785, may be relevant to the *Idea* essay, which was published in 1784, on account of the two texts' compositional proximity in time and consequently close conceptual relationship to each other at certain points. However, I will not venture far beyond 1784 in my attempt to provide an explanation of what Kant was arguing in the *Idea* essay, unless there seem incontrovertibly good justification for thinking that the content of later works (such as the *Anthropology* and the *Pedagogy* for example) represents earlier content compiled and published at a later stage. To do so would commit the historical fallacy of anachronism which one would want to avoid were one to understand Kant in his context in 1784.

Finally, the structure of the main body of the thesis is as follows. First, I will explain the meaning of universal history as a kind of philosophical history which pertains to all people in the world at all times—past, present and future—before looking at natural

predispositions in the context of foundational Kantian anthropology. In Chapter Two, I will then discuss the ‘unsociable sociability’ of human nature and its implications for the shape of the cosmopolitan constitution and community. In Chapter Three, I will articulate the shape of the cosmopolitan constitution. I will then conclude by providing some philosophical evaluation of the *Idea* essay’s claims. We begin in Chapter One.

Chapter One

Universal History

This chapter intends to clarify just what Kant means by “universal history” in contrast to “empirical history” and to explain how this philosophical kind of history provides an answer to a problem posed by Kant’s doctrine of nature and freedom. It also speaks to a dispute about the status of universal history, as to whether it is a theoretical or a practical idea. Some argue Kant’s universal history is a theory about how history may play out over time; others argue it is a practical concept which was intended to contribute to the establishment of cosmopolitanism. I argue that the theoretical and the practical points of view in the debate are compatible and the reconciliation of these viewpoints provides deeper insights into Kant’s universal history. Universal history basically refers to an account of the progress of the human species that includes past, present and future time. Universal history is therefore a kind of philosophical human history and is anthropological in that sense. To say universal history proceeds with a cosmopolitan aim is to postulate a teleological understanding of nature, which is to say that nature guides the human species towards a particular future, namely, a cosmopolitan constitution and federation of nations, through natural mechanisms. Universal history is therefore the term used to denote the progress of the human species across past, present and future time, and a teleological nature is the mechanism by which this progress is achieved throughout time. I argue that the *Idea* essay is to be read primarily as a practical text but that it is also false to deny the intuitions of theoretical commentators entirely. The *Idea* essay was as a resolution to a problem Kant perceived may arise from his moral philosophy and his critical view of freedom, the latter of which involved a notion of free will as a practical notion that we must believe to be so for moral responsibility, despite the fact that it might not, in fact, be true, given deterministic mechanisms of human action in nature. The Introduction of the *Idea* essay provides an explanation of the potential problem,

and then proceeds in the body of the essay to provide the premises from both precritical Kantian anthropology and critical philosophy in order to illustrate how it might be consistent to think of human beings as being predisposed to achieve certain ends by virtue of natural teleology, and how we bear some responsibility in bringing about that end through social, moral and political choices. The conclusion is both theoretical and moral: it describes how moral development is rooted in our natural lives while also commending our obligation to further our own development through free choices grounded in practical reason.

1.1 Preliminary Definitions

The *Idea* essay first appeared in the 11 November 1784 issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. It was written in response to a comment from Johann Schultz in the 11 February 1784 issue of the *Gothaische gelehrte Zeitungen*.⁴ Schultz wrote:

It is a favourite idea of Herr professor Kant that the ultimate goal of the human race is the establishment of a perfect civil constitution. He desires that a philosophical historiographer would undertake it to write a history of mankind from this perspective in order to show whether mankind has come closer to this final goal at some time, has strayed from it at other times, and what still remains to be done to achieve it.⁵

Given what Kant argues in the essay, Schultz's comments have fallen short: the ultimate goal of the human race is not the civil constitution as such; rather the civil constitution is the means towards complete moralisation according to the natural predisposition to reason. We may therefore interpret Kant's reference to this comment in the footnote on the first page of the *Idea* essay as an explanation that this comment occasioned an extended explanation by him by way of clarification, which implies that Kant intended to explain comprehensively

⁴ Louden and Zöller (eds.), *Anthropology, History and Education*, p. 107.

⁵ Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 288.

what Schultz briefly mentioned in passing, and possibly to correct him, in part.⁶ Consequently, the *Idea* essay is placed in the context of a variety of complex themes from Kant's precritical and critical writings, but most importantly it provide the first example of a direct engagement by Kant in the philosophy of history as such.

The title provides the first clue about the subject of the *Idea* essay.⁷ The use of the term 'Idea' (*Idee*) in the title plausibly refers to the concept of a transcendental idea. According to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) (1781): "They [i.e. ideas] are transcendent concepts, and exceed the bounds of all experience, in which no object adequate to the transcendental idea can ever occur."⁸ Despite this limitation, ideas are nonetheless applicable in the world: "For even if no object can be determined through them, they can still, in a fundamental and unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon for its extended and self-consistent use."⁹ These comments may support an intuition for taking the *Idea* essay to be a potential application of a theoretical idea. As long as we think that it is consistent to think of ideas in a theoretical way, and yet not so as to negate their practical usefulness in the world, then we have grounds to think that Kant's conception of an idea of universal history in the *Idea* essay might be both theoretical and practical. However, the title could also be a play-on-words referring to Schultz's comment referring to the 'favourite idea' of Herr professor Kant, namely, the purposeful process of the attainment of the final goal of humanity. Kant's *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755) had already employed purposive teleological principles with regard to the movements of the planets and the stars following the epochal interpretation of the world, according to which the universe developed

⁶ Kant, *Idea*, p. 108 (AA 8:17).

⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 108 (AA 8:15).

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A. W. Wood and P. Guyer (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, A327/B384.

⁹ A329/B386.

in stages or epochs.¹⁰ Teleology was a way of explaining how objects within nature achieve the purpose for which they exist in nature. Thus, the narration of human actions and their appearance in the *Idea* essay, as part of a project of giving meaning to human action, is teleological in this basic sense. Kant's philosophical project for history—or, universal history—is comprised of taking a point of view on history as a whole—past, present and future—in order to provide some reason to encourage people to live in such a way so as to fulfil the hidden plan of nature. The purpose of this is to make sense of the whole state of human affairs, and to provide an account of the ends towards which human action as a whole is orientated.

Kant provides a basic definition of 'universal history' near the end of the *Idea* essay. According to Kant, universal history is, "how the course of the world would have to go if it were to conform to certain rational ends."¹¹ There are several things to note about this definition. Firstly, it is stated hypothetically: universal history is about how the history of the world *would* play out provided certain conditions *were* the case. What are these conditions? Kant provides three: necessity, reason and purpose. It is not possible here to unpack precisely what Kant means by each of these three individual concepts. Suffice it for now to say that Kant seems to think of universal history as philosophical history about the whole course of human events past, present and future. Furthermore, it is the task of a philosophical historian to explain exactly what conditions may advance the achievement of this future by humanity. Thinking of history as future is the most innovative notion here. Understanding the role of the universal historian as a philosopher explaining how and why the future will come to be as reason predicts is the consequent practical implication of a theory of universal history.

¹⁰ Philip R. Sloan, 'Kant on the history of nature: The ambiguous heritage of the critical philosophy for natural history', in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, vol. 37, 2006, pp. 633.

¹¹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 118 (AA 8:29).

Kant finds this view of history rather counterintuitive in itself but finds justification for it both empirically and *a priori*.¹² Empirical history is typically understood as understanding what happened in the past by inference from physical remains, such as writing, monuments and other physical artefacts. Such a philosophical and universal history, on the other hand, is not intended to be a substitute for empirical history, as ordinarily practiced through the use of sources, narratives, and so on. Rather, the universal history is a philosophical point of view of history. Kant explains:

That with this idea of a world history, which in a certain way has a guiding thread *a priori*, I would want to displace the treatment of history proper, that is written merely *empirically*—this would be a misinterpretation of my aim; it is only a thought of that which a philosophical mind (which besides this would have to be very well versed in history) could attempt from another standpoint.¹³

Thus, the universal history is a specific—philosophical—kind of history that attempts to view world history teleologically: guided toward a specific end under certain conditions, which Kant articulates at the beginning of the essay. Universal history may be associated with the Göttingen school of history, which was a form of history writing and research which went beyond standard methods of source-based inferences from past written sources and archaeological remains toward attempting to articulate the causes and conditions for human political life.¹⁴ This opened the door to theories of history which departed from a strictly empirical basis for historical narratives and extrapolated philosophically into the purposes and ends of nature with regard to human beings. Kant has a view on history itself, and he understands that history can be empirical or universal, as has been explained. He recognises that history can refer to the empirical study of the human past. As a cosmologist, he also understood history as referring to the natural past and especially the natural past of celestial

¹² Kant, *Idea*, pp. 118-119 (AA 8:29-30).

¹³ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 119-120 (AA 8:30).

¹⁴ Thomas Sturm, 'What did Kant Mean by and Why Did He Adopt a Cosmopolitan Point of View in History?', in Stefano Bacin, Alfredo Ferrarin, Claudio La Rocca and Margit Ruffing (eds.), *Kant und die Philosophie in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des XI. Internationalen Kant-Congresses*, Bd. IV, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013, p. 863.

bodies. For Kant, history itself is the simple past. However, by qualifying the word ‘history’ with a ‘universal’ concept, the term denotes the whole range of human action across all of human history, including what would occur in the future given certain conditions holding. Therefore, for Kant, history must denote meaningful human action as an object of study. This seems like a wing of anthropology. For his purposes in the *Idea* essay, Kant is more interested in the consequences of human action, provided certain conditions of rationality and morality hold for the human species in the large.

1.2 Natural Teleology

Teleology—or the purpose of things with regards to their ends—is the unifying theme of Kant’s philosophy of history.¹⁵ As we have already noted, the philosophical history conceived by Kant in this text is not the same as empirical history, as he understood it, which would have been a history in the classical sense, that is, with its object of study being the past and its reasons for narrative being physical evidences that already exist. Rather, Kant conceived of a philosophical, anthropological and metaphysical history which was intended to narrate, for the human species, “a necessary development toward rationality and freedom.”¹⁶ This history of the development of the species is philosophical, in that it is a fundamental analysis of the nature of human history as a whole; anthropological, in that it pertains to the whole human race; and metaphysical, in that it provides a framework for human action as necessarily heading towards previsioned ends. Teleology implies a state of affairs according to which human persons and society progress according to principles of development over time. This development may be economic or biological, for example. But

¹⁵ Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 128-129.

¹⁶ Emil L. Fackenheim, ‘Kant’s Concept of History’ in *Kant Studien*, vol. 48, 1956/7, in Heiner F. Klemme and Manfred Kuehn (eds.), *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, vol. 2, Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1999, p. 381.

in Kant this development is moral. Accordingly, in the Eighth Proposition, Kant notes that one may regard history as the attainment of the aim of nature through the development of all human natural predispositions.¹⁷ This teleological understanding of human history predicts the development of human reason toward complete enlightenment and understanding of the good and thus toward a golden age of reason—a philosophical *chiliasm* or millennium—and, “the bringing about of which is promoted by the very idea of it, through only from afar, so that is it anything but enthusiastic.”¹⁸

For Kant, this idea is justified mostly *a priori*—it is an implication of the logical relationships between natural predispositions and their lawful development through nature.

According to the First Proposition:

All natural predispositions of a creature are determined sometime to develop themselves completely and purposively.¹⁹

This provides the groundwork for the substance of the claim, which is found in the Second Proposition:

In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth) those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual.²⁰

Given human reason and the moral implications of reason (practical reason), human beings should develop unified, rational relationships over time. From this passage, Kant seems to have believed that individuals cannot develop complete reason and morality left alone to themselves. Rather, these can only be developed fully on the species-level and that through cosmopolitan political community. Just as in the case of non-human animals, who are not obviously rational in the individual yet fulfil clear natural aims collectively as a species, so too are the nature’s moral aims for humanity achievable through the species only as a whole

¹⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:27).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18).

²⁰ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18).

and not for the individual member of the species left to themselves. This is a teleological view of the human species on the whole, given a teleological view of nature.

There is some empirical evidence of this development, according to Kant. Though we have observed only a small amount of the whole of human history thus far, we have a general idea of what human beings are morally and politically capable of. Kant thinks this is evidence that we can extend the principle to human history more generally, similar to how we may infer the cosmic order of the movement of the heavens, including the sun and stars, from what little we have observed in space. Humanity advances according to a general pattern, whereby morality gradually improves on the whole.²¹ Kant's most detailed empirical example of this principle at work—albeit a very generalised statement—is in the Ninth Proposition. The process of civilisation from the Greeks through to the Romans, the barbarians and the Europeans appears to Kant to be indicative of an advancement in human society over time:

[I]f one follows their [i.e. Greek] influence on the formation or malformation down to the present time its [i.e. Greek history's] influence on the education or miseducation of the state body of the *Roman* nation which swallowed up the Greek state, and the latter's influence on the *barbarians* [sic] who in turn destroyed the former, down to the present time, and also adds to this *episodically* the political history of other nations, [...] then one will discover a regular course of improvement of state constitutions in our part of the world (which will probably someday give law to all the others).²²

This quotation shows the correspondence of the *a priori* and theoretical idea of a universal history to empirical fact, according to Kant's understanding. Teleology in history is derived *a priori* from a doctrine of human nature, but it is also empirically grounded. Teleology also has political significance, as it supposes a particular political society as one of the ends of human action for the achievement of nature's ultimately moral aims.²³

²¹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 117 (AA 8:28).

²² Kant, *Idea*, pp. 118-119 (AA 8:29-30).

²³ Dilek Huseyinzadegan, 'Kant's Political *Zweckmässigkeit*', in *Kantian Review*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2015, pp. 429-430.

1.3 Nature and Normativity

Moral aims in nature imply normativity. Thus, any view of nature as teleological must also view nature as normative. Paul Guyer argues that, for Kant, teleological views of human freedom are grounded in normative views of nature. This has a direct bearing on the logic of the *Idea* essay. Our experience of nature is such that it compels us to interpret nature as being purposive (*zweckmäßig*) in order that we might satisfy the demands of ethics and its ends in and through human beings and society as natural beings.²⁴ The notion of the highest good, the reconciliation of duty with the universality and necessity of natural law, practical theology and practical anthropology are essential components of this view.²⁵ According to Guyer, Kant's doctrine of nature replaced the Wolffian theological teleology with a morally anthropocentric teleology by which the morality of the human species is naturally advanced through time.²⁶ This serves to distinguish Kant's teleology from theological or metaphysical teleology. Rather, it is a natural teleology which is normative and that in a moral and political sense. This is a crucial step which will support the practical reading of the thesis which will be provided below in the discussion of the theoretical and practical readings of the essay as well as the synthesis proposed here.

1.4 Scholarly Disputes

Given that Kant's natural teleology is distinct from more familiar theologically or metaphysically grounded understandings of teleology, it should not be surprising that

²⁴ Paul Guyer, 'Purpose in Nature: What is Living and What is Dead in Kant's Teleology?', in Paul Guyer (ed.), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom: Selected Essays*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. 343-344. Whereas Guyer and I disagree on fundamental methodology—Guyer takes the systematic approach—nevertheless on this point we both agree.

²⁵ Paul Guyer, 'The Unity of Nature and Freedom: Kant's Conception of the System of Philosophy', in Guyer (ed.), *Kant's System*, p. 280.

²⁶ Paul Guyer, *Kant*, 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 387-390.

scholars disagree about how best to characterise Kant's universal history in general and the *Idea* essay in particular. Scholars disagree about whether Kant's universal history is solely or predominantly a theoretical or a practical endeavour. This is a primary dispute I wish to address at this point.

1.4.1 Theoretical Readings

Theoretical readers argue that universal history provides a coherent and systematic conception of the world, so as to address theoretical problems which may arise from a convergence of the deterministic and mechanistic philosophy of nature and the freedom required for duty in the realm of morals. On this view, the *Idea* essay provides the philosopher a way of thinking about history under a natural teleology in order to harmonise disparate intuitions about nature and freedom, and to provide an orderly model of purpose for the chaotic state of seemingly random human affairs. Allen W. Wood is a champion of this model. He argues that Kant's purpose in the *Idea* essay is to make history intelligible given our concern as a species for making sense of the course of history, as historical beings who are also moral agents.²⁷ The right way to express Kant's view is to think of the title's term 'Idea' (*Idee*) as referring to an *a priori* rational concept which is the basis for a theoretical program attempting to make coherent the course of seemingly random, chaotic and disorderly set of human actions, and then bring this coherent model of human activity into contact with our practical concerns in order to best inform our present moral and religious hopes as historical beings from a coherent theoretical conception of history. If the concept Kant has in mind refers to the mere concept of a future history given natural laws, then the *Idea* is a theoretical piece.

²⁷ Allen W. Wood, 'Kant's Philosophy of History', in Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), *Towards Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 245.

Theoretical perspectives on the text also emphasise the *Idea* essay as providing a way of looking at the world, but not necessarily calling human beings to action. Universal history, on this view, is a way of understanding of human history from a philosophical point of view. For example, Burleigh Taylor Wilkins argues from the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the CPR that ideas are epistemological concepts which help to make sense of the spectacle of human history.²⁸ This seems correct, given a reading of the beginning of the essay, according to which Kant wants to find out whether or not it is coherent to say there is an “*aim of nature* in this nonsensical course of things human.”²⁹ For Wilkins, ideas must play some role in understanding the world. Ideas are speculative concepts which make possible a way of looking at the world from which we may infer teleological laws, not as an efficient cause of the course of human events, but as explanatory principles of human action in nature.³⁰ He provides an extended illustration of this principle from ordinary life.³¹ He asks us to imagine a country boy asking his father, who is a farmer, “Why does the wind blow?” Imagine that the father replies, “So that there will be no frost and our crops will be spared.” This is a teleological answer in the Kantian sense. It provides to the boy an answer to the question, “What does the wind do?” It explains the blowing of the wind teleologically. The wind blows for the natural purpose of crop-preservation. Had the father answered, “I do not know why the wind blows,” or, “That is a stupid question; the wind does not blow *for* anything,” it would have negated the perfectly legitimate question, “What is it for?” and delayed the knowledge of the questioner whilst also throwing the burden of proof on the answerer. By analogy, Kant’s universal history explains human action from a teleological point of view and makes sense of the whole set of historical human actions under a

²⁸ Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, ‘Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History’, in *History and Theory*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1966, p. 172; A688/B716.

²⁹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18).

³⁰ Wilkins, ‘Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History’, pp. 177-179.

³¹ Wilkins, ‘Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History’, p. 182.

purposeful explanation, namely, the aim of nature toward the perfect moralisation of the human species and the consequent immorality of the race as a whole.

1.4.2 Practical Readings

John H. Zammito, on the other hand, rejects the theoretical view based on a reading of the *Idea* essay given themes derived from the CPR.³² He thinks the purpose of Kant's essay is practical. The reason we adopt a particular point of view in history is not merely to explain it, so as to commend the whole set of human affairs to our understanding epistemologically, but rather to think about ways in which human action might contribute to attaining the aim of nature, namely, perfect moralisation through cosmopolitanism. According to him, the assumptions underlying Kant's universal history are derived from biology and anthropology. Human history is littered with chaos, irrational and evil. However, there are also examples of order, rationality and goodness. Births, deaths and marriages, which Kant mentions in the Introduction, are indicative of a regular course of natural human events which provide us with the powers and abilities to progress in the world through rational capacities of characteristics and the will to do the moral law solely for the sake of the moral law itself. These things are Kant's examples of how we can detect regularity in human action in aggregate even though we cannot predict behaviour at the individual level. Their regularity is indicative of pockets of order in a disorderly world, which provides sense to the course of human events over time.³³ As Kant explains:

Individual human beings and even whole nations think little about the fact, since while each pursues its own aim in its own way, and one often contrary to another,

³² John H. Zammito, 'Kant's "Naturalistic" History of Mankind? Some Reservations', in *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 34, 36-37, 43-44.

³³ Kant, *Idea*, p. 108 (AA 8:17).

they are proceeding unnoticed, as by a guiding thread, according to an aim of nature.³⁴

The actions of humanity as a whole contribute to nature's purpose, but individual instances of human action do not obviously do so. Therefore, teleology is discerned *a priori* only at a species level. Teleology provides intelligibility to the process by which we are progressing in freedom through the moral law toward an end determined by nature. Zammito wishes to downplay the *a priori* nature of Kant's philosophy of history, but Kant seems clear that his theory has, in a sense, "a guiding thread *a priori*."³⁵

Joel T. Klein has recently pointed out three significant problems with reading the *Idea* essay from a theoretical point of view.³⁶ Given that universal history is teleological and therefore normative, it would be erroneous to think that Kant was focusing on the mere concept of a historical totality without an aim to inform human behaviour in the present.³⁷ To argue that history is moving in a certain direction, provided certain conditions hold, implies we have some responsibility to ensure the conditions hold in the right way which makes us responsible and the theory of history practical. Such a teleological conception of history causes us to ask how the world is at present, and what we ought to be doing in order to bring about the end towards which history is naturally aimed.³⁸ In the second case, Kant believes that it is false to think that our free choices create the purposes of nature. Rather, our choices are a product of the purposes of nature in aggregate. In other words, teleology both precedes and determines human action. It is a mistake to reverse this sequence, as that would give human beings absolute power over nature, which is the very thing Kant denies.³⁹

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kant, *Idea*, p. 119 (AA 8:30); Wood, 'Kant's Philosophy of History', pp. 246-247.

³⁶ Joel T. Klein, 'Three Problems with the Theoretical Reading of the *Idea* for a Universal History in context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*', Rafael V. Orden Jiménez, Robert Hanna, Robert Loudon, Jacinto Rivera de Rosales and Nuria Sánchez Madrid (eds.), *Kant's Shorter Writings: Critical Paths Outside the Critiques*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, pp. 246-265.

³⁷ Klein, 'Three Problems', p. 250.

³⁸ A331-332, 336-337/B388-389, 393-394.

³⁹ A629/B720.

Understanding human activity as progressing gradually, step by step, towards a perfectly moral state supports an understanding of human development under mutual freedom and not political coercion. Nevertheless, we will become what nature intends for us to be, as nature ensures that we will make choices which, over time, gradually bring humanity into alignment with nature's aim.⁴⁰ Finally, the naturalisation of modernity involves the Aristotelian notion of human beings as animals that are capable of reason. This concept is related to Kant's belief in the natural predisposition to morality for humanity, which is manifested politically through the civil constitution. Moralisation is the third and final step in a three-tier natural process of human development over time—civilisation, cultivation and moralisation—and it is a natural aspect of human life as it develops.⁴¹

1.4.3 Proposed Synthesis

Let us return to the earlier distinction between the definition of universal history provided by Kant and the consequent practice of universal by a philosophical historian. Universal history is, "how the course of the world would have to go if it were to conform to certain rational ends."⁴² Kant postulates universal history as a history of the human species throughout past, present and future time, and it is the task of the philosophical historian to articulate the conditions of necessity, reason and purpose that drive's the development of the human species. The first definition seems like a kind of theory about what history is or could be. The second seems like a practical method of thought that arises from a reflection on the theory of universal history. If human history is a universal history, then human history is purposed in a certain moral and rational direction for the species. Assuming the concept of universal history

⁴⁰ Klein, 'Three Problems', pp. 252-253.

⁴¹ Klein, 'Three Problems', pp. 257-259; Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:26).

⁴² Kant, *Idea*, p. 118 (AA 8:29).

is coherent—and there does not seem to be any reason to think that it is not—then one is able to adopt a perspective on human history that makes possible the coherent conception of universal history as being true in the world. If we can conceive of universal history being true, we can adopt rational and moral attitudes that are consistent with nature’s aim to develop rational ends. This cannot be attained in the individual alone, according to Kant. But it must begin with the individual as a member of a society. This is what is meant by Kant’s claim being both theoretical and practical: the concept of universal history is a coherent picture of the world (Kant’s theoretical component) and the consequence should be our adopting a perspective on the world thus inspiring attitudes which make the attainment of the purposes of nature possible in both our individual and communal lives (Kant’s practical component). The former leads to the latter. Therefore, Kant’s universal history is both a theoretical and practical idea—a theoretical-practical synthesis.

Ileana Beade agrees that Kant intends for his readers to adopt a perspective on human history, so as to encourage the adoption of attitudes that are conducive to the emergence of morally significant future events, which are predicted *a priori* by that perspective.⁴³ Philosophical universal history, says Beade, “provide[s] an incentive to the fulfilment of our moral duties, contributing thus to the accomplishment of fundamental goals of the human race.”⁴⁴ The perspective itself must be theoretical and practical. Beade explains:

[A]n aim of nature (which orientates [the] human race towards progress) is an *idea of pure reason*, that is, a rational construction—or heuristic principle—the *objective reality* of which cannot be theoretical, but only *practical*, i.e. it can only rely on its binding character regarding empirical history. The main purpose of Kant’s assessment of historical facts is therefore not to find *examples* which could demonstrate the *theoretical* objective reality of that idea, but only to encourage a hopeful, optimistic, attitude towards progress in view of its practical consequences.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ileana Beade, ‘Some Remarks on Kant’s Concept of an a priori History’, in *Studia Kantiana*, vol. 22, 2016, pp. 71-72.

⁴⁴ Beade, ‘Some Remarks’, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Beade, ‘Some Remarks’, p. 78; emphases original.

Adopting such a philosophical view of history should, on Beade's view, be a theoretical notion on its own terms. She argues that Kant is interested in the adoption of an attitude. By adopting a logically coherent model of the world, one may hope for progress. However, logical possibility does not imply metaphysical possibility for Kant and thus a logical model with positive attitude is still, at best, predominantly theoretical. However, on my reading, such an attitude is supposed to be conducive to action. Natural teleology is normative for human action. The movement from theory to norms in the *Idea* essay implies practical applicability or moral action. So, Kant is conceiving of metaphysical possibility as well as logical possibility in the *Idea* essay, which is something I would say differently to Beade's account. Beade's account balances theory and practicality, more strongly favouring theory. My account balances theory and practice, more strongly favouring practicality. Kant's view is more strongly practical than Beade gives it credit for. The theory is moral in practice and is thus normative and practical. The theory therefore provides an incentive for the adoption of the moral law of the categorical imperative in order to lead to the outcome intended by nature, namely, cosmopolitanism, so that all the natural predispositions of the human species may be fully developed to the fullest extent.⁴⁶ This view seems to be a synthesis of theoretical and practical readings, therefore, into an ultimately applied theory.

There seem to be good reasons from the text to balance theory and practice with more emphasis on practicality over theory. One of the significant points to note in support of this notion is the way in which Kant makes reference to physical examples across his essays in order to illustrate his points. In the First Proposition, Kant likens the purposiveness of natural predispositions to the function of physical organs.⁴⁷ Human body parts operate according to set patterns and regularities, yet have a specific purpose for which they are intended (the stomach digests, the heart pumps blood, and so on). By analogy, the human race is like an

⁴⁶ Beade, 'Some Remarks', pp.80-81.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18).

organ in the body of nature, and we too have an end for which we are predisposed. Other examples include references to insects, animals and the heavens. In the Introduction, for example, Kant refers to the fact that because human beings are not merely instinctual but operate according to reason and freedom, it is harder to chart a universal history of them in conformity with the laws of nature than it would be for more simple creatures such as bees or beavers.⁴⁸ It is relatively easy to chart the course of these smaller and less complex creatures. Bees can be observed with relatively simple regularity, and essentially perform their daily tasks with consistency: building the hive, defending the hive, breeding, collecting pollen, making honey, and so on. Similarly, beavers behave in a regular manner: building the dam, finding food, breeding, building the nest and so on. These creatures, endowed with such simplicity, do not act outside of their merely instinctual behaviour. But human beings, who are not as simple, do not behave only according to instinct, can act in ways that are so unexpected that it is difficult to see how their activities can fit into a regular pattern.

Kant expands on this principle the more he speaks about the significance of the physical form of human beings, in contrast to the animals, as forcing them to develop through their intelligence and prudence the properties that are necessary for safety and survival. The human being is said to need to earn for himself a safe and happy life through use of his own reason in society. As the Third Proposition states:

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.⁴⁹

This is grounded in a claim that whatever nature does, and for whatever properties with which it has endowed its creatures, those properties are not wasteful, but have some purpose in achieving nature's ends: "For nature does nothing superfluous and is not wasteful in the

⁴⁸ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 108-109 (AA 8:17).

⁴⁹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:19).

use of means to its ends.”⁵⁰ This is an anti-evolutionary claim which is grounded in the rationality of nature. Nature ostensibly provides the human species with the capacity for reason as a tool by which human beings construct political systems which procure happiness and safety over time. For example, over the course of time, humans have been compelled to produce means of self-defence, such as clothing, weapons, armour and walls “out of himself” through use of intelligence the tools for his survival.⁵¹ Unlike the lion’s claws, which nature provides in order to secure the survival of the lion, a human has only his hands and his head. Therefore, human reason must move him beyond his mere physical form. Humanity extends itself through reason toward a greater end of self-preservation and advancement. Kant says:

For in this course of human affairs, there is a whole host of hardships that await the human being. But it appears to have been no aim at all to nature that he should labor and work himself up so far that he might make himself worthy of well-being through the conduct of his life.⁵²

A lion’s claws are merely a part of its body; it has neither the rational capacity nor the need to develop further needs of its own protection. Yet human beings, having both the rational capacity and the need, are pushed, by hardship and necessity, to invent “out of” the self, weapons such as swords, spears, axes and rifles through the free use of our intelligence and wisdom for their own protection. It seems reasonable to assume that Kant took these physical analogies to illustrate something unique about the effect of nature on the human species over time. Kant took it to be true that human beings are pressured by nature to develop their use of reason in a way that animals are not, given the natural, physical deficiencies of human beings. We cannot defend ourselves like the lions. So, we must invent ways of dealing with the dangers that assail us. As a consequence, our capacity for rationality and intelligence has, on the whole, increased over time. Insofar as we are able to discern patterns of this increase, we may say that it is an obligation for the philosophical historian to identify just what it is

⁵⁰ Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:19).

⁵¹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:19-20).

⁵² Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:20).

about individual instances of improvement in the species that led to that improvement, and so write as to make it more likely that we, in fact, continue to improve along the same line. Universal history therefore cannot be merely theoretical. It must also be practical. Furthermore—and in contrast to Beade—it seems predominantly practical, as the final end of Kant’s universal history is the actual betterment of the human species towards a cosmopolitan constitution as a step on the way to moral perfection as a race.

There are therefore substantial reasons to think that Kant intended the *Idea* essay to be a theoretical piece with a practical application. Given the Ninth Proposition, it seems that Kant intended his philosophy of history to be a means to an end: “A philosophical attempt to work out universal world history according to a plan of nature that aims at the perfect civil union of the human species must be regarded as possible and even as furthering this aim of nature.”⁵³ It is possible to conceive of a world in which such a philosophical history makes sense. Therefore, we should regard such a philosophical history as possible. If universal history makes sense and is possible, then there is a possible world in which universal history is true and there is a logical chance that the actual world is like the one described in Kant’s universal history. That is the logical and theoretical side of it. The second phrase calls readers to action: the act of articulating universal history also furthers this aim of nature and we should further nature’s aim, as it is a moral aim. So, the theory must apply in some way. That is the normative and practical side of it. Bringing these together into a synthesis seems to be the most appropriate way to bridge the gap between theory and practice here.

Synthesis shows that the importance of both the theoretical and practical dimensions of Kant’s essay should not lead us to overlook the other. Given the theoretical elements of the *Idea* essay and the practical nature of its application, it seems necessary to explore whether or not some unification of these two theories of approaching the *Idea* essay is possible. This is

⁵³ Kant, *Idea*, p. 118 (AA 8:29).

even noted by proponents of both major readings. In Wood's case, he notes that there is a practical application of the theoretical concepts underpinning the *Idea* essay from the Ninth Proposition only.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Zammito says that significant theoretical and conceptual issues underlie the practical reading of the text.⁵⁵ Therefore, it seems to me that the theoretical and the practical reading of the essay should be reconciled in a moderated view which places an emphasis on theory under a practical application. Practical matters are a logical consequence of morally relevant ideas. There are strong reasons to hold onto the intuitions underpinning the theoretical reading. The primary purpose of Kant's essay does seem to be to adopt a particular point of view, so as to provide some sense to the course of human history, which on face value simply seems like a random conglomeration of random human activities. If this were so, then that would become a problem, in Kant's view, as it would be hard to see how human history could be an appropriate object of rational study and reflection. In several cases throughout the essay, Kant despairs of the cosmopolitan constitution coming to fruition any time soon. Yet he does point to physical analogies in the world which seem to justify the truth of the principles he employs, such as social antagonism leading to human progress, or of nature's intention to force human beings to employ their reason in struggle, by virtue of humans' relatively weak physical constitution yet clever way of using their bodies. However, there are also clear indications that Kant wants this theoretical point of view to become an incentive for human action. If this universal philosophical point of view on human history is possible, then the future that is predicted by it would become a genuine metaphysical potentiality for the actual world. Kant thinks the adoption of this point of view in history will actually contribute to the attainment of the cosmopolitan and moralised future predicted in the universal history. If the point of view is aimed at the adoption of certain rational and moral attitudes, then universal history is both

⁵⁴ Wood, 'Kant's Philosophy of History', p. 245.

⁵⁵ Zammito, 'Kant's "Naturalistic" History of Mankind?', p. 48.

theoretical with respect to the concept of universal history itself and practical with respect to the adoption of these attitudes. If a perspective on the world involving universal history implies we *ought* to adopt certain rational and moral attitudes, then believing in universal history becomes normative. Normativity implies obligations and obligations implies practicality. Therefore, adopting a perspective on the world involving universal history implies practicality. Theory and practice must be reconciled in order to understand fully what Kant intended to convey in writing the *Idea* essay. Therefore, we should view Kant's essay as a theory about human history that may be applied in philosophical anthropology. This is ultimately a practical reading of the *Idea* essay but one which also deeply appreciates and incorporates the essential insights of the theoretical reading.

1.5 Chapter Conclusion

By clarifying the meaning of universal history as a theoretical and practical human history of what would happen in the world provided certain conditions hold, and thinking about this as a theoretical notion that may be applied practically in morality and politics, we have a foundation on which to build a case that Kantian philosophy of history in the *Idea* essay is a practical application of a theory grounded in the lawfulness in nature which can be discerned empirically in the history of human society. In Kantian philosophy of history, teleology and anthropology imply cosmopolitanism for the complete moralisation of the species over time. But by what mechanism may this come about? Or by what means may we explain the purposive development of the human species in nature? The Fourth Proposition of the *Idea* essay, concerning the counterintuitive natural mechanism of social antagonism, begins to provide the groundwork for an answer to these questions. Nature has willed human beings to develop their natural predispositions and capacities to the fullest extent not by peace and

tranquillity but by chaos and disorder. Social antagonism is nature's instrumental cause for the advancement of the species toward the political condition of cosmopolitanism which serves as the context in which the natural predispositions of humanity may be completely developed over historical time. This is the subject of Chapter Two.

Chapter Two Social Antagonism

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the mechanism employed by nature in human society which serves as an instrument for propelling the human species towards the resolution of a problem in human relations, namely, “social antagonism” or “unsociable sociability.” This mechanism is first mentioned in the Fourth Proposition. Here is where the mechanism fits within the argument of the essay thus far. The meaning of the Second Proposition and the Third Proposition essentially falls out of the discussion of the underlying concepts in the Introduction and the First Proposition. Provided we conceive of Kant as having introduced a practical project of moral action based on the practical application of a theoretical conception of teleological nature, then universal history is a universal claim about the purposive development of all the natural predispositions of the human species. The Second Proposition is an extension of the First Proposition. Humanity, which is a product of nature, is more importantly a uniquely rational product of natural teleology. Just as beavers are naturally predisposed to attain their natural predisposition for dam-building, so humans are naturally predisposed to rational activities which are conducive to their perfect moralisation. Political institutions created to this end should also be designed for the attainment of the end of human nature, which is happiness in moral and political community.⁵⁶ Nature desires “the inner perfection of” our “mode of thought” and thereby our “happiness.”⁵⁷ Thus the association of thought with perfection in this instance, given the wider context of perfection throughout the essay, associates perfection with morality and morality with happiness. The concepts of sociability and unsociability have a foundation in intellectual discussion in Europe in general and finds its way into Kant to this section of the *Idea* essay through Kantian anthropology. We

⁵⁶ Kant will go on to say that nature has not willed the happiness of human beings so much as it has willed the perfection of human beings, but it seems evident that Kant conceives of happiness as being important on the whole, but only as a consequent to and derivative from perfection, which will not necessarily be brought about by those things which makes human beings supremely happy.

⁵⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:20).

will therefore discuss the foundations of unsociable sociability in European thought prior to Kant, which likely influenced his view on the topic, and will then outline Kant's own view on this concept from his anthropology and ethics, before seeing how this concept is applied by Kant as a mechanism against the backdrop of which the cosmopolitan constitution is to be framed and implemented.

2.1 Context in Modern European Philosophy

Other European authors prior to Kant engaged in debates about whether or not human beings are fundamentally sociable or unsociable beings, and it is helpful for understanding Kant's use of the phrase 'unsociable sociability' to view him against the backdrop of specific debates happening around his time, which is the purpose of this section. European intellectuals debated the notion whether individuals or humanity in general should be perceived as being fundamentally sociable, altruistic and communal, or unsociable, egoistic and individual. Theories of the communal and individual nature of humanity were articulated in Europe through social theories designed to attempt to explain the account for the historical development of civilisation.⁵⁸ J. B. Schneewind outlines some of the essential names and works on the debate. Intellectuals in favour of the sociable view included Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694) and Jean-Jacques Burlamarqui (1694-1748).⁵⁹ Grotius' *The Rights of War and Peace* (1625 and 1631) held to the view of man as being an animal of a higher order who is predisposed to have a desire for society. Human beings are said to develop towards community as we develop in morality and reason for the

⁵⁸ J. B. Schneewind, 'Good out of evil: Kant and the idea of unsociable sociability', in 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, pp 95-96. This discussion had its origin in debates in ancient Greek philosophy. The Epicurean tradition viewed human society as fundamentally narcissistic, self-preserving and pleasure-driven. However, the Stoics understood human society as driven by altruistic morality.

⁵⁹ Schneewind, 'Good out of evil', pp. 97-100.

maintenance of good, social order. However, this is not without recognising the concern for self-interest that may arise among us, thus engendering the requirement for Natural Law in order to regulate the conduct of human beings towards maintaining civil society. Pufendorf's *On the Law of Nature and of Nations* (1672) also took an imperative and preservation view about sociability, according to which human society requires 'sociableness.' This work in turn influences Burlamarqui, whose two-volume *Principles of Natural and Political Law* (1751) described sociability as a law of nature which is the foundation of all other duties. Thus, the sociability advocates conceive of the principle as having some underlying and motivating effect for political society, as a property of persons and communities of persons.

Others held to a view of human nature as more fundamentally unsociable, individualistic and egotistical. Representatives of this set of thinkers include Bernard de Mandeville (1670-1733), Francis Hutcheson (1644-1746) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁶⁰ We may also add Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714) criticises the notion of sociability as a form of narcissism and human weakness, under the view that human beings may desire forms of sociability, but for fundamentally selfish reasons, which implies fundamentally unsociable features of human nature. Hutcheson criticised both the egoist theories of Mandeville and the collective sovereignty of Hobbes, preferring to defend the existence of naturally sociable desires in mankind yet in view of the highly individualised nature of human beings, which is taken to be a form of individualism that uses sociability as a means of personal gain, which seems to be a form of optimistic egoism. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) may be interpreted as advocating principles of self-preservation prior to a doctrine of natural right. Finally, Hobbes rejected the Aristotelean notion of the inclination to social order in favour of a more pessimistic view that our fear of

⁶⁰ Schneewind, 'Good out of evil', pp. 101-103.

death causes to erect sociable structures in order to thus secure a power for our own safety, including an absolute ruler, such that sociability becomes a moral and political imperative.

Two of the most significant figures to come out of this debate for Kant are David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is debateable whether or not Hume or Rousseau fell onto the other side of the sociability and unsociability debate. Arguably, both of these thinkers created blends of the concepts which were formative for the Kantian doctrine of antagonism as an unsociable sociability. Scholars have argued that Rousseau's *Discourse* represents more fundamentally a developmental model of cultural anthropology centred around the human faculty of perfectibility, according to which, "the concept of sociability supplied a naturalistic characterisation of social origins to justify a more fully political characterisation of social outcomes and, by doing so, offered a number of different ways to address the related problems of collective decision-making, collective action and public choice."⁶¹ Rousseau believed that human nature is such that we form political communities whereby the general will of the people represents a sovereign ideal of collective society involving sociability as a motivational force for people to live together in community and to serve the general will according to principles of ethics and law. Sociability therefore provided a precondition for political society, yet only in an ideal and practical sense, through the whole set of individual attitudes and desires within the community of the self (*moi commun*). For Rousseau, the principles guarding the development of political society were the grounds on which political society could develop, yet paradoxically and reciprocally were also engendered by society. This leads to an awkward paradox in Rousseau's thinking about the primacy of sociability and political society. It seems as if sociability is required for political society, yet political society also provides a context for the development of sociability.

⁶¹ Michael Sonenscher, 'Sociability, Perfectibility and the Intellectual Legacy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *History of European Ideas*, vol. 41, no. 5, 2015, p. 684.

Rousseau's political philosophy is developmental and reciprocal as sociability and society subsist in a dynamic, mutual interrelation.

Hume is also an important figure in the discussion of sociability and unsociability in the background for Kant.⁶² Christopher J. Finlay has argued that Hume probably held to a notion of 'human sociability' which was grounded in a variety of positive and negative social attitudes or passions, such as sympathy and love on the one hand, and envy and malice on the other.⁶³ For Hume, unsociable passions such as envy may only possibly arise in the context of society, which is an example of where a human capacity may only be developed to the fullest extent through sociable relations. Therefore, it seems as if Hume explains human sociability with reference to unsociable relations. Finlay explains:

Only within society, that is, in the company and gaze of others, can desire itself be activated fully and even the most selfish propensities of human individuals be fully realized [...] The desire for objects and riches that bestow a power of acquiring them is activated only to the same extent that we develop the sociable passions comprehended by Hume's theory of sympathy, because it is only by sympathizing with common and particular perceptions of the world that of goods that we come to understand their meaning and hence their value.⁶⁴

The specific narrative arising from this involves the distribution of good within society that improves society according to sociability. However, in principle, the sociable properties and propensities of human beings are activated and improved through unsociable relations, such that the presence of unsociable attitudes and passions are either dependent on or provide the occasion for the development of sociable ones. This seems like an early form of sociability which is dependent on unsociability, or unsociable sociability. Which is relatively clear is how grounded it is in views of anthropology. Kant's views on this topic are particularly important to consider if we are to understand social antagonism.

⁶² Kant certainly owned a number of Hume's works and both admired and drew from him. Evidence for Kant's awareness of his philosophy may be inferred from Kant's personal book collection: Kant owned a variety of relevant works by both Hume and Rousseau. See Arthur Warda (ed.), *Immanuel Kants Bücher*, Berlin: Verlag von Martin Breslauer, 1992.

⁶³ Christopher J. Finlay, *Hume's Social Philosophy: Human Nature and Commercial Sociability in A Treatise on Human Nature*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007, pp. 105-107.

⁶⁴ Finlay, *Hume's Social Philosophy*, p. 109.

2.2 Context in Pre-Critical Kantian Anthropology

Kant conceives of human beings as products of nature that possess at least four natural predispositions: animal, corresponding to discipline; technical, corresponding to culture; pragmatic, corresponding to prudence; and moral, corresponding to ethical behaviour. The development of our natural predispositions are conducive to the civilisation, cultivation and moralisation of the human race over time.⁶⁵ Given the conception of human beings as natural products, Kant also has a conception of them as being determined according to universal laws of nature (*allegemeinen Naturgesetzen*) and as being free under ‘appearances’ (*Erscheinungen*) for moral responsibility, it remains ambiguous what exactly the plan of nature is, particularly reason and the given the freedom of the will.⁶⁶ We know from the Seventh Proposition that Kant thinks there is a difference between metaphysical human freedom and political freedom. In addition to this, nature intends human beings to become fully free morally and rational through lawful political society. Thus, the universal laws are purposive, for Kant, insofar as we can conceive of them as directing human action towards moral progress through political society. Kantian anthropology is integral to Kant’s philosophy of history and its relation to his account of moral development over time as the aim of nature. As Jennifer Mensch has stated:

Increasingly preoccupied with the possibility of moral development on the grand scale, like many of his contemporaries Kant began to think about the perfectibility of the species in terms of mankind’s special vocation, that is, to think of self-improvement for the good of self and whole as the task set by God and nature for mankind.⁶⁷

Therefore, having a foundation in Kantian accounts of the teleology of nature and the individual and collective freedom of the will illuminates the substance of the First

⁶⁵ Holly L. Wilson, *Kant’s Pragmatic Anthropology: Its Origin, Meaning, and Critical Significance*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, pp. 47, 62-86.

⁶⁶ Kant, *Idea*, p. 108 (AA 8:17).

⁶⁷ Jennifer Mensch, ‘From Crooked Wood to Moral Agency: On Anthropology and Ethics in Kant’, in *Estudos Kantianos*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014, p. 197.

Proposition and its relevance to the Second Proposition and the Third Proposition in preparation for the logic of the determinate mechanism which drives human progress teleologically through freedom towards the cosmopolitan constitution, namely, the social antagonism or unsociable sociability of the Fourth Proposition. The First Proposition provides an explicit reference to this kind of a problem which Kant is seeking to address.⁶⁸ Natural predispositions, by definition, predispose their objects to develop in particular ways. If something is naturally predisposed to be a certain way, then that natural predisposition provides a condition under which, for any being which is so disposed, that being will act or perform in a certain way. Therefore, a natural predisposition is a condition of moral action, insofar as we are predisposed to act morally, as an emergent property of the four natural predispositions described above.

Now, Kant defines “reason” in the following way in this context: “Reason in a creature is a faculty of extending the rules and aims of all the use of its powers far beyond natural instinct.”⁶⁹ This is not unlike the former description of human beings’ use of intelligence, wisdom and prudence in being forced to create for itself means of defence. However, most significantly, the complete development of reason, in Kant’s view, as a natural predisposition of humanity, is conceivable only on the species-level.⁷⁰ Individual human beings both possess and enact reason. However, the fullest development of reason in human beings happens through human community. Reason does not arise spontaneously and *ex nihilo* but rather progresses through stages of human life across generations of human beings. It cannot be completely individualistic as it is fully realisable only generationally, societally and collectively. The complete development of reason is nature’s goal for

⁶⁸ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 108-109 (AA 8:17-18).

⁶⁹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:19).

⁷⁰ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 109-110 (AA 8:18-19)

humanity, and thus nature has naturally predisposed human beings with reason that exceeds these mere animal inclinations.

This doctrine can be thought of as a moral and anthropological implication of the life-sciences, whereby human freedom is a means to the end of the moral ideal which is the aim of nature.⁷¹ Kant claims, “For if we depart from that principle [i.e. the teleological doctrine of nature] then we no longer have a lawful nature (*eine gesetzmäßige [...] Natur*) but a purposelessly playing nature (*eine zwecklos spielende Natur*); and desolate chance takes the place of the guidelines of reason.”⁷² Furthermore, without such a teleological doctrine of nature to ground our understanding of human history, then the study of mankind as an object seems superfluous. As Kant explains by the end of the essay:

For what does it help to praise the splendor and wisdom of creation in the nonrational realm of nature, and to recommend it to our consideration, if that part of the great showplace of the highest wisdom that contains the end of all this—the history of humankind—is to remain a ceaseless objection against it, the prospect of which necessitates our turning our eyes away from it in disgust and, in despair of ever encountering a completed rational aim in it, to hope for the latter only in another world?⁷³

Kant says that without being able to make sense of humanity according to a general course of nature, nature itself seems lawless and irrational, which he is not prepared to accept. Since nature has no teleology in itself without reason then without teleology and freedom, nature is unlawful and purposeless, which is contrary to reason and unacceptable to Kant.⁷⁴ Therefore, the appearances of the freedom of the will must be made sense of under a teleological view of nature, such that both nature and freedom might be made compatible, and the human choices plays a role in bringing about those ends for which nature has so predisposed us may be

⁷¹ I refer here to the four formulations of the Categorical Imperative found in the *Groundwork*, namely: The Formula of Universal Law (4:421), the Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself (4:429), the Formula of Autonomy (4:432) and the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends (4:433); Guyer, *Kant's System*, pp. 146-168.

⁷² Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18).

⁷³ Kant, *Idea*, p. 119 (AA 8:30).

⁷⁴ Kant, *Idea*, p. 109 (AA 8:18-19).

viewed not as random, meaningless and chaotic acts but purposive products of nature's will, when the whole of nature and human history is taken into consideration.

2.3 Unsociable Sociability

Therefore, it seems relatively clear that Kant believed that the mutual resistance with which we find ourselves engaging as individuals in a society is actually a means to that ultimate form of human unification, namely, cosmopolitanism under the civil law, which provides a context for the development of all our natural predispositions to the fullest extent. In the Fourth Proposition, Kant introduces the proposed mechanism by means of which the natural predispositions of humanity are to develop, namely, human “antagonism in society”

(*Antagonism [...] in Gesellschaft*):

The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all its predispositions is their antagonism in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order.⁷⁵

By “antagonism in society” Kant means to refer to the “unsociable sociability” (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*) of humanity in general, which is defined as the tendency of people within societies both to socialise (*sich zu vergesellschaften*) and to individualise (*sich zu vereinzeln*), the dynamic interaction of which is a means of progress for Kant. These two opposites create a dynamic in which humans feel a compulsion to create a culture of “lawful order” (*gesetzmäßigen Ordnung*), which is ultimately manifested through the cosmopolitan constitution.⁷⁶ Given the context of the discussion of unsociable sociability in the previous propositions about the development of humanity's natural predispositions, it seems correct to interpret the sociable and unsociable aspects of human life as indicative of properties of the human individual versus the human society. This is just how Kant seems to use this concept.

⁷⁵ Kant, *Idea*, p. 111 (AA 8:20).

⁷⁶ Kant, *Idea*, p. 111 (AA 8:20-21).

As individuals in society, Kant thinks we are unsociable. We experience ourselves as wanting to get our own way over other people in life, and we often excuse ourselves from keeping social laws when it is convenient for us. However, as social beings, we simply know that there have to be certain laws in place in order to facilitate our enjoyment being with other people.⁷⁷ To think of Kant's point using a modern example, we might think of the concept of *road-rage*. When driving along the road, we may feel like we want to get ahead, cut others off and drive furiously in order to obtain our own, personal goals. However, we also know certain laws hold on the roads such that road-travel in society might be possible, and therefore we submit to society's rules. If everyone drove on the wrong side of the road, it would impede every individual's goals. Therefore, we cooperate with others in order to achieve our own ends. We enter into society in order to satisfy our individuality.

In Kant's words, the mutual resistance we feel is due to unsociability, that is, the tendency of the individual towards attaining "ambition, tyranny, and greed [...] a rank among his fellows" which provides the first steps from "crudity" to "culture."⁷⁸ From culture come talents, then taste, enlightenment, moral distinctions, practical principles and a moral whole.⁷⁹ The concept of unsociable sociability is Kant's "dynamic of development."⁸⁰ It is also foundational for matters pertaining to the next four propositions and is presented by Kant as a fact of human anthropology stemming from our natural predisposition to form societies. Kant believed that without the unsociable elements of our nature—and he may have been thinking of the kinds of Humean properties mentioned above—that we would not advance very far as a species. Nature, knowing better for humanity, wills discord among human beings as a means of forcing us into a state of affairs whereby we are forced to act to secure our own sense of good and wellbeing through the development and use of our own reason. Kant says:

⁷⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 111 (AA 8:21).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Onora O'Neill, 'Historical trends and human features', in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 39, 2008, p. 531.

The natural incentives to this, the sources of unsociability and thoroughgoing resistance, from which so many ills arise, which, however, impel human beings to new exertion of their powers and hence to further development of their natural predispositions, thus betray the ordering of a wise creator.⁸¹

Therefore, conflict within society is actually a means by which human beings may further develop the unity of society over time. By conflicting, we are forced into a situation in which we may actually flourish. Unsociability is thus eventually a source of sociability over time. Kant actually has a magnificent illustration of this once again using a physical analogy from nature in the world, this time involving forests and trees. Although not technically scientifically true, given contemporary knowledge about tree-systems, we may take the analogy to be an illustration of what Kant believed to be true, namely, that the natural predispositions of human nature may be developed only in the species and not in the individual only, and that through the social antagonism of our unsociable sociability. In the Fifth Proposition, Kant uses trees in a forest as an example of the principle of unsociable sociability at work in nature, and illustrates of how communities of natural beings may flourish most supremely only when they are together in the world striving one against the other:

Yet in such a precinct as civil union is, these same inclinations have afterwards their best effect; just as trees in a forest, precisely because each of them seeks to take air and sun from the other, are constrained to look for them above themselves, and therefore achieve a beautiful straight growth; whereas those in freedom and separated from one another, that out forth their branches as they like, grow stunted, crooked and awry. All culture and art that adorn humanity, and the most beautiful social order, are the fruits of unsociability, through which is it necessitated by itself to discipline itself, and so by an art extorted from it, to develop completely the germs of nature.⁸²

In nature, trees in a forest grow strong and tall precisely *because* they are forced to live together and compete for air and sunlight, and are often weak and anaemic when alone. Similarly, human beings will become strong together through their social antagonism.

⁸¹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 112 (AA 8:21-22).

⁸² Kant, *Idea*, pp. 112-113 (AA 8:22).

Kant may probably be judged, therefore, to have placed himself on the positive and sociable side of the European debate, and this perspective informs the process by which human society is projected to improve, yet uniquely through unsociability. Kant understands that unsociability and sociability are opposed—they are logical opposites, after all—yet he does not see them as incompatible under a teleological and developmental view of human nature: unsociability is a means to sociability, as sociable elements of human life overtake unsociable elements over time. Moreover, if we look deeper into the foundations of Kant’s philosophy of unsociable sociability from the European intellectual background and early Kantian anthropology then we can see how Kant took elements from both Hume and Rousseau on unsociable sociability, and used it to provide a positive contribution about making sense of the history of the human species under a teleological doctrine of nature.

2.4 Natural Predispositions and Human Development

Contextually, the anthropological lectures from 1772 onwards coincided with the early stages of Kant’s critical turn that began with his *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) which led to the publication of the CPR.⁸³ For Kant, anthropology is a “doctrine of nature” that would pertain directly to the human affairs of the common man. By the 1780s Kantian anthropology focused on social, cultural and political issues of human life.⁸⁴ Anthropology is also fundamental to the wider Kantian project. Consequently, Kant’s psychological and social accounts of the knowledge of the human being, which also feature in the mechanism of unsociable sociability, take on special significance for interpreting the *Idea* essay. The following quotation from the *Menschenkunde* lecture of the Winter of 1781/82 speaks to a

⁸³ Brian Jacobs, ‘Kantian Character and the Problem of a Science of Humanity’, in Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain (eds.), *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 105-106,

⁸⁴ Jacobs, ‘Kantian Character’, pp. 111-112.

counterintuitive social dynamic Kant believed occurs among cultured persons in civilised social contexts, which actually communicates several assumptions Kant brings to his concept of social antagonism in the Fourth Proposition:

Association with many social clans and with cultured human beings is a very fruitful source of anthropology. With uncultured human beings complete humanity is not yet developed because they do not yet have the opportunity to unfold all of the attributes of humanity. But if I go to the civilized part of human beings, there I run into the difficulty that the more cultured the human being is, the more he dissembles and the less he wants to be investigated by others. The gentleman does not want to be studied, and in order to *conceal* this cunning he advances with the growth of culture, where one does not simply dissemble but also shows the opposite of oneself.⁸⁵

By “anthropology” Kant means the knowledge of human beings that arises from experiencing human beings in cultivated and civilised contexts. The unsociable aspect of his nature causes him to partake in distrustful dissimulation, which actually allows humanity to advance in culture. This process of growth seems to be a growth of prudence on part of the cultivated and civilised individual in order to get by in the world. Thus, there is a sense here in which the unsociability of human nature only takes place continually within a society of individuals who have no regard for the civil law and the needs of the others at any time, which are elements of sociability. Therefore, there is an interaction between the sociable and unsociable in this instance of empirical anthropology, whereby unsociable individuals must become socialised and thus sociable over time. The uncivilized man may live a peaceful life free from such troubles left to himself. But, in his comfort and ignorance, he does not have the opportunity to develop his prudence. Only by placing human beings into societies will they conflict. But only by conflicting will they develop their prudence to the greatest extend, in line with nature’s aim to develop human reason absolutely and completely. This is similar to what we have already seen in the *Idea* essay, and it is illustrative of the foundations of that work in Kant’s earlier anthropology.

⁸⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Anthropology*, A. W. Wood and R. B. Louden, R. R. Clewis, R. B. Louden, G. F. Munzel and A. W. Wood (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 293; (AA 25:857).

Wood comments that the *Idea* essay is also predicated on a similar ambivalence within social relationships for the development of the natural predispositions of humanity as a whole.⁸⁶ Unsociable characteristics provoke us a species to develop characteristics which then lead to the betterment of all, and thus a sociability is achieved through unsociability. Kant calls the propensity to enter into society, yet with resistance, as a predisposition that is part of human nature.⁸⁷ However, it is also applicable in the world. Prior to human cultivation—defined as the creation of culture, defined as “the social worth of the human being”—human nature is actually composed of quite evil qualities: ambition, tyranny, greed and status cause human beings to come into a kind of conflict consisting in mutual resistance which engenders a progress of enlightenment by which human beings make moral distinctions that become practical principles of behaviour regulating human action in complex societies involving unity in disparity.⁸⁸ Thus Kant praises nature for unsociability, which compels human beings toward rationality, morality and ultimate happiness:

Without these qualities of unsociability from which the resistance arises, which are not at all amiable in themselves, qualities that each of us must inevitably encounter in his selfish pretensions, all talents would, in an arcadian pastoral life of perfect concord, contentment and mutual love, remain eternally hidden in their germs; human beings, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would give their existence hardly any greater worth than that of their domesticated beasts; they would not fill the void in creation in regard to their end as rational creature. Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! For without them all the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped.⁸⁹

Kant sees this as the ordering of—as Kant puts it at the end of the Fourth Proposition—a “wise creator” (namely, nature) who has so willed not what human beings desire, but what they need for their complete development according to all their natural capacities and predispositions, especially reason.

⁸⁶ Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 213.

⁸⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 111 (AA 8:20).

⁸⁸ Kant, *Idea*, p. 111 (AA 8:21).

⁸⁹ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 111-112 (AA 8:21).

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

If this is correct, then we can agree that Kantian anthropology is ultimately a doctrine of individual unsociability and communal sociability, where the latter wins out against the former over time, as reason is ever on the increase, albeit slowly and over many generations, according to Kant. We prefer a world in which we are only ever sociable, but it is best for us if we are also unsociable, that our unsociability might bring out our sociability more perfectly and completely. The sociability of human beings is uniquely occasioned by the unsociability with which we are beset. Then this fundamentally sociable paradigm would justify a movement in the *Idea* essay from the concept of antagonism towards the necessity of a lawful condition under a perfect civil constitution. Particularly relevant to this is what Wood calls the second part of Kantian pragmatic anthropology, namely, the anthropological characteristics, which refers to what human beings make of themselves through freedom.⁹⁰ Kant moves from a conception of human beings under an account of their individual nature as historical and moral beings, and then through a “way of thinking” (*Denkungsart*) with freedom toward character, which informs relations between genders, nations and races through laws. Wood explains, “The aim of anthropological characteristics would be to understand how freedom expresses itself through the medium of nature.”⁹¹ One way of understanding how freedom expresses itself is through the inclinations. Freedom is the strongest of all the inclinations, and being free is relevant to being happy. Therefore, society places individual human being into a state of perpetual sub-optimality with regard to happiness, which necessarily arouses conflict and thus engenders necessary laws which function to mediate human conflict, such that humans might collectively achieve some form

⁹⁰ Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, p. 205.

⁹¹ Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, p. 206.

of personal freedom by choosing to stand in a lawful, civil relationship to others.⁹² Just what the shape of such a lawful constitution might be is the next step in the *Idea* essay. If the mechanism propels us towards a particular kind of political society, then the concept of that society will need to make coherent sense logically, and be practically achievable, especially on the applied theoretical reading defended in this thesis. The shape and function of the civil constitution of cosmopolitanism is the topic of Chapter Three.

⁹² Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, pp. 254-255. An interesting analogy for Kant's doctrine of moral progress from unsociable sociability states that we may think of human development as an increase in the production or moral capital whereby the rivalry between agents leads to an increase in effort that accelerates the accumulation and retention of knowledge. For more information, see Gabriel Fagan, Vitor Gaspar and Peter McAdam, 'Immanuel Kant and Endogenous Growth Theory', in *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 63, no. 5, 2016, pp. 427-442. Another example of this is the opacity of human motivation, according to which there is an epistemic gap between motives, thoughts, behaviour and appearances, such that moral flaws can become motivations for moral behaviour. For more information, see Alix Cohen, 'Kant on Anthropology and Alienology: The Opacity of Human Motivation and Its Anthropological Implications', in *Kantian Review*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2008, pp. 85-106.

Chapter Three Cosmopolitan Constitution

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the shape of the cosmopolitan constitution and its relationship to the moral development of the human species over time. As we will see, Kant suggests that the social antagonism of individuals in communities creates a state of affairs according to which laws need to be created on the civil level. This is taken to be a local example from which a much wider generalisation can be made. Kant draws an analogy between this more local situation and places it on an international level. I will discuss the logic of this movement. The political uncertainty of human existence because of social antagonism provides Kant with an epistemological and moral basis on which to explain the need for human beings to enter into a particular kind of political community, which is essential to the claim of the Fifth Proposition, in which human nature “compels” (*zwingt*) humanity to form a “civil society” (*bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*):

The greatest problem for the human species, to which nature compels him, is the achievement of a civil society universally administering right.⁹³

The significance of this “greatest problem” that Kant has in mind in the Fifth Proposition is spelled out more clearly in the Sixth Proposition:

This problem is at the same time the most difficult and the latest to be solved by the human species.⁹⁴

It seems justified to discuss these two propositions together, as the latter qualifies the former. If we grant, along with the compulsion referred to in the Fifth Proposition, the view that Kant held to a fundamental sociability of human nature then we may also see more clearly his inference from unsociable sociability, through civil justice to the cosmopolitan constitution, which forms the bulk of the discussion from the Fifth Proposition to the Eighth Proposition. For Kant, such a cosmopolitan constitution would be indicative of a community become

⁹³ Kant, *Idea*, p. 112 (AA 8:22).

⁹⁴ Kant, *Idea*, p. 113 (AA 8:23).

perfected in moral progress and would provide the context in which the predispositions of humanity, especially the moral predispositions, could be developed to completion, which includes the full freedom of human beings. This “universal cosmopolitan condition” in community would become the “womb” (*Schoß*) in which all the moral predisposition of humanity can develop, which involves most specifically the moral predisposition and the predisposition to cosmopolitanism.⁹⁵

3.1 Personal and Political Freedom

There is a distinction that we can make between personal freedom and political or collective freedom in Kant’s philosophy. In the Seventh Proposition, for example, Kant expresses his desire to observe the formation of a federation of nations (*Foedus Amphictyonum*), such that all states might stand “in unbound freedom” in relation to each other. This kind of freedom is different to the “brute” or “barbaric” freedom of natural humanity, but is rather a tranquil and secure stately existence under a civil constitution.⁹⁶ Such stately freedom is an expression of the development of human capacities. There is thus a relationship between individual freedom, civic laws and national freedom. National freedom is a product of human freedom compelled by the mechanisms of nature:

Therefore what the purposeless condition of savages did, namely hold back all natural predispositions in our species, but finally through ills into which this condition has transported the species, necessitated them to go beyond this condition and enter into a civil constitution, in which all those germs could be developed; this the barbaric freedom of already establishes states also does, namely, that through the application of all powers of the commonwealth to armaments against one another, through the devastations perpetrated by war, even more, however, through the necessity of preserving themselves, constantly in readiness for it, the full development of the natural predispositions are restrained in their progress; yet on the contrary, the ills that arise out of this necessitate our species to devise to the in itself salutary resistance of many states to one another

⁹⁵ Kant, *Idea*, p. 118 (AA 8:28).

⁹⁶ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 114-115 (AA 8:24-25).

arising from their freedom a law of equilibrium and to introduce a united power giving emphasis to that law, hence to introduce a cosmopolitan condition of public state security, which is not wholly without *dangers* so that the power of humanity may not fall asleep.⁹⁷

Kant refers here to the social antagonism and other problems that rise from the natural state, which compels us to make choices as individuals to form communities of persons who then create commonwealths for the purposes of self-preservation and protection such that we may be most completely politically free. Perfect political freedom is a form of freedom under external laws. Such laws supposedly restrain forces and factors that might take away one's freedom. They also make it such that we may not necessarily be able to do everything we might want to do. The purpose of such self-restraint is a greater good, namely, the cultivation of societies that might be positively predisposed to forming a union of states. Such a union of states would ultimately possess significant civil liberties and civil laws as an expression of human freedom that has been cultivated, civilised and moralised through a civil constitution.

The results are counterintuitive on face value. By the Eighth Proposition, Kant implicitly commends the restriction of individual liberties for the sake of the greater liberty of the community, just in case the liberties of the individual are at odds with the freedoms of other individuals.⁹⁸ Here, Kant argues that if the state—for the purposes of political ambition—restricts the civil liberties of its subjects, the entire nation will suffer. He cites freedom of religion and freedom of commercial enterprise as examples of this. On the other hand, if civil liberties increase then enlightenment emerges, thus fostering over time a perfect understanding of morality (or “the good”) throughout the citizenry, which in time must also influences the governmental powers-that-be (that is, “the thrones”) and, therefore, the principles of government. Indeed, Kant actually criticises the governments of his day for failing to facilitate the enlightenment of its citizens through a great emphasis on moral

⁹⁷ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 115-116 (AA 8:25-26).

⁹⁸ Kant, *Idea*, p. 117 (AA 8:27-28).

education and hopes that the increasing financial burdens of constant warfare will perhaps wake up the rulers of Europe to pour their energies and finances into moral education for enlightenment, rather than war for political gain.

Kant is therefore interested in liberty, one which consists in personal liberty of morally educated citizens who do not labour under the slavery of war. But Kant's critical philosophy also admits of at least three kinds of freedom: (1) freedom as required for moral responsibility for human action and especially on account of powers enacted by myself; (2) freedom as an idea of the moving force and efficient cause in relation to human action which is conceived transcendently as operating in accordance with the moral law; and (3) freedom as self-mastery over inclinations for moral liberty and virtue of character.⁹⁹ It seems clear that the first two of these three forms of freedom are aspects of human freedom. However, the third one is not so clear. It clearly relates to human beings insofar as it relates to character. Character involves self-mastery and cosmopolitan condition of public state security is an expression of the mastery of society over crime and disorder through a lawful order is a political extension of human reason in conjunction with a desire for personal and political freedoms. Therefore, improvement in character—which is a moral improvement—increases personal and political freedom.

3.2 Moral and Political Dilemma

However, this involves a practical problem. Kant explains, “a society in which *freedom under external laws* can be encountered combined in the greatest possible degree with irresistible power, i.e. a perfectly *just civil constitution*, must be the supreme problem of nature for the

⁹⁹ Courtney Fugate, ‘Teleology, Freedom and Will in Kant’s Moral Philosophy’, in Stefano Bacin, Alfredo Ferrarin, Claudio La Rocca and Margit Ruffing (eds.), *Kant und die Philosophie in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des XI. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Bd. III, Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013, pp. 207-211.

human species.”¹⁰⁰ Kant’s point is that an absolute freedom that is wild and uncultivated by human law is actually inimical to the human species as a whole, conceived as a rational race which is predisposed to reason. Kant’s forest of trees—which flourished in competitive society yet were weak when alone—still obeyed in the law of the jungle, one might say. Thus, a civil constitution of laws, constrains total freedom in the individualistic sense and yet is a means to the development of the whole race as a community, according to the purposes of nature.¹⁰¹ The Sixth Proposition commends this problem as a dilemma, as laws by definition constrain individual action; you cannot just drive on the opposite side of the road, for example. Yet creatures in society require a law to constrain their freedom, as well as an individual or governing body that may be trusted consistently to implement that law justly and fairly, so that individuals within a society do not have the freedom to exempt themselves from the civil law whenever they please, for example by crime, to which human beings—by virtue of their imperfect rationality or irrationality and unsociable nature as individuals—are prone. “Thus,” Kant explains, “he [humanity] needs a *master* (*einen Herrn nötig hat*), who breaks his stubborn will and necessitates him to obey a universally valid will with which everyone can be free.”¹⁰² This supreme power and authority should be just in-itself, in accordance with laws, and have the moral authority and political power to compel human beings to obey the civil law. Furthermore, the master must also be necessarily just.¹⁰³ In a footnote in the same section, Kant says that it is not impossible to conceive of such a perfect, natural being; perhaps there are extra-terrestrial beings in the universe who are just in themselves. So, a morally perfect person is metaphysically possible for Kant. However, it is simply a matter of empirical fact that human beings are not this way, and thus a dilemma

¹⁰⁰ Kant, *Idea*, p. 112 (AA 8:22).

¹⁰¹ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 112-113 (AA 8:22).

¹⁰² Kant, *Idea*, p. 113 (AA 8:23).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

ensues, whereby humanity has need someone to fulfil a role that it is not obvious that anyone in their individual moral imperfection, is able to fulfil.¹⁰⁴

Kant thinks this is a very difficult problem. He postulates at least three conditions that must hold in historical time if such a just civil constitution were to be made manifest through human efforts.¹⁰⁵ Firstly, it would require the correct concepts of the nature of such a possible constitution, something which Kant does not seem to think has been articulated yet. Secondly, some great experience of such a civil constitution in action across the courses of many generations would have to take place, which makes it impossible for any one generation or thinker to verify in time that the constitution itself is implemented without hindsight. Thirdly, there would have to be a good will on part of the people to accept such a constitution, which is somewhat of a paradox, if the civil constitution itself is supposed to be a means by which unfavourable wills are to be overcome through sociable relations, of which the constitution would presumably be a product. Kant surmises, “three such items are very difficult ever to find all together, and if it happens, it will only be very late, after many fruitless attempts.”¹⁰⁶ Kant has no confidence that such a civil constitution will ever take place in his lifetime. The concept of a universal history predicting *a priori* the establishment of such a cosmopolitan constitution sometime in the future given present conditions must hold true at least in theory if there is to be any hope in the establishment of such a constitution at all in practice in the future.

It is instructive at this point to provide a discourse on the social and political context of the European Enlightenment in Kant’s day, in order to illuminate Kant’s intuitions about the difficulties that society posed in the establishment of a civil constitution. Why think that the three conditions, mentioned above, would be so hard to come by? Why think that the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 113-114 (AA 8:23-24).

¹⁰⁶ Kant, *Idea*, p. 114 (AA 8:23-24).

cosmopolitan community would be a far-off phenomenon rather than one that might be realised in Kant's lifetime? Kant's mature and scholarly work on morality and politics developed against the backdrop of eighteenth-century European Enlightenment social and cultural life, and this would have had an effect on Kant's view on the ideal human society which began to be articulated in a philosophical fashion in 1784.¹⁰⁷ International relations between 1763 and 1793 saw an increase in competitiveness and corollary tensions between states that had been engendered by problems sustained as a consequence from decades of war in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, such as the Seven Years War (1756-1763), and financial burdens and debts, territorial acquisitions by force and annexation, forming new alliances and breaking old ones complicated diplomacy and further conflict all saw the rise of conflict among European powers.¹⁰⁸ International rivalries in the form of conflict and war between the great states were a common occurrence in Europe, as well as civil unrest from within those states in the forms of rebellions and revolutions, a fact which introduced troubling trends for the powers-that-be but also inspired philosophical reflection around Europe about the dynamic new political potential of such movements.¹⁰⁹ Enlightenment Europe therefore represents a period of intense social, economic and political conflict in a highly socially stratified society.¹¹⁰

The European economy was, on average, experiencing a significant boon in this time.¹¹¹ Technological innovation from the Industrial Revolution in England improved agricultural methods in European culture which correlated with a surge in population growth and food demands on an exponential scale. In Prussian culture, the population almost

¹⁰⁷ Steven Lestition, 'Kant and the End of the Enlightenment in Prussia', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 65, no. 1, 1993, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth Century Europe 1700-1789*, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1990, pp. 294-302.

¹⁰⁹ John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present*, 3rd edn., New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010, pp. 386-387.

¹¹⁰ Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, pp. 356-360.

¹¹¹ Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, pp. 360-368.

quintupled, from approximately two million persons to almost ten million persons, following a broad trend in many European countries. This was to such an extent that some writers, such as Thomas Mathus, were compelled to believe that nature had built into it automatic population checks and balances, such as plague, famine, disease, infant mortality and war, in order to bring about societal equilibrium so that the population did not exceed its food demands. Most importantly, a general surge in European population implies a need for social change as towns and cities grew, which may have engendered conflict between upper and lower classes and increased in wealth due to consumerism, social distinctions became more pronounced, and social control was guaranteed by governing authorities by strict laws for protection of property and subordinationism of the lower classes to the higher ones.¹¹² This context would have influenced Kantian intuitions about sociability among human beings as humans competed for position and power. Thus, when Kant wrote the *Idea* essay, Europe was a deeply divided place, where absolute monarchies strove for power and prestige, which was a great source of significant social antagonism between states.¹¹³ This would have been a significant context for Kant's pessimistic view of the achievability of the cosmopolitan constitution in his lifetime.

3.3 Individual and International Relations

It is little surprise, then, that in the Seventh Proposition Kant proceeds to assert an analogy between the unsociable sociability of individuals with respect to states, and that of the unsociability of individual states in relation to the sociability of the whole set of states. Kant

¹¹² Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, pp. 375-382.

¹¹³ Isser Woloch, *Eighteenth-Century Europe: Tradition and Progress, 1715-1789*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982, p. 1. Woloch goes on to note that, of the three European countries which did not consist of absolute monarchies—Britain, Poland and the Dutch Netherlands—there was either a constitutional monarchy (Britain and Poland) or an oligarchical republic (Dutch Netherlands); see Woloch, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 4.

explains, “The same unsociability that necessitated human beings to this [i.e. lawful civil constitution] is once again the cause of every commonwealth.”¹¹⁴ Just as individuals, left to themselves, are unsociable, selfish and so on, so too are states independent of other states, being vested in their own interests and that of their rulers. Moreover, just as society creates laws to deal with this unsociability by means of the sociability of laws, so too may there be international laws and commonwealths of nations that are created in order to deal with antagonism between states. Kant sees the antagonistic international relations between states as indicative of a plan of nature to bring human beings into a greater international unity; just as nature brings unsociable individuals into a sociability community as part of a hidden plan, so too does nature do the same with states, but on a meta-level.

The individual corresponds to the state and the community corresponds to the commonwealth or federation of nations founded on “a united might” and “laws of its united will.”¹¹⁵ To this end, international wars take on a similar character to conflicts between individuals in society:

All wars are therefore only so many attempts (not, to be sure, in the aims of human beings, but in the aim of nature) to bring about a new relationship between states, and through destruction or at least dismemberment of all of them to form new bodies, which, however, once again cannot preserve themselves either in themselves or next to one another and hence must suffer new, similar revolutions until finally, partly through the best possible arrangements of their best civil constitution internally, partly through a common agreement and legislation externally, a condition is set up, which, resembling a civil commonwealth, can preserve itself like an *automaton*.¹¹⁶

Following the guiding analogy, just as a community must create laws to deal with unsociable characteristics, so the international community has to come up with ways to deal with the unsociable characteristics of individual member-states, such that humans may develop, “from the lowest step of animality gradually up to the highest step of humanity” by means of an art

¹¹⁴ Kant, *Idea*, p. 114 (AA 8:24).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 114-115 (AA 8:24-25).

brought forth from him by struggle.¹¹⁷ Thus, the anthropological doctrine of unsociable sociability has been extended into the political realm, and the full purposes of nature in the individual are exhibited most perfectly completely only in the species as a whole as humans relate to each through stately relations. Human community under a civil constitution is a product of natural predispositions to reason. The cosmopolitan community is therefore a kind of human moral self-creation which is intended to perfect human nature gradually over time. However, it is also cyclical; human progress can move backwards by natural devastations which tear down what currently exists in order to establish something greater, in accordance with nature's aim:

[T]he ills that arise out of this necessitate our species to devise to the in itself salutary resistance of many states to one another arising from their freedom a law of equilibrium and to introduce a uniting power giving emphasis to that law, hence to introduce a cosmopolitan condition of state security.¹¹⁸

Thus, as the Eighth Proposition explains:

One can regard the history of the human species in the large as the completion of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an inwardly and, to this end, also an externally perfect state constitution, as the only condition in which it can fully develop all its predispositions in humanity.¹¹⁹

Kant therefore affirms the concept that the conflicts between states necessitate us to provide some means to greater unity for the purposes of preserving liberty and security, which is the international cosmopolitan constitution.

This is the logical movement that Kant has been developing from the natural predispositions to the cosmopolitan community through the mechanism of social antagonism, namely, and it is a key step in the developmental movement between becoming “cultivated” (*kultiviert*), “civilised” (*zivilisiert*) and “moralised” (*moralisiert*).¹²⁰ Cosmopolitanism falls somewhere in between civilisation and moralisation, as cosmopolitanism is a means to the

¹¹⁷ Kant, *Idea*, p. 115 (AA 8:25).

¹¹⁸ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 115-116 (AA 8:26).

¹¹⁹ Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:27).

¹²⁰ Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:26).

latter is not possible without the former. Each of these three may be properties of individuals or collections of individuals (or states). More exactly, they are the following. Cultivation has to do with the creation of culture, already defined as the worth of the human beings, and is exhibited by art and science, which are the exploration of the aesthetic and the empirical, respectively. Civilisation is marked out by social rules of decorum and propriety, and therefore is more a matter of polite manner of behaviour. Moralisation is about the “inner formation” (*Ausbildung*) of human beings. Moralisation is the end goal of cultivation and civilisation, and cultivation and civilisation are established most perfectly through a cosmopolitan order. These three stages, successively, comprise a variety of social relations. There is a conceptual contrast between culture, civilisation and morality here, but somehow culture and civilisation must prepare the human being to be moral, even though culture and civilisation are not moral themselves.¹²¹ But most significantly, they are connected to a number of intellectual and academic developments in art and science as well as a number of social rules for common sense and good manners, which is supposed to be the result of the “formation” of the citizenry from within which is also the same word translated “education” (*Bildung*) in the same place, the aim of which state-instruction is for a “morally good disposition” (*moralisch-gute Gesinnung*) for the community, thus blending themes of morality, education and culture.¹²² So the movement from the cultivation of human beings to the moralisation of the same is a movement of moral education, and this kind of moral formation, Kant believes, may take place only within an appropriate moral context in which the state-powers may imbue within people the love for duty required by the moral law.

¹²¹ Thomas Fiegle, ‘Teleology in Kant’s Philosophy of History and Political Philosophy’, in Paul Formosa, Avery Goldman and Tatiana Patrone (eds.), *Politics and Teleology in Kant*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014, p. 173.

¹²² Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:26).

As Jeremy Waldron has explained, eighteenth century European conceptions of the state could be both “norm-enacting” and “norm-applying.”¹²³ In other words, centralised state powers both could and should play a significant role in the creation of morally and politically good citizens, and Kant seems to have been convinced by this view of the role of the state in his conception of a world-state: “Kant is interested in the state as an institution that makes a systematic difference to what it is morally permissible for ordinary moral agents to do” by means of “a systematic body of law” from which it ought to follow that “people have a duty to see it that such an organisation comes into existence.”¹²⁴ By implication, we may say that Kant believed people are duty-bound to make choices which are conducive to the formation of the cosmopolitan community, which is itself a result of moral predispositions and is the place where humanity will be nurtured so as to become morally perfect over time. Knowing we have the duty to create such an entity and acting from duty to form it is at once both a moral act and a step on the way to moral perfection. Such a constitution would have to allow for the greatest possible human freedom whereby the freedom of every member coexists with the freedom of all the others. This is consistent with a Kantian theory of moral maxims, whereby the foundation of a political constitution after a theory of cosmopolitanism would seek to utilise the unsociable sociability of human beings to provide the occasion for the perfection of human nature.

¹²³ Jeremy Waldron, ‘Kant’s Theory of the State’, in Kleingeld (ed.), *Towards Perpetual Peace*, p. 181.

¹²⁴ Waldron, ‘Kant’s Theory of the State’, p. 183.

3.4 Cosmopolitan Moral Education

Moral formation in cosmopolitan society also involves moral motivation through education.¹²⁵ In the *Lectures on Pedagogy* (1803)—the content of which may be attributed to the Winter semester of 1776-1777 and therefore within the time-range of the *Idea* essay—Kant first expresses the concept of a ‘kingdom of ends’ as an ethical commonwealth which is characterised by a set of ethical properties such as autonomy, freedom, practical reason, maxims, duty and moral imperatives. Kant’s theory of autonomy in particular is social and relational, being embedded within the context of the moral and social world of other rational agents and not individually. If Kantian concepts of ethics were already fundamentally communal and relational in this sense, then there is a logical relationship between Kantian ethics and the cosmopolitan community as a progression of morality over time. Education would then be a means of consolidating morality among the populace. The state does this in order to prepare cosmopolitan citizens for maximal moral autonomy, self-legislation and self-motivation through a way of thinking (*Denkungsart*) and moral disposition (*Gesinnung*).

Georg Cavallar explains:

The tenets of Kant’s cosmopolitical education can be summarised as follows. He developed a broad concept of education; he argued with the civic republicans that education was indispensable for genuine morality; he subscribed to their belief in law’s educational function; he held that a republic—or rather a republican constitution—was the proper basis and condition of moral formation; he believed that he followed Rousseau in constructing an embedded form of cosmopolitan formation.¹²⁶

Therefore, moral education would be a cornerstone of the cosmopolitan constitution, and educating morally should become a moral and political duty. This is why cosmopolitan community implies moral development over time.

¹²⁵ Georg Cavallar, *Kant’s Embedded Cosmopolitanism: History, Philosophy, and Education for World Citizens*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, p. 120.

¹²⁶ Cavallar, *Kant’s Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, p. 138.

We have already explained above the relationship between human freedom and political freedom in Kant as a composition of individual choices due to social antagonism. Kant also appears to have extended this analogy to the collection of individual states in the essay. Kant did not advocate the solution of a single world-state on the political level any more than he would argue that all human individuals become one individual. Rather, he commends a constitution of states organised under one perfectly just law legislated by an essentially just legislature.¹²⁷ The key to moral perfection and human happiness, for Kant, is not total conformity to the system, but a development of the predisposition to morality that can only be achieved under cosmopolitanism, which by definition involves a united effort and cooperation between states. This would be an ongoing choice that each state would have to make, along with the citizens which make up that state. States of persons involve large sets of wills which would have to agree in tandem to maintain the civil constitution and an enforcement of that legislature to encourage states to remain in keeping with the international cosmopolitan law. This law would regulate state behaviour across the whole world and thus should ensure moralisation over time, in accordance with the aim of nature.

This moral and political duty of humanity according to Kant should consist in five important elements.¹²⁸ Firstly, Kant's concern—which is ultimately a moral concern—is the existence of a collection of free, autonomous individuals making up states who cooperate both individually and collectively as ends-in-themselves and autonomous law-givers and potential legislators and governors. This outlines a concern in the critical philosophy to form a conception of human beings as morally responsible agents capable of self-government through what we know about nature. Secondly, the normative purpose of all civil law is to maximise freedom. Whatever form the cosmopolitan constitution should take, it should never

¹²⁷ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 114-116 (AA 8:24-26).

¹²⁸ Garret Wallace Brown, *Grounding Cosmopolitanism: From Kant to the Idea of a Cosmopolitan Constitution*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, pp. 36-37.

take away from the autonomy of individual human agents, but should provide a context in which they can be most fully autonomous, in conjunction with the autonomy of all the others, which implies a non-coercive conception of government. Thirdly, cosmopolitan justice must be universally applicable. Whatever set of laws are to be issued according to the constitution of the meta-state, those laws would encapsulate norms which engender moral values that are valid and binding for all races and cultures. Fourthly, justice as an *a priori* ideal provides normative grounds for the legislation of such laws. Given how we may derive the concepts of justice and fairness in reason, that should be able to translate into practice. Finally, present hindrances to this moral and political ideal should not negate human striving towards the ideal. Given a practical reading of the *Idea* essay, which is being defended, this should not come as a surprise.

Guaranteed human progress is not the point here. Rather, what is at issue is the practical motivation that universal history should give us so as to strive towards that end. Brown helpfully summarises the point:

[T]he practical concern for cosmopolitanism, is with creating a global environment where various individuals can mutually develop their capacities without the consequences of conflict that have been witnessed throughout history. Therefore, the cosmopolitan ideal of history is meant to illustrate that if antagonism and human agency are to be understood as having a universal human end, we should reflectively conclude that they must accord with universal principles of right which can guarantee the development of these purposeful ends.¹²⁹

However, given the state of Europe in the Eighteenth Century, Kant does not seem optimistic about this happening any time soon. The continuous warfare between states has detracted from states' investment in the moral education of their citizens. Thus, in an ironic sense, the peace so sought after by states through war eludes them, given their overemphasis on ambition and intrigue manifesting itself through international conflict. In a sense, individual

¹²⁹ Brown, *Grounding Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 42-43.

states exhibit the same kind of individual unsociability manifested in irrational human individuals. Kant explains:

As long, however, as states apply all their powers to their vain and violent means of expansion and thus ceaselessly constrain the slow endeavor of the inner formation of their citizens' mode of thought, also withdrawing with this aim [i.e. of war] all support from it [i.e. education], nothing of this kind [i.e. moralisation] is to be expected, because it would require a long inner labor of every commonwealth for the education of its citizens.¹³⁰

Thus, state ambitions challenge the achievement of the cosmopolitan constitution any time soon—Kant was not optimistic this would be the case in his lifetime, nor for many generations to come. Kant's vision of a unified international system codified under international laws, one that is presumably governed by an in itself just legislature and master for the governance of all the states, just as in the case within states, eludes physical reality at the present. But European rulers—and the rulers of this world in general, for that matter—must change their ways with moral education.

Kant's interaction in the 1770s with moral cosmopolitanism, as advocated by Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724-1790) and Rousseau, reinforces the conception of cosmopolitan community as a context of moral formation through education.¹³¹ The uniqueness of Kant's account is to couch the formation of the community in natural predispositions and social antagonism due to his practical anthropology, according to which there also exists a “cosmopolitan disposition” (*cosmopolitische Anlage*) that makes possible the ultimate formation of cosmopolitan political order by free choice.¹³² In a marginal note to his *Anthropology*, Kant speaks of a “cosmopolitan predisposition in the human species, even with all the wars, which gradually in the source of political matters wins the upper hand over

¹³⁰ Kant, *Idea*, p. 116 (AA 8:26).

¹³¹ Georg Cavallar, 'Sources of Kant's Cosmopolitanism: Basedow, Rousseau, and Cosmopolitan Education', vol. 33, 2014, pp. 371-373.

¹³² Cavallar, *Sources of Kant's Cosmopolitanism*, p. 375.

the selfish predisposition of peoples.”¹³³ This remarkable passing comment arises in a discussion about cultivation, civilisation and moralisation as a context for which humans strive towards happiness or perfection through reason, which Kant also makes reference to in the *Idea* essay in relation to reason.¹³⁴ Speaking about cosmopolitanism in this way makes clear that, for Kant, the cosmopolitan constitution is both a product and a tool of human reason which is formed through the natural processes of social antagonism to cause social order to be established among us in the right way, self-imposed through freedom. The end of nature is a moral end and therefore must result from freedom, and history plays a role in the development of the predispositions to morality and cosmopolitanism, or moral cosmopolitanism, using reason and time to create the conditions for the state as a social context for moralisation.¹³⁵ Fotini Vaki elaborates, “It is as if nature is forcing us to overcome it by provoking conflicts between human beings which render necessary the institution of an enlightened political framework which, in turn, looks as if it were designed by a rational agent with moral intent. Put differently, the teleology of nature is the vehicle that transfers humankind above and beyond its will into the realm of legality.”¹³⁶ The outcome of this process is eventually moral and political freedom.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

Kant’s vision of shape of the cosmopolitan law should be according to the moral law of pure practical reason. It should thus not impose itself coercively onto the autonomy of any given individual of the cosmopolitan citizenry, as undermining personal autonomy undermines the

¹³³ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Louden and Zöllner (eds.), *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 422 (AA 7:326).

¹³⁴ Kant, *Idea*, p. 110 (AA 8:19).

¹³⁵ Fotini Vaki, ‘What Are We Allowed to Hope? Kant’s Philosophy of History as Political Philosophy’, in Formosa, Goldman and Patrone (eds.), *Politics and Teleology in Kant*, pp. 202-203.

¹³⁶ Vaki, ‘What Are We Allowed to Hope?’, p. 203.

whole enterprise.¹³⁷ The universal administration of this system, given, on the one hand, the positive desire for human autonomy, and, on the other hand, the negative fact of social antagonism, tempts the rulers of the cosmopolitan state into forceful coercion, which given the argument would be a moral imperfection and thus detrimental to Kant's philosophy.¹³⁸ Waldron explains this dynamic as an emphasis on popular sovereignty under a civil contract model under a standard eighteenth-century emphasis on the separation and mutual interrelation of the legislature and the judiciary, conceived as constitutionalism under the rule of law and the separation of powers, yet with the added dimension of this state as a moral necessity and obligation.¹³⁹ Brown notes a dynamic that arises from Kant's theory as a tripartite jurisprudential system: domestic law, international law and cosmopolitan law, each of which are underpinned by the moral law motivating the individual but are only capable of being expressed in community.¹⁴⁰

Finally, it is important to note that, for Kant, the cosmopolitan community is not an end-in-itself. It is rather a moral attitude, whereby the morality of agents can be developed.¹⁴¹ Kant is not interested in the cosmopolitan community for its own sake. Rather, he is interested in the community as an entity that can be formed for the perfection of human agents and their natural predispositions even by means of unsociable and selfish self-interest for an autonomous and sociable federation of peoples (*Völkerbund*) with a centralised government.¹⁴² This is not the final end of human history, but is an essential means by which that moral end may be achieved and is therefore conducive toward that goal. Just as the *Enlightenment* essay promoted the value of the public sphere, so the *Idea* essay promoted the value of the cosmopolitan community for complete development of human freedom and

¹³⁷ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 116-117 (AA 8:27-28).

¹³⁸ Kant, *Idea*, p. 112 (AA 8:22).

¹³⁹ Waldron, 'Kant's Theory of the State', pp. 183-187.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Grounding Cosmopolitanism*, p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Pauline Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism: The Philosophical Ideal of World Citizenship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 44.

¹⁴² Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 51-52.

moral education, which is a result of the natural teleology underlying free, human action and driving us towards the full development of all our natural faculties to the greatest extent.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 151-152.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by promising to provide a new synthetic reading of Kant's *Idea* essay as an application of theory from natural teleology. This new reading essentially proposed that elements of both the theoretical reading and the practical reading are compatible. I have sought to incorporate the insights of the theoretical readings and the practical readings to craft a new reading of Kant's essay which is a blend of the two accounts with a greater emphasis on its practical dimension. I have done this with reference to three major concepts: universal history, social antagonism and the cosmopolitan constitution. In Chapter One, the basic definition of universal history was provided as being an account of what would happen provided certain conditions held, and argued for its being a combination of both theory, in the concept of universal history itself, and practical, in its normative application. In Chapter Two, we outlined the concept of unsociable sociability as the mechanism by which nature propels humanity forward into progress through conflict. Finally, in Chapter Three, the cosmopolitan constitution was explored as the means by which the human species in aggregate is theoretically to become perfectly moralised.

Each of these concepts provides some reason to think the synthetic reading of the *Idea* essay presented in this thesis is true. By seeing, as Chapter One argues, that the universal history may also have a normative application, we are able to recognise that Kant has presented us with a philosophical picture of the whole world and the species as a whole with the expectation that a philosophical historian might chart the course of human events. This would not only act as a proof of universal history but would also facilitate the aim of nature in the development of our species. By thinking, as Chapter Two outlines Kant did, that there really are anthropological facts about human beings, such that we have an unsociable sociability which generates conflict that eventually leads to development of our species

morally and politically, we can also see that Kant thinks his theory of universal history has being applicable in the world. Chapter Three then articulated that the cosmopolitan constitution—a federation of nations—could serve as the womb in which all the natural predispositions of humanity could be nurtured and developed to the fullest extent. However, it is the responsibility of human beings to make this political womb of moral progress a reality and viewing the world as if it is a universal history in the way specified may in fact advance this project, making the writing of a universal history a practical responsibility to advance the world by various means, including cosmopolitan moral education for example. It seems most reasonable, then, to take the *Idea* essay as both a synthetic union of both logical theory about world history and practical application of that theory by us.

By way of final conclusion, I will offer some philosophical evaluation of Kant's *Idea* essay as promised in the Introduction. The *Idea* essay ends with both a modal claim and a practical claim in the Ninth Proposition:

A philosophical attempt to work out universal world history according to a plan of nature that aims at the perfect civil union of the human species must be regarded as possible and even as furthering this aim of nature.¹⁴⁴

This argument is in two parts. Firstly, a philosophical universal history must be regarded as possible. Secondly, such a history must be regarded as furthering the aim of nature in bringing about the civil union of the species. Even though it seems counterintuitive to view human history in this way, nevertheless the conception of human history as proceeding according to a plan of nature has practical value in that it is an idea that can become useful. Kant considers the universal history to be a theoretical idea that can become useful, provided we adopt the teleological and normative point of view of human history as represented by that idea. Therefore, we should not conceive of the idea as merely theoretical but as also having a practical extension in the realm of morality, law and international relations.

¹⁴⁴ Kant, *Idea*, p. 118 (AA 8:29).

As we have already pointed out, Kant makes references to physical analogies in the world to illustrate the principles that he employs. Animals, insects, trees function as illustrations which point to the existence of the essential characteristics in the world of principles that Kant would like to expand upon and apply to human life. If these things actually exist, then that points to the potentiality of implementing these principles in practice. From the Jewish world, to the Graeco-Roman world and to the barbarian world there have been empirical signs of the progress of humanity according to a natural predisposition to reason and morality, thus commending the writing of a philosophical historiography for the philosophical historiographer who is also well-versed in empirical history.

Kant also suggests two motivations for such a philosophical and historical project.¹⁴⁵ The first motivation is what he calls a “justification of nature” (*Rechtfertigung der Natur*) or “providence” (*Vorsehung*) by which nature and human history is given a coherent conception for the practical betterment of humankind.¹⁴⁶ This may be conceived in three ways. Firstly, it provides an explanation of the seemingly chaotic and random interplay of human affairs and actions; secondly, it may provide a useful means by which the future political changes in states may be predicted philosophically, which presumably would give us greater ability to act in diplomatic and military contexts; finally, it would provide a “consoling prospect” (*tröstende Aussicht*) into the future in its optimistic representation of humankind as heading towards the completion of a purpose of nature for the species here on earth. The second motivation has to do with the role of such a philosophical history in relation to empirical history. Kant states quite clearly that he does not intend, with his philosophical universal human history, or world history (*Weltgeschichte*), to displace traditional and empirical history (*Historie*) of mankind.¹⁴⁷ Rather, he intends to provide a complementary way for us to look at

¹⁴⁵ Kant, *Idea*, pp. 119-120 (AA 8:30-31).

¹⁴⁶ Kant, *Idea*, p. 119 (AA 8:30).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

human world history in order to motivate us towards fulfilling the ends of nature for the world.

This is also conceived in three ways, and to this end Kant brings up two issues of education and one of political relevance. Firstly, Kant has a concern for how posterity will receive the human history of Kant's own day, and so it functions as a practical motivation to engage in a philosophical history: without an application in philosophy, empirical history seems disinteresting to many, and Kant seems concerned about this. Secondly, there is a practical matter that people only study what interests them, and such a philosophical history can motivate an interest in studying empirical human history from a cosmopolitan point of view. Finally, Kant sees such an attempt at philosophical history as being able to bring about honour and glory for the heads of state and their servants.

These two motivations, consisting of six reasons, therefore comprise the practical application of Kant's idea and the justification for the idea in practice. It therefore seems appropriate at this point to offer comment on the six motivations, by way of philosophical evaluation of the idea from a historical and philosophical point of view. Here, it seems to me, Kant's idea does have practical value, but is questionable as to the special application of the teleological concepts to a cosmopolitan conception of human nature specifically, for reasons which have been explained. In order to explain what I mean, I will proceed along the order of the six reasons offered in the two motivations. With regard to the three elements of the justification of nature or providence—explanation, predictability and consolation—as applied to human history, these elements occupy varying levels of importance and plausibility from a historical and philosophical point of view. With regard to the notion of explanation, this is in fact a high plausible notion. Every history is involved in providing explanation, usually in terms of cause and effect, human motivation and so on.

If Kant's theory about the natural predispositions of human beings, as grounded in his empirical and philosophical anthropology, holds true, especially in our social antagonism and the various state structures that may be erected in relation to that element of human nature, then that would provide additional depth to for the explanation of human action and human history. There is nothing that is incompatible with human history and additional layers of explanation. A major concern would be whether such an additional, teleological layer of explanation is necessary, given other sources of explanation we might hold from empirical evidences. Philosophical universal history may appear as an imposition upon ordinary, empirical history. Occam's Razor suggests that it is metaphysically unnecessary to multiply entities beyond necessity. Only the simplest form of explanation is required as a sufficient explanation of something, then it might seem as if a teleological conception of human nature, as explanation, may be found to be redundant, *qua* explanation, which is an issue.

With regard to predictability and consolation, the former seems political in nature and the latter seems existential in nature. With respect to the first, it may be strategically helpful for a variety of political affairs to be able to detect patterns with which to predict by inference from past patterns. It is very hard to see how this should count as 'history' in either or an empirical or philosophical sense and therefore hard to see how it should act as a motivator for our engagement in such philosophical histories. Whereas it is true that one account of Kantian philosophy of history would see the idea for a universal history as pertaining to past, present and future, and whereas this one statement may speak on that view's behalf given a practical reading which seems focused both on the past and then the present implications for future action, the "art of political soothsaying" that Kant presents here does not seem applicable or interesting. With regard to the second, such existential motivations for human history, these would certainly count as being practical considerations. But would not seem to

serve the philosophical-historical project as such, and therefore seem downplayed in terms of their motivational power for extending that project, in my opinion.

With regard to the three elements of the motivation of the relationship of empirical history to philosophical history—reception, interest and honour—these seem more plausible on the first two educational sides of it, and perhaps less so for the latter, political side. With the issues of the reception of history and interest in studying history, I think it would be important for educating young people about history to involve a theory about why history should be studied and which gives it both importance and application for young people, which seems to be Kant's concern here. This would not only be an academic concern, but a moral concern. For if history should be progressing along a certain pathway according to fundamental human anthropology, principles of ethics, and sound political ideals, then one could study history with the intent of finding the guiding thread of such a process, and implementing relevant reform given education of whether or not human history is following that thread. The only concern here would be that this falls outside the study of history for history's sake. Insofar as Kant himself may have been concerned, this would not count as a criticism at all; universal history is not supposed to supplant empirical history, but is rather to complement it. However, provided the motivation to study the past would be to find out the guiding thread of universal history rather than to study the past *per se*, then the implication would be, at least, a form of attitudinal abandonment of empirical history on part of the student, as the student's interest turns to applied ethics and politics over the historical knowledge of the past. Finally, the honour and glory of the heads of state does not seem like a historical interest at all, either empirically or philosophically. Rather, this throw-away comment at the end was probably intended to be bone thrown in favour of Frederick the Great, Kant's sovereign, in light of the fact that this essay emphasised popular sovereignty and may justify revolution *ex post facto*. In fact, given what Kant has already said about the

social antagonism between individuals and nations, which was most certainly to do with the activities of these very heads of state and their servants, it is little wonder why such a philosophical history would honour and glorify such persons, rather than drown them in dishonour and ignominy! So, this does not seem persuasive.

In conclusion, I have provided a reading of the *Idea* essay, paying particular attention to issues of teleology, anthropology and cosmopolitanism with a view to defending a practical account of the essay that uniquely offers a view of the essay as providing a practical theory of human history. I began with a summary of the preface and the nine propositions and explained their logical relationship in brief. I then proceeded to look closely at the essay in three major steps. Firstly, I outlined the argument of the essay in order to highlight important themes of the essay. I then covered three of the most important themes of the essay, namely, universal history, social antagonism and the cosmopolitan constitution. Methodologically, I privileged intertextual sources of Kant which were written roughly contemporaneously with or prior to the *Idea* essay. Nevertheless, I did include some reference to works published later, on the assumption that they reiterate themes or involve material roughly contemporaneous with or prior to the *Idea* essay in time. Finally, I concluded with a brief philosophical evaluation of the reasons Kant gives for the philosophical study of history in the form he has presented it. The outcome is a somewhat plausible account of human history from a philosophical point of view that may be useful for providing additional layers of depth in explanation of human histories so as to garner interest in the discipline of history as such. The picture that emerges is that of a theoretical philosophy of history that has a moral and political application for the reader. This comprises Kantian philosophy of history as a universal history of teleology, anthropology and cosmopolitanism in 1784. The *Idea* essay represents an applied theory and it should be viewed as ultimately practical, while not ignoring the insights of the theoretical position. Viewing the beginnings Kantian philosophy

of history in the *Idea* essay as both theoretical and practical with a view to moralisation and human happiness also gives room to analyse later writings on Kantian philosophy of history along a similar line, thus commending Kantian philosophy of history as a teleological philosophy of human development over time.

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