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**Kant, Providence, and the 'Guarantee' of Progress**

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# **Kant, Providence, and the ‘Guarantee’ of Progress**

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Kant's conception of *providence* is often thought to occupy an anomalous position relative to his critical philosophy. Scholars have differed on whether it is consistent or inconsistent with his wider philosophical position. This article seeks to provide an explanation of Kant's desire to view human history in terms of *providence* – and argues this arises both as a result of his Enlightenment commitments and his previous commitment to *theodicy*. It also considers the question of whether Kant's postulation of providence is consistent with his wider critical philosophy.

This article investigates the place of *providence* within Kant's critical philosophy. Along with his three *Critiques*, Kant, during his critical period, wrote a number of essays on history. As we shall see, scholars have been divided on the status of these essays, not least Kant's appeal within them to an ideal of *providence* as a source of progress within human history. This paper seeks an explanation of this appeal in terms of Kant's Enlightenment commitments, and his earlier commitments to *theodicy*. Yet we shall see that the purpose Kant wished *providence* to fulfil, at the level of practical reason, could only be achieved if *providence* exceeded the limits Kant imposed on speculative and practical reason altogether. In this respect, we see that although Kant's desire to provide a "guarantee" of progress within human history arose within the context of his philosophical commitments, it could only be achieved, via the agency of *providence*, at the expense of the formal limits of his critical philosophy itself. We shall see how various attempts within the Kant literature to reconcile this conflict ultimately fail, with the result that a fundamental tension remains between Kant's desire and his philosophical limits.

## Kant, Enlightenment and Progress

Thomas Malthus begins *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, with the following proposition:

It has been said that the great question is now at issue, whether man shall henceforth start forwards with accelerated velocity towards illimitable, and hitherto unconceived improvement, or be condemned to a perpetual oscillation between happiness and misery, and after every effort remain still at an immeasurable distance from the wished-for goal (Malthus 1985: 67).

This “great question”, to which Malthus gave his notoriously pessimistic answer, was of course the issue that was central to the eighteenth century Enlightenment. For all of the Enlightenment’s voluminous appeals to reason, it was the progress that, it was believed, reason could make possible that was reason’s ultimate justification and the testimony to its worth. Kant, as we shall see, perceived his own age to be an “age of Enlightenment” and saw the authority of reason as residing in its indubitable veracity – a veracity arrived at by determining reason’s limits<sup>1</sup> - and it was this veracity which, Kant believed, entitled reason to occupy a legislative position in relation to the rest of human affairs:

Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit. Religion through its sanctity, and law-giving through its majesty, may seek to exempt themselves from it. But they then awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination.<sup>2</sup>

Malthus' question concerning the possibility of progress was at the center of Kant's own concerns. Some five years prior to Malthus's publication above, Kant grapples with this same question in the following terms:

It is a sight fit for a god to watch a virtuous man grappling with adversity and evil temptations and yet managing to hold out against them. But it is a sight quite unfit not so much for a god, but even for the most ordinary, though right-thinking man, to see the human race advancing over a period of time towards virtue, and then quickly relapsing the whole way back into vice and misery. It may perhaps be moving and instructive to watch such a drama for a while; but the curtain must eventually descend. For in the long run, it becomes a farce. And even if the actors do not tire of it – for they are fools – the spectator does, for any single act will be enough for him if he can reasonably conclude from it that the never-ending play will go on in the same way for ever. If it is only a play, the retribution at the end can make up for the unpleasant sensations the spectator has felt. But in my opinion at least, it cannot be reconciled with the morality of a wise creator and ruler of the world if countless vices, even with intermingled virtues, are in actual fact allowed to go on accumulating (Kant 2006a: 88).

In referring to “virtue” and “vice” in this passage, Kant makes clear that he is reflecting on whether moral progress is possible within the human race. Kant put the same question some five years later (indeed the same year as Malthus) once again showing how central this question was to his own concerns:

To start off swiftly along the way of goodness without persevering on it.....to construct in order to demolish; to take upon ourselves the hopeless task of rolling the stone of Sisyphus uphill, only to let it roll back down again.....This empty activity of backward and forward motion, with good and evil continually alternating, would mean that all the interplay of members of our species on earth ought merely to be regarded as a farce. And in the eyes of reason, this cannot give any higher value to mankind than to the other animal species, whose interaction takes place at less cost and without any conscious understanding (Kant 2006b: 179-80. See also Kant 2006e: 53).

What both of the passages above make clear is that Kant conceived of the possibility of progress as central to the dignity of the human race. Without this progress, such dignity, he believes, is not possible. It is this concern for human dignity which underwrites what we shall see is Kant's agonistic desire to show that such progress is not only possible within human history but (by eliminating all permanent reversals) inevitable.

Indeed, with the onset of the French Revolution, Kant believed he had found proof of a "moral disposition" in the human race (manifest in a disinterested "sympathy" for the Revolution) which, he claimed, was evidence that humanity was indeed embarked on a course of moral progress, and that this progress was, indeed, irreversible:

Even without the mind of a seer, I now maintain that I can predict from the aspects and signs of our times that the human race will.....henceforth progressively improve without any more total reversals. For a phenomenon of this kind which has taken place in human history *can never be forgotten*, since it has revealed in human nature an aptitude and power for improvement of a kind which no politician could have thought up by examining the course of events in the past.<sup>3</sup>

At a political level, with the French Revolution, Kant believed he had discovered empirical evidence of an irreversible progress within human history. At an intellectual level, with his idea of practical reason, and its inextricable association with human freedom (autonomy) and morality, Kant believed he had discovered the intellectual means by which such progress was potentially illimitable.<sup>4</sup> As Kant put it:

For what the highest degree may be at which mankind may have to come to a stand, and how great a gulf may still have to be left between the ideal and its realisation, are questions which no one can, or ought to, answer. For the issue depends on freedom; and it is in the power of freedom to pass beyond any and every specified limit.<sup>5</sup>

And yet despite the centrality of this question concerning progress to Kant's philosophical and historical thinking, a number of commentators have insisted it is in fact anomalous relative to Kant's philosophical position as a whole and cannot be integrated with it. As Emil L Fackenheim, has stated:

Many expositors treat Kant's philosophy of history; but few treat it seriously. Many treat it, for it is popular and attractive; few treat it seriously, for it seems unconnected, and indeed incompatible with the main body of his thought (Fackenheim 1956-57: 381).

As if to confirm this statement, the historian J.B. Bury has written:

Kant's considerations on historical development are an appendix to his philosophy; they are not a necessary part, wrought into the woof of his system (Bury 1955: 250).

The following discussion seeks to show that far from Kant's "considerations on historical development" being an "appendix" to his philosophy, such was Kant's desire to fulfil his Enlightenment ambitions, and provide a positive answer to the question popularized by Malthus (but which Kant himself had posed five years previously) that Kant was willing to transgress the basic parameters of this philosophy in order to provide a guarantee of progress within human history. Kant did so by his appeal to *providence*.

## Kant and Theodicy

Kant was profoundly imbued with the ethic of Enlightenment and was fully aware that his age was, in this respect, different to all preceding ones:

If it is now asked whether we at present live in an *enlightened* age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of *enlightenment*. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can even be put into a position) of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance. But we do have distinct indications that the way is now being cleared for them to work freely in this direction, and that the obstacles to universal enlightenment, to man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, are gradually becoming fewer (Kant 2006c: 58).

Here we see that, as with other Enlightenment thinkers, Kant identifies the Enlightenment with progress, and perceives both reason, and the freedom to use reason independently in matters of *public* concern, as the source of this progress:

For enlightenment of this kind, all that is needed is *freedom*. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all – freedom to make *public use* of one's reason in all matters (Kant 2006b: 55).<sup>6</sup>

Yet even before Kant's critical period, in which he ascribes to reason a legislative role in human affairs, Kant was still committed to the ideal of progress in human history, and sought a guarantee that such progress was both inevitable and irreversible. In his pre-critical period, Kant found this guarantee in the idea of *theodicy*. Alexander Pope defined *theodicy* as the "vindication of the ways of God to man" (Pope 1968: 504). It involved the belief that the development of human history could be presented as being

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in the best interests of humankind, because in accord with the purposes of God who had those interests at heart. It was Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz who, in his *Theodicy, Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* (1710) famously articulated the basic thesis of *theodicy* that “all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds”, so famously satirized by Voltaire in his *Candide*. Kant was fully aware of Leibniz’s formulation, stating:

Leibniz was right to call his system a theodicy, or a defence of God’s good cause. For, on the assumption that God may perhaps be the author of evil, the assurance that, as far as it is within his power, everything is good, and that at least it is not his fault if not everything turns out as perfectly as it ought, if it is to accord with what honest people would wish – that assurance is, indeed, nothing but a justification of God (Kant 1992a: 81).

Kant himself established his own commitment to *theodicy* in *An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism*, published in 1759:

Since God chose this world and this world alone of all the possible worlds of which He had cognition, He must for that very reason have regarded it as the best. And since God’s judgement never errs, it follows that this world is also in fact the best.....Measureless spaces and eternities will probably only disclose the wealth of the creation in all its extent to the eye of the Omniscient Being alone. I, however, from my viewpoint and armed with the insight which has been conferred upon my puny understanding, shall gaze around me as far as my eye can reach, ever more learning to understand that *the whole is the best, and everything is good for the sake of the whole* (Kant 1992b: 75-76).

## Kant, Morality and Dignity

It was Isaac Newton who ultimately disabused Kant of any such *theodical* faith. Far from perceiving all creation as serving human needs, Kant ultimately recognized that Newton's impersonal universe ("the starry heavens above me") "annihilates.....my importance", since it reveals each of us as "a mere speck in the universe" (Kant 1949a: V161-62). As Susan Meld Shell puts it:

Newtonian science had banished rank and preference from the natural order. A world of interchangeable matter, to which all laws are equally applicable, brooks no hierarchies. Knowledge of such a nature could well terrify men with visions of their dependence and insignificance (Shell 1980: 24).

It was precisely to compensate for this loss that Kant, in his critical period, emphasised the capacity of human beings (in the use of their practical reason) to impose moral law upon themselves, via the legislative capacity of their own wills, since this process, being within their own control and volition, "infinitely raises [their] worth as that of an intelligence by [their] personality, in which the moral law reveals a life independent of all animality and even of the whole world of sense" (Kant 1949a: V 162). This independence Kant understood in terms of autonomy, and it is this autonomy which enables individuals, via practical reason, to conceive of the world in moral terms (i.e. in terms of what *ought to be*) independently of any causal influence other than their own will to do so.<sup>7</sup> For Kant, such autonomy (and the moral law that arises from it) is a source of human worth and dignity, thereby compensating for the

loss imposed by Newton's universe. As Kant put it: "Autonomy is thus the basis of the dignity of both human nature and every rational nature".<sup>8</sup>

### **After Theodicy**

What is widely referred to as Kant's critical period, incorporating his three great *Critiques*, is defined by the *legislative* role of reason, both in relation to human experience and human morality (i.e. reason in its speculative, judgmental and practical uses).<sup>9</sup> Just as speculative reason defines the terms upon which individuals will experience and understand the phenomenal world around them (Kant 1968: Bxvi-Bxxvi), so practical reason enables individuals to become a moral law unto themselves (Kant 1949a: V 33-34; Kant 1949b: IV 400-01, 429-35, 440, 452-62). In each case, reason relies on no sources other than itself:

[F]reedom of thought.....signifies the subjection of reason to no laws other than those *which it imposes on itself*.... (Kant 2006d: 247. See also Kant 1968: Bxxx-xxxi; B 22-23).

Kant distinguishes this critical reliance on reason from his older *theodical* perspective when, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he warns us ".....against the fanaticism, and indeed the impiety, of abandoning the guidance of a morally legislative reason in the right conduct of our lives, in order to derive guidance directly from the idea of the Supreme Being." (Kant 1968: A819/B847). For Kant, it was reason, not God, that was meant to be legislative, and the purpose of the "critique of pure reason" was to establish the grounds whereby reason, on the basis of its own indubitable veracity, could assert this legislative authority (see Kant 1968: Bxxxvii, A711/B739,

A751/B779). John Rawls points to the extent to which Kant sought to establish this legislative authority of reason, independent of any theological assumptions, when he states: “Kant is the historical source of the idea that reason, both theoretical and practical, is self-originating and self-authenticating”.<sup>10</sup>

It was in providing limits to the use of reason that Kant believed he could provide assurances of its indubitable certainty and therefore of its legislative authority.<sup>11</sup> Kant saw what he called his “critique of pure reason” as “the true tribunal for all disputes of pure reason”, “determining and estimating the rights of reason in general”, “....in the face of which no pseudo-rational illusion will be able to stand, but will at once betray itself, no matter what claims it may advance for exceptional treatment” (Kant 1968: A711/B739; A751/B779). For Kant, the use of reason was “dogmatic” when it transgressed these limits and so made claims to knowledge outside the bounds of its own certainty. As he puts it:

Dogmatism is thus the dogmatic procedure of pure reason, *without previous criticism of its own powers*.<sup>12</sup>

It would appear, therefore, that Kant, in his critical period, left his older position on *theodicy* behind, since this required, as a basis of its material reality, a substantive belief in a God who was an independent agent, in active control of the universe, and who determines outcomes in accordance with human interests. It was precisely such a role for God, and the centrality of human interests that, we saw, Newton had banished, and in compensation for which Kant had emphasised the dignity of the

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individual will directed by moral law. Indeed, in his third *Critique*, Kant appeared to eschew any *theodical* conception of nature, denying that nature is designed to serve human interests:

[E]xternal nature is far from having made a particular favourite of man or from having preferred him to all other animals as the object of its beneficence. For we see that in its destructive operations – plague, famine, flood, cold, attacks from animals great and small, and all such things – it has as little spared him as any other animal.”<sup>13</sup>

And yet Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, does seek to articulate something akin to his former *theodicy*. This involves a viewpoint speculative reason adopts in its perspective on the phenomenal world, in which it views that world *as if* it had an intrinsic purpose and *as if* that purpose had been designed by a supreme creator. The significant difference is that, unlike his earlier *theodicy*, Kant does not present this as a statement of fact about the phenomenal world. Kant is not insisting that the phenomenal world really is, in its essence, directed by such divine purposes.<sup>14</sup> Any such statement would involve speculative reason transgressing its own limits and making “constitutive” claims concerning the essence of nature which are beyond the boundaries of its own knowledge.<sup>15</sup> It would therefore be an exercise in “dogmatism”.<sup>16</sup> Rather, Kant insists that such a stance of reason, in conceiving of the phenomenal world *as if* it had divine purposes, and therefore final teleological causes, is merely a “regulative” idea, whose purpose is to allow reason to conceive of nature as a “systematic unity” (Kant 1968: A686/B714-A695/B723, A700/B728). Reason

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therefore assumes “the systematic unity, order, and purposiveness of the arrangement of the world” as arising from a supreme being, but only as “....an idea which reason is constrained to form as the regulative principle of its investigation of nature” (Kant 1968: A697/B725). Indeed Kant makes clear how closely this conception resembles older *theodical* ideas, with his references to “mountains” and “seas” in the passage that follows, but insists at all times that such conclusions arise as a result of a “regulative”, not a “constitutive”, use of reason:

The *speculative* interest of reason makes it necessary to regard all order in the world as if it had originated in the purpose of a supreme reason. Such a principle opens out to our reason, as applied in the field of experience, altogether new views as to how the things of the world may be connected according to teleological laws, and so enables it to arrive at their greatest systematic unity. The assumption of a supreme intelligence, as the one and only cause of the universe, though in the idea alone, can therefore always benefit reason and can never injure it. Thus if, in studying the shape of the earth....of the mountains, seas, etc., we assume it to be the outcome of wise purposes on the part of an Author of the world, we are enabled to make in this way a number of discoveries.....[However] if this assumption be treated as constitutive it goes much further than observation has thus far been able to justify; and we must therefore conclude that it is nothing more than a regulative principle of reason, to aid us in securing the highest possible systematic unity, by means of the idea of the purposive causality of the supreme cause of the world – *as if* this being, as supreme intelligence, acting in accordance with a supremely wise purpose, were the cause of all things.<sup>17</sup>

Kant insists that “reason, in its speculative employment, can never.....transcend the field of possible experience” (Kant 1968: A702/B730). The “regulative use” of reason, and the conclusions it can arrive at, is therefore subordinated to these empirical concerns. As Kant puts it: “The idea of a systematic unity should be used

only as a regulative principle to guide us in seeking for such unity in the connection of things, according to universal laws of nature; and we ought, therefore, to believe that we have approximated to completeness in the employment of the principle only in proportion as we are in a position to verify such unity in empirical fashion....” (Kant 1968: A692/B720. See also Kant 1968: A691/B719). In this respect, this “regulative” employment of reason does not justify “constitutive” claims about the phenomenal world beyond what can be empirically verified.<sup>18</sup> If *theodicy* is once again to be discovered by this “regulative” use of reason, Kant insists it is to be discovered solely in the empirical processes of nature itself, and not (as in his earlier account of *theodicy*) in a prior assumption of a “hyperphysical God”.<sup>19</sup>

We see, therefore, that even in his critical period, Kant did not leave his earlier commitment to *theodicy* entirely behind. He was still concerned not simply to presuppose the existence of God in order to aid the regulative purposes of reason in conceiving of nature as a “systematic unity”, but also to “....proceed in accordance with the idea of an Author of the universe, but not in order to deduce therefrom the purposiveness for which it is ever on the watch, but in order to obtain knowledge of the existence of such an Author from this purposiveness. And by seeking this purposiveness in the essence of the things of nature, and so far as may be possible in the essence of things in general....[seek] to know the existence of this supreme being as absolutely necessary.”<sup>20</sup> Such a search for empirical confirmation of God, and His purposive role in the phenomenal world, would seem to move beyond the otherwise strictly “regulative” limits that Kant, elsewhere in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, placed on reason’s capacity to conceive of God, insisting that we can think of such a

“supreme being” “.....only as object in *idea* and not in reality, namely, only as being a substratum, to us unknown, of the systematic unity, order, and purposiveness of the arrangement of the world – an idea which reason is constrained to form as the regulative principle of its investigation of nature” (Kant 1968: A697/B725).

### **Legal versus Moral Progress**

Kant made a distinction between legal and moral progress. Legal progress resides in the outward manifestations of society, in particular the extent to which legal principles of *right* defined the laws and governed the relations between individuals within society.<sup>21</sup> So long as individuals, in their outward behaviour, conformed to such principles of right, then irrespective of their inner intentions, legal progress could be said to be occurring. Moral progress, on the other hand, refers to these inner intentions, and therefore to the state of individual conscience – in particular, the willingness of that conscience to abide by principles of moral law as ends in themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Kant considered both these forms of progress – the legal and the moral – to be interconnected. He recognized that legal progress at the societal level did not *necessarily* entail moral progress at an individual level – since outward obedience to laws did not inevitably reflect a moral commitment to those laws on the part of individuals.<sup>23</sup> However he also recognized that there was a possible reciprocal influence between these two forms of progress, where one potentially provided the

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conditions for the other. For instance, the prevalence of legal principles of right, and the movement towards “perpetual peace” that Kant believed accompanied this (see note 21 above) could provide civil conditions (absence of violence etc.) conducive to individuals orienting themselves towards moral law.<sup>24</sup> In turn, this potential increase in morality makes it more likely that legal principles of *right* will be obeyed for *moral*, as distinct from merely *legal* reasons, thus extending the influence of the rule of law and resulting in further *legal* progress (see Kant 2006a: 73-74). So while there is no *necessary* reciprocal relationship between *moral* and *legal* progress within Kant’s system, there is a *possible* one, given the right historical conditions, involving a process of mutual reinforcement where each assists in providing the conditions for the other.

### **The Impotent Will**

For Kant, moral progress was defined by individuals freely affirming moral law and then acting in ways to achieve it in practice, (see Kant 1949b: 412, 420, 421n, 425, 429, 440, 452). As Kant put it:

What is incumbent on us as a duty is rather to act in conformity with the idea of that [moral] end, even if there is not the slightest theoretical likelihood that it can be realized, as long as its impossibility cannot be demonstrated either.<sup>25</sup>

Yet in practice, Kant acknowledged, individuals will often fail to affirm moral law. In other words, there will be a disparity between their “rational will” (identified with

practical reason and therefore with moral law) and their actual will.<sup>26</sup> According to Kant, the only will that shall not, at some point, transgress moral law is a “holy will” – something that Kant says can never be achieved within a human lifetime (Kant 1949a: V 32-33, 121).

The problem for Kant, therefore, was that although moral progress was defined by individuals freely affirming moral law and then acting in ways to achieve it in practice, there was no guarantee that individuals, in practice, would act in this way. Despite the fact that “respect” for the moral law was, according to Kant, a source of motivation to act in accordance with moral law (Kant 1949a: V 75-80) individuals possessed the capacity to choose to act otherwise. Indeed, Kant’s conception of moral responsibility required this capacity to act otherwise, since only then would the affirmation of the moral law arise from a state of individual autonomy, free from all sensuous or external impulses (Kant 1968: A555/B583).

This was the first obstacle Kant confronted to any *guarantee* of moral progress – the recalcitrance of the human will in the face of moral law. The second was the impotence of that will itself. Even if an individual will affirmed moral law, and acted in ways consistent with this affirmation, there was no guarantee, within the phenomenal realm, that this would produce outcomes commensurate with the intentions of that will itself. This is because actions of cause and effect within the phenomenal realm often operate independently of the will once it has engaged in its actions. As Kant puts it:

[A]lthough reason does indeed have causality in respect of freedom in general, it does not have causality in respect of nature as a whole; and although moral principles of reason can indeed give rise to free actions, they cannot give rise to laws of nature (Kant 1968: A807/B835-A808/B836).

Kant insists that it is only over their intentions that individuals have any semblance of control, since these are a product of their choices (Kant 1949b: IV 425) – and even then, as Kant explains at note 23 above, this control is not complete or certain. Concerning the external (empirical) consequences of their choices, and the actions of others that follow from them, these too are outside their total control, occurring within the phenomenal world according to laws of cause and effect. Once again, therefore, although the reality of individuals affirming moral law provides the *possibility* of moral progress, it provides no *guarantee* that phenomenal outcomes commensurate with those choices will inevitably occur. The phenomenal realm, after all, with its independent causal processes, may remain intractable to the best moral intentions (see Kant 1968: A807-08/B835-36). It is little wonder, therefore, that Kant refers to “.....the universal and rational human will, so admirable in itself but so *impotent* in practice....” (Kant 2006f: 112. Emphasis added. See also Kant 2006a: 90, 91).

Indeed it is Kant’s recognition of the potential impotence of the individual will in the face of the phenomenal realm, and his belief that broad collective outcomes commensurate with our moral intentions are unlikely to be fulfilled in our lifetimes, that led to his postulation, on the basis of practical reason, of a set of assumptions concerning a posthumous world, in which moral intentions ultimately coincide with empirical outcomes, in the form of a “highest good”.<sup>27</sup> Such assumptions, as products of practical reason, are defined in terms of a moral perspective on the world, in terms

of what *ought to be*, and so are not ascribed to the actual phenomenal world itself.<sup>28</sup> As with “respect” for the moral law, Kant sees these as necessary postulates in order to provide sufficient motivation for individuals to act in accordance with moral law as an end in itself (Kant 2006a: 65n; Kant 1949a: V121-22; Kant 1968: A808/B836). As Kant put it, such ideals are “....a practical idea for bringing about that which is not actually real but which can become real through our conduct, and which is in accordance with this idea”<sup>29</sup>

Yet while providing for the *possibility* of progress, such practical postulates, once again, provide no guarantee that phenomenal outcomes commensurate with such moral intentions will actually be achieved in practice. Indeed, in postponing to a posthumous realm (“highest good”) any reconciliation between the world as it *is* and the world as it *ought to be*, Kant introduces a *quixotic* element into his conception of moral motivation, with individuals endlessly striving to create a world as it *ought to be* but where the final realization of this world is forever postponed to a posthumous existence. It is precisely this element of Kant’s moral philosophy which gives some credence to Friedrich Hegel’s claim that Kant’s moral philosophy is “.....an everlasting ‘ought to be’ which never is” (Hegel 1967: 289. Cf. *ibid*, 619-20, 633, 634-35. See also Hegel 1896: 463).

### Providence

It is precisely because Kant recognizes these limits of the human will – and therefore the incapacity of his practical perspective to provide a *guarantee* of progress within

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human history – that he appeals to an agency which, he insists, can provide precisely such a guarantee. This agency is “providence”. Kant introduces this agency into his philosophy during the critical period in order to provide those assurances concerning human progress which, we saw, were of such concern to the eighteenth century Enlightenment:

If we now ask what means there are of maintaining and indeed accelerating this constant progress towards a better state, we soon realise that the success of this immeasurably long undertaking will depend not so much upon what *we* do (e.g. the education we impart to younger generations) and upon what methods *we* use to further it; it will rather depend upon what human *nature* may do in and through us, to *compel* us to follow a course which we would not readily adopt by choice. We must look to nature alone, or rather to *providence* (since it requires the highest wisdom to fulfil this purpose), for a successful outcome which will first affect the whole and then the individual parts.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, Kant refers to forces working independently of the human will, within nature itself, which he ascribes to a divine source (“the highest wisdom”) and insists are oriented to achieving outcomes consistent with legal progress (in the hope that this may, ultimately, provide the conditions for moral progress).<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Kant goes so far in asserting *providence’s* independence from the human will as to claim that *providence* secures progressive outcomes precisely *because* human beings, as individuals, have inclinations which run in the contrary direction.<sup>32</sup> As Kant puts it, *providence* can secure progressive outcomes even among a “nation of devils” who, in their individual actions, work solidly against such outcomes (Kant 2006f: 112; Kant 2006a: 91). As Kant puts it:

The mechanical process of nature visibly exhibits the purposive plan of producing concord among men, even against their will and indeed by means of their very discord. This design, if we regard it as a compelling cause whose laws of operation are unknown to us, is called *fate*. But if we consider its purposive function within the world's development, whereby it appears as the underlying wisdom of a higher cause, showing the way towards the objective goal of the human race and predetermining the world's evolution, we call it *providence*.<sup>33</sup>

### **Providence and Reason**

The question that concerns us is whether this appeal to *providence* is in accord with the “regulative” use of reason, outlined in the *Critique of Pure Reason* above, where Kant referred to a similar idea, conceiving nature in terms of “teleological” (i.e. purposive) ends, and insisting these were directed by a supreme “Author” of the world.<sup>34</sup> For Kant, any shift from such a “regulative” ideal to “constitutive” claims that nature itself is intrinsically defined, in its very essence, by such processes, independent of any empirical evidence that this is so, we saw was a “dogmatic” use of reason, and therefore wholly unjustified.<sup>35</sup> Yet Kant admits in his essay *Perpetual Peace* that any such providence in nature is empirically unobservable, though supplied as an “idea” in order to galvanize the will in seeking such progress (Kant 2006f: 108-109). In other words, it appears that for Kant, *providence* is not only a “regulative” idea of speculative reason, allowing reason to view nature as a “systematic unity” (as in his account within the *Critique of Pure Reason*) but also, in its role in fortifying the human will and its belief in the possibility of progress, also a product of practical reason. To put it another way, it is what Kant refers to at note 29

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above as “....a practical idea for bringing about that which is not actually real but which can become real through our conduct, and which is in accordance with this idea.”<sup>36</sup> Kant refers to his *practical* commitment to fortifying the human will in its belief in the possibility of progress, and therefore its willingness to act in the interests of such progress, as follows:

I base my argument upon my inborn duty of influencing posterity in such a way that it will make constant progress (and I must thus assume that progress is possible), and that this duty may be rightfully handed down from one member of the series to the next. History may well give rise to endless doubts about my hopes, and if these doubts could be proved, they might persuade me to desist from an apparently futile task. But so long as they do not have the force of certainty, I cannot exchange my duty....for a rule of expediency which says that I ought not to attempt the impracticable....And however uncertain I may be and may remain as to whether we can hope for anything better for mankind, this uncertainty cannot detract from the maxim I have adopted, or from the necessity of assuming for practical purposes that human progress is possible.<sup>37</sup>

Kant explicitly identifies a role for *providence* in fortifying this human hope for progress when he states: “....it is not inappropriate to say of man’s moral hopes and desires that, since he is powerless to fulfil them himself, he may look to *providence* to create the circumstances in which they can be fulfilled” (Kant 2006a: 91. See also Kant 2006e: 52-53). But in order for *providence* to fulfil such a practical purpose (and therefore in order for such a statement to be meaningful) individuals must believe that *providence* has empirical effects within the phenomenal realm independent of the human will. Without such independent efficacy, how else could it possibly “create the circumstances” for “moral hopes and desires” to be fulfilled, independent of these hopes and desires themselves?

Yet we have seen that in Kant's account in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, what amounts to *providence* is merely a "regulative" idea of speculative reason (not an independent agency active in nature) designed to allow reason to conceive of the "systematic unity" of nature, in terms of ultimate teleological ends.<sup>38</sup> Any "constitutive" claims that such a process is an independent agency, acting through nature, and capable of having independent empirical effects, in the absence of any empirical confirmation that this is so, we have seen is perceived by Kant as a judgment well beyond these "regulative" boundaries of reason. To the extent, therefore, that Kant ascribes a *practical* role to *providence*, providing hopes for human progress, and galvanizing individual wills in that direction, he moves beyond this "regulative" function. This is because such a *practical* role requires individuals to believe that *providence* has independent empirical effects, separate from the human will, since only then is *providence* assumed to be capable of making up for the shortcomings of that will as a source of progress. In each instance, therefore, the *practical* role of *providence*, in providing hope and motivation for the human will, exceeds the "regulative" limits which speculative reason imposes upon it.

Similarly, regarding practical reason, we have seen that any postulates arising from our conception of the world as it *ought to be*, such as Kant's "highest good", are not intended to have an independent empirical reality, but instead possess solely a "practical" reality, premised upon our will to view the world in these normative terms.<sup>39</sup> Yet as discussed above, the *practical* role of *providence* is premised on its having an agency independent of the human will. In each case, therefore, neither



Kant's speculative or practical reason can conceive of *providence* in the terms required for it to fulfil the *practical* role that Kant ascribes to it. Indeed, Kant's conception of *providence* as an active independent agency, forcing individuals "to do what they do not willingly choose" (Kant 2006a: 92) with the result that "[w]hat men have neglected to do will ultimately happen of its own accord...." (Kant 2006a: 92) coincides very strongly with Kant's pre-critical conception of *theodicy*, in which God is an active agent in human history independent of human beings themselves.<sup>40</sup> Yet it is precisely such a pre-critical *theodicy* that Kant, at a number of points above, claimed to have left behind in his critical period.<sup>41</sup>

### Other Critics

Michel Despland argues that, ultimately, *providence* within Kant's philosophy can only be understood in theological terms, independent of the human will and dependent on the will of God alone (Despland 1973: 94-95). William James Booth, in contrast, claims that Kant's *providence* is essentially an *aesthetic* perspective, which we adopt in order to make human history appear "beautiful", by viewing it from a perspective which gratifies our philanthropic instincts and buoys our hope that human progress really is possible (Booth 1986: 112). R.G. Collingwood, however, seeks to provide an account of Kant's *providence* that makes no reference to God, or aesthetics, but instead sees it as an account of history which refers largely to statistical regularities when humanity is viewed in the aggregate and entails nothing of the agonistic motives in seeking a source of progress within human history that I have identified with Kant (Collingwood 1956: 95-98).

William Galston, on the other hand, has insisted that Kant's philosophy of history is much more than a "statistical regularity", and that in failing (in Galston's view) to explain how the progress of history would lead to the moral progress of the individual (the relation between legal and moral progress referred to above) (Galston 1975: 235-36, 236-37, 241, 242, 265-66, 269-70) Galston insists that Kant ultimately failed to reconcile ".....a natural world indifferent to human will and human will impotent to transform that world in accordance with its moral intention" (Galston 1975: 269). But for Galston, it is the fact that this dualism gives rise to Kant's ideal of a "highest good", as a posthumous goal of progress, which is the primary problem for Kant's mature philosophy. The heteronomy at the source of the highest good, in the form of human happiness as an end of moral activity, undermines (in Galston's view) the autonomy of Kant's morality itself, thereby vitiating it altogether (Galston 1975: 251-56).<sup>42</sup> This paper, on the other hand, has insisted that it is when Kant seeks to circumvent the human will, due to its relative impotence to achieve the "highest good", and postulates *providence* as a means of ensuring at least the legal progress necessary to this end, that the primary problems for his philosophy arise.

Yirmiahu Yovel has challenged this chronology. Far from insisting (as I do) that Kant, for the sake of his Enlightenment commitments, and as a result of the perceived impotence of the human will, sought an alternative (in the form of *providence*) to the ideal of a posthumous highest good and the moral capacity of individuals to generate progress, Yovel insists that it is *providence* (the "cunning of nature") that Kant first emphasises as the sole source of progress, but that a subsequent commitment, on

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Kant's part, to Enlightenment, and therefore the rational will as a free and autonomous agency, leads him to conceive of this will as a source of progress in its own right, dislodging *providence's* exclusive role in this regard (see Yovel 1980: 76-77, 143-44, 153-54, 175). However the chronology of Kant's works cannot bear the weight of Yovel's claim.<sup>43</sup> As early as the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant was fully aware of the Enlightenment and its potential to produce both an "age of criticism" and a "tribunal" of reason before which all human affairs would be subject to judgement.<sup>44</sup> Again, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he was fully aware of the progressive role of practical reason in human affairs (see Kant 1968: Bxxv, A547/B575-A548/B576). Further, in this same early work, Kant sings one of his most moving paeans to the unlimited potential of free human agency as a source of progress.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, in what Yovel perceives as Kant's late works, when Kant (according to Yovel) should have been relying on human agency as the primary source of progress, Kant makes some of his most unqualified appeals to *providence* to produce the progress of which he believes human agency (however imbued with Enlightenment principles) to be incapable.<sup>46</sup> Only in this way, I have argued, was Kant able to secure the guarantee of progress which he so ardently desired but which he believed human agency was unable to provide.<sup>47</sup>

Sharon Anderson-Gold has insisted that it is not the intractability of external nature which Kant believes most hinders moral progress in the world but rather our capacity for "moral evil", such as Kant outlines in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, and which, Anderson-Gold insists, Kant believes must be "transformed by concerted

moral action” in terms of collective moral progress (an “ethical commonwealth”) within human history (Anderson-Gold 2001: 23). As Anderson-Gold puts it: “Since moral evil cannot be overcome without the realization of the ethical commonwealth, overcoming evil is more than an act of individual renunciation. Moral development requires the simultaneous promotion of ethical forms of community.” (Anderson-Gold 2001: 7). In this respect, Anderson-Gold insists that “Kant’s ethics cannot be meaningfully separated from his philosophy of history” (Anderson-Gold 2001: 3).

Yet like Yovel, Anderson-Gold’s account founders on a mistaken chronology. She believes Kant perceives the human will, not *providence*, as the primary basis for the creation of the “ethical commonwealth”, and indeed endorses Yovel’s view, to which she adds that of Paul Guyer, that by the time of his mature philosophy, Kant had displaced providence as a source of progress in favour of the individual (practical) will guided by reason (Anderson-Gold 2001: 5). Guyer claimed, for instance, that by the time of *Perpetual Peace* (1795) Kant had “....revised the claim of ‘Idea for a Universal History’ concerning the causal role of natural mechanisms in making peace possible.” (Anderson-Gold 2001: 4).

It is questionable whether Kant is less insistent on providence as an independent source of human progress in *Perpetual Peace* than in *Idea for a Universal History*, Kant insisting in the former text that “Perpetual peace is *guaranteed* by no less an authority than the great artist *Nature* herself....” (Kant 2006f: 108). But the fact remains that three years after *Perpetual Peace*, in *The Contest of Faculties*, Kant again endorses providence as a source of progress, independent of the human will,

stating:

And in view of the frailty of human nature and the fortuitous circumstances which can intensify its effects, we can expect men's hopes of progress to be fulfilled only under the positive condition of a higher wisdom (which, if it is invisible to us, is known as providence); and in so far as *human beings* can themselves accomplish anything or anything can be expected of them, it can only be through their negative wisdom in furthering their own ends.<sup>48</sup>

### **Kant and the *Critique of Judgement***

Yirmiahu Yovel has insisted that Kant's advancement of *providence* in his historical essays leads him to commit a "dogmatic error", by "ascribing to nature....a hidden teleological plan", when the "synthetic logic" of speculative reason, by which nature is understood, "includes only the category of causality, excluding the category of purpose" (Yovel 1980: 154-55). In other words, Yovel insists that *providence* ascribes to nature a purpose, design and set of ultimate ends, when speculative reason "admits only of mechanistic principles in nature" (Yovel 1980: 155). This is a case of Kant making "constitutive" claims for *providence* which exceed the "regulative" limits of speculative reason – such as we have discussed above. This paper, however, has insisted that Kant's concept of *providence* serves the purposes of practical reason as well as speculative reason, insofar as it is supposed to act as a source of exhortation for the individual will, and as we have seen above, to the extent that this exhortation depends on *providence* being presumed to have an independent agency, it is just as much at odds with the framework and limits of practical reason as speculative reason.

Yet Yovel goes on to argue that any “dogmatic errors”, at the level of Kant’s speculative reason, are resolved by the time of the *Critique of Judgement*, where, he insists, Kant’s ideal of *providence* shifts to a merely “reflective” principle as a means of understanding nature:

[I]n the *Critique of Judgement*, the principle of the cunning of nature undergoes a radical change in its methodological status. It is now conceived only as a ‘reflective’ teleological judgement that carries no ontological commitment, and thus becomes compatible with the demands of critical reason.<sup>49</sup>

The idea of a *reflective* judgement in Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* refers to a judgement which is concerned purely with assisting our speculative reason in imposing an order, meaning and unity upon certain natural phenomena (particularly organisms) through the postulation of final or teleological ends as the “cause” of such phenomena.<sup>50</sup> Such “final causes”, in the form of teleological ends, are not intrinsically present within nature itself.<sup>51</sup> They are simply a heuristic device aiding our understanding of nature, because our speculative reason is unable to conceive of the origin and purpose of certain natural phenomena in any other way.<sup>52</sup> Therefore the validity of *reflective judgements* is based on Kant’s claim that “...by the constitution of our understanding and our reason we are unable to conceive the origin in the case of beings of this kind otherwise than in the light of final causes” (Kant 1957: par. 429).

So described, it seems that the “reflective” status of *providence* (understood as “teleology”) in the *Critique of Judgement* is little different from its “regulative” status

in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However what Yovel misses in his claim that, by the time of the *Critique of Judgement*, *providence* is “compatible with the demands of critical reason”, is that in the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant still subordinates *providence* to the concerns of practical reason. *Providence*, in this context, we have seen serves a practical purpose, in terms of what *ought to be*, which extends well beyond the “reflective” purpose to which Yovel refers. It therefore retains all the problems of its association with *practical* reason that we discussed in previous sections.

### **The Primacy of *Practical* Reason**

We have seen that Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement*, insists that reflective judgement conceives of nature as a “system” oriented to the realisation of ends. This leads to the idea of a *final end*, to which nature as a whole is subordinated as a system (see Kant 1957: pars. 378, 427, 434-35). Kant refers to this as a *final end of creation* (see Kant 1957: par. 426). For Kant, this final end of creation is “man”, because he alone is capable of setting ends for himself.<sup>53</sup> But this end does not refer to “man” as a natural phenomenon, because for Kant, a final end for nature as a whole cannot be derived from within nature itself, since it is an end to which nature is itself subordinated (see Kant 1957: pars. 378, 431, 435). Hence this final end of creation must be external to nature, and so must come from some element within “man” which is independent of nature (Kant 1957: par. 431). Kant argues that this *final end of creation* can only be a human being acting in accordance with moral laws, because this is the only end which exists entirely outside of nature, arising from the freedom of

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the human will alone (see Kant 1957: pars. 435-36. See also Kant 1957: pars. 443, 445, 448-49).

In this way, Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement*, subordinates reflective judgments concerning “nature”, and its orientation towards final ends, to practical concerns. Kant is explicit that this *final end of creation* cannot be posited by reflective judgement, but arises wholly from the legislative capacities of *practical reason*, which in the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant links with the faculty of desire (see Kant 1957: pars. 442-43). Any ends *within* nature (such as “culture”) which are perceived in terms of “reflective” judgment, have value and purpose solely in terms of how they aid the achievement of this *final end of creation*, and so are also subordinated to practical ends.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, we have clearly moved beyond any “reflective” conception of nature as a system of ends where such a conception is a mere “heuristic” device to aid our understanding.<sup>55</sup> With the *final end of creation* we are back within the practical realm of what *ought to be*. Kant’s claim in the *Critique of Judgement* that it is possible, via “reflective” judgment, to perceive of nature as a providential process giving rise to “culture” as a final end *within* nature, only has worth and meaning because such “culture” aids the purposes of practical reason centered on the *final end of creation*.<sup>56</sup> In such instances, reason is acting in more than simply a “reflective” capacity, as a heuristic device to aid the understanding, because the understanding is engaging in more than simply a process of conceptualization and synthesis of nature. It is seeking to fulfil practical purposes.

In this respect, I think Kant is mistaken to claim, in the *Critique of Judgement*, that

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reflective judgment, in such instances, can be conceived “without regard to the practical”, but at the same time can provide us with the “mediating concept” to make “the transition from the pure theoretical to the pure practical” (Kant 1957: par 196). After all, the conclusion of reflective judgment that “culture” is a final end *within* nature only arises because of the role of this end in making possible the final end of creation (“man” as “moral being”) outside of nature. The “reflective” judgment is therefore purposive, in a practical sense, from the start. In what way is it therefore conceivable “without regard to the practical”?

The other reason why I think Yovel is mistaken in his claim that Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement*, has successfully ensured that *providence* is consistent with the “demands of critical reason”, thereby avoiding the problems that we discussed in previous sections, concerns the dating of the *Critique of Judgement* itself. Kant published this work in 1790. Yet most of the historical writings, with their robust references to *providence*, were published after this date.<sup>57</sup> The *Critique of Judgement* was not, therefore, a denouement upon what were *previous* difficulties with Kant’s conception of *providence* (as presented in the historical writings), as Yovel suggests, but a prelude to those difficulties themselves. It is in these *later* writings, post-dating the *Critique of Judgement*, that we see the difficulties with Kant’s account of *providence* discussed earlier. Perhaps Yovel believes he can overcome these problems of chronology along the lines of his earlier suggestion, at note 47 above, that we can distinguish between a temporal and a conceptual chronology in Kant’s works, where even though a work appears *after* another within Kant’s corpus, it may exhibit a conceptual structure which *precedes* it. Such a claim is, of course, counter-intuitive

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and, applying Occam's Razor, the account in the present article is the more parsimonious one – that Kant, despite his commitment within the critical period to the legislative authority of reason, was willing (for the sake of his Enlightenment commitments) to embrace a model of *providence* which could provide the guarantees of progress within human history that reason, with its dependence on the human will, could not.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, we can see that Kant's desire to provide a guarantee of progress within human history, and his postulation of *providence* as a means to this end, was inherently at odds with his critical philosophy - in both its speculative and practical aspects. Indeed, *so much* is this the case that Kant's postulation of *providence*, as an active agent in history independent of the human will, and ultimately arising from a supreme being, appears to involve a regression to Kant's pre-critical affirmation of *theodicy*. Ultimately, the purpose that Kant attributed to *providence* at a practical level – underwriting the faith that the human will possessed concerning the possibility of progress – required of *providence* an efficacy independent of that will itself, achieving what that will might not. It is at this point that Kant's conception exceeded the limits of his critical philosophy, involving a “constitutive” judgment concerning processes of nature (at odds with the “regulative” uses of speculative reason) and the postulation of an agency independent of the human will (at odds with practical reason). We can see the extent to which *providence* was at odds with practical reason when we realize that *providence* could only fulfil its *practical* purpose of providing hope to the human will if its practical origins within

the human will were ignored, and an independent agency ascribed to it instead. All of this showed the extent to which Kant, in his agonistic desire to provide a positive answer to the Malthusian question, was willing to transgress the formal limits of his critical philosophy.

## Notes

1. See note 11 below.
2. Kant 1968: Axiia. See also Kant 1968: Axi-xii; A751/B779.
3. Kant 2006b: 184. On “sympathy” for the Revolution as evidence of a “moral disposition” in the human race, see Kant 2006b: 182.
4. On Kant’s conception of practical reason, see Kant 1968, Bx, B385-86, A800/B828; Kant 1949b, IV 427-30, 433, 435, 437-38. On the inextricable connection that Kant believes practical reason establishes between itself, autonomy and morality, see Kant 1949b: IV 412, 420, 446, 452; Kant 1949a: V 33-34, V 94
5. Kant 1968: B374
6. Of course, Kant has a quite distinct notion of what is a “public” use of one’s reason (involving “*a man of learning* addressing the entire *reading public*”), and he insists that enlightenment is consistent with restrictions on “private” uses of reason (which individuals exercise in their duties and positions in relation to the state) (Kant 2006c: 55). In this way, perhaps more than French Enlightenment thinkers, Kant seeks to reconcile the idea of enlightenment with the state’s concern with authority and obedience.
7. On Kant’s conception of practical reason, see note 4 above. On Kant’s claim that practical reason is

entirely oriented, in moral terms, to what *ought to be*, see Kant 1968, A534/B562, A547-48/B575-76, A800/B828, A808/B836; Kant 1949b, IV 411-12, 427-28, 452; Kant 1949a, V33-34.

8. Kant 1949b: IV 436. See also Kant 1949b: IV 435, 440; Kant 1949a: V 33.

9. Jürgen Habermas refers to this legislative role of reason, as follows: “[Kant] sets up practical reason, judgement, and theoretical cognition in isolation from each other, giving each a foundation unto itself, with the result that philosophy is cast in the role of the highest arbiter for all matters, including culture as a whole.....Thus Kant’s philosophy poses as the highest court of appeal vis-à-vis the sciences and culture as a whole” (Habermas 1990: 2-3).

10. Rawls 2005: 100. See also note 9 above.

11. Kant 1968: A xii-xiii; B vii; B295/A236; A709/B737.

12. Kant 1968: Bxxxv.

13. Kant 1957: sec. 83, pgh. 430.

14. Although at one point in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant appears to advance such a proposition when he states that “.....the belief in a wise and great *Author of the world* is generated solely by the glorious order, beauty, and providential care everywhere displayed in nature.” (Kant 1968: Bxxxiii).

15. On Kant’s claim that reason cannot know nature in its “essence”, but only in terms of how it appears to reason, see Kant 1968: B xvi-xx. On Kant’s conception of “constitutive” claims of reason, which he contrasts to “regulative” claims of reason, see Kant 1968: A180/B223; A509/B537; A647/B675; A685/B713; A693/B721-A694/B722.

16. See note 12 above.

17. Kant 1968: A686/B714-A688/B716. My addition. See also Kant 1968: A692/B720.

18. See Kant 1968: A700/B728, A702/B730

19. Kant 1968: A699-700/B727-28. See also Kant 1968: A693/B721-A694/B722.

20. Kant 1968: A694/B722. My addition.

21. Kant defines *public right* as those principles of law whose validity depends on their justice and not on their power of enforcement (Kant 2006a: 73-74). He argues that such principles lead inevitably to a *republican* constitution and ultimately, with the spread of *republicanism*, to the maintenance of *perpetual peace* in international politics between republican states (Kant 2006f: 99-102).

22. Kant 1949b: IV 400-01, 408-11, 429-35 . Kant's conception of morality required that the will fulfil the moral law as an end in itself, and so the intention of the will, in its orientation to moral law, was crucial to determining whether the action was "moral" or not. As Kant states: "...morality or moral worth, can be conceded only where the action occurs from duty, i.e., merely for the sake of the law." (Kant 1949a: V 81. See also Kant 1949b: IV 425). See also note 23 below.

23. See Kant 2006b: 187-88; Kant 2006e: 49. Indeed Kant points out that we can never be sure of another, or even our own motives, in engaging in moral actions, and therefore whether these motives are sufficiently disinterested to qualify our actions as "moral" (see Kant 1968: A552/B580a; Kant, 1991, sec. 447; Kant 2006a: 69).

24. See Kant 2006f: 113, 121n, 124; Kant 2006a: 88. Similarly, along with legal progress, Kant believed that increases in levels of culture and refinement were a necessary (if not sufficient) precondition for moral development in that they overcame the "tyrannical propensities" of our natural instincts and "...so prepare man for a sovereignty in which reason alone shall have sway." (Kant 1957: pars. 433-34).

25. Kant 1991: sec. 354. My addition. See also notes 36 and 37 below.
26. Kant 1949b: IV 452-55; Kant 1949a: V 72-76, 81-82, 151-54. See also Beck 1960: 202-03.
27. On the “highest good”, and the posthumous world in which it exists, see Kant 1949a: V4, 121-33, 144-46; Kant 1968: A808/B836-A819-B847. On Kant’s pessimism concerning moral progress in the phenomenal world, see Kant 1949a: V 121-22; Kant 1968: A811-15/B839-843.
28. Kant 1968: A807-808/B835-536, A811-15/B839-843.
29. Kant 1949b: IV 436n.
30. Kant 2006a: 90.
31. Indeed, at a number of points, Kant identifies God as a source of this “providence” – Kant 2006a: 88, 90; Kant 2006f: 108-09n; Kant 2006e: 45. Kant is careful not to refer to such providential outcomes as instances of “moral” progress (since they arise from processes independent of the human will) (Kant 2006f: 113). They must therefore be an instance of “legal” progress, providing the material circumstances for moral progress to occur (see Kant 2006a: 90-91; Kant 2006f: 112-13. See also note 24 above).
32. Hence Kant argues that it is the antagonism within society, the “unsocial sociability of men”, which provides the *means* for *providential* progress towards a more harmonious civil state (see Kant 2006e: 44-45).
33. Kant 2006f: 108. Cf. Kant 2006e: 52-53.
34. See note 17 above.
35. See notes 12, 15, 17, and 18 above.

36. Though of course like the rest of the postulates arising from Kant's *practical perspective*, providence is only *practically* possible so long as speculative reason cannot prove the contrary, and so long as such practical postulates are not contradictory from the perspective of speculative reason, with the result that speculative reason is capable of conceiving of such practical postulates as a logical possibility – see Kant 1968: Bxxv-Bxxx, A288-89/B345, A565/B593-A566/B594; Kant 1949b: IV 456-57.

37. Kant 2006a: 88-89.

38. See the section “After Theodicy” above.

39. See notes 28 and 29 above.

40. Such a view is inherently at odds with orthodox interpretations of Kant's conception of providence as purely a product of the way we perceive the world, rather than something intrinsic to that world itself – see Williams 1983: 18-22. Equally, Pauline Kleingeld repeats this orthodox view that Kant's claims to progress in history are purely “regulative”, concerned with how we view history rather than the internal processes of history itself, and that, for Kant, progress ultimately arises from individuals, in their “spontaneous acts of freedom” (Kleingeld 1999: 75).

41. See notes 13 and 19 above.

42. On Kant's concept of the “highest good”, see note 27 above.

43. On this chronology see note 57 below.

44. See the section “Kant, Enlightenment and Progress” above.

45. See note 5 above.

46. See Kant 2006c: 90; Kant , 2006a: 188-89. See also note 48 below.

47. Indeed, Yovel encounters such problems with fitting his thesis with the chronology of Kant's works that he is forced to counter-intuitive conclusions such as his claim that the *Idea for a Universal History* (1784) belongs ("conceptually") to Kant's pre-critical period even though it was written after the first major *Critique*, which appeared in 1781 - see Yovel 1980: 155.

48. Kant 2006b: 189.

49. Yovel 1980: 8.

50. On reflective judgments, see Kant 1957: pars. 385-86. See also Kant 1957: pars. 183, 184, 379. On the use of reflective judgement to impute teleological ends to organisms in nature, in order to assist our understanding of them, see Kant 1957: pars. 376, 377, 413, 425, 426.

51. Kant 1957: par. 429. My addition. Hence Kant is insistent that *reflective* judgements do not explain processes which are internal to nature itself, materially determining its outcomes (Kant 1957: pars. 185, 376, 388, 395, 408, 411). On the contrary, such explanation is the role of *determinant* judgements (Kant 1957: pars. 179, 360, 383, 386, 398).

52. On teleological ends of nature as a *heuristic* device aiding our understanding, see Kant 1957: par. 411. Concerning the status of these ends as simply what reason requires because it is unable to understand certain natural phenomena any other way, see Kant 1957: pars. 398, 399, 408, 409-10, 415 and 429.

53. As Kant puts it: "He is the ultimate end of creation here upon earth, because he is the one and only being upon it that is able to form a conception of ends, and from an aggregate of things purposively fashioned to construct by the aid of his reason a system of ends." (Kant 1957: par. 427).



54. On “culture”, see Kant 1957: pars 431, 433-34 (see also note 24 above). On it being a product of our “reflective” judgment, see Kant 1957: pars 180-81, 429. On “culture” only having value and purpose in terms of its capacity to aid the *final end of creation*, see Kant 1957: pars 431, 431-32, 433.

55. See the section “After Theodicy” above. See also note 52 above.

56. On Kant’s references to “culture” within the *Critique of Judgement*, see note 54 above.

57. Concerning Kant’s historical writings, *On the Common Saying: ‘This May be True in Theory but it Does not Apply in Practice’* was published in 1793; *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* was published in 1795; *The Contest of Faculties* was published in 1798. Of Kant’s writings on history discussed in this text, only the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* was published prior to the *Critique of Judgement*, appearing in 1784.

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