

KANT'S CONCEPT OF HISTORICAL PROGRESS

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Tis mine and it is likewise yours;  
But an if this will not do;  
Let it be mine, good friend!  
for I am the poorer of the two.

My sons Jeremy and Willy, who give me such joy.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an analysis of Kant's later works in an effort to elucidate the harmony and theoretical reciprocity governing the relationship between his political philosophy, his philosophy of history and philosophy of religion. In the first chapter, a study of Kant's political writings sets out the specific problem that his concept of historical progress is designed to overcome. Chapter Two is an exposition of the philosophy of history in general and an evolution of Kant's concept of progress insofar as it fulfills its assigned task. Chapter Three moves beyond the political and historical writings and enters into the domain of Kant's philosophy of religion. This section represents an attempt to determine whether or not Kant develops any further the arguments about progress originally found in the other works. Finally, it will be shown that although the concept of historical progress is also a prominent theme in Kant's philosophy of religion, his overall view of the relationship between history and morality has undergone some interesting modifications.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1956 Kant-Studien published an article by Emil Fackenheim entitled "Kant's Concept of History". In his essay Fackenheim initiates discussion with what amounts to an accusation against a number of Kantian scholars; somewhat cryptically he calls attention to the lack of significant recognition on their part of an important area of Kant's thought: "Many expositors treat Kant's philosophy of history, but few treat it seriously."<sup>1</sup> While Fackenheim's statement was undeniably true with regard to the situation in Kantian scholarship two decades ago, since then a growing number of scholars have focused attention on Kant's philosophy of history and given it very serious treatment.

In the past twenty years many publications on this subject have presented important contributions to the ongoing task of consolidating a unified and comprehensive interpretation of Kant's historico-political writings. A few scholars in particular provide intriguing arenas for discovery by opening up unique perspectives in which to approach Kant's thought on history. For instance, Pierre Hassner<sup>2</sup> sets out a compact but thorough study of the dialectical relationship between nature and freedom at the core of Kant's moral and political philosophy and his philosophy of history. Hassner's study presents

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<sup>1</sup>E. Fackenheim, "Kant's Concept of History", Kant-Studien, XLVIII (1956-57), 381-392, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup>P. Hassner, "Immanuel Kant".

basic theoretical questions concerning Kant's politics and philosophy of history, questions which derive originally from problems that lie entrenched in Kant's critical system as a whole. In addition to Hassner's article, two major books have been published recently dealing with Kant's philosophy of history. In Kant and the Problem of History<sup>3</sup> William Galston interprets Kant's thoughts on history within a framework shaped by questions concerning the philosophical foundations of modern liberalism: a central aim of Galston's "archaeological" enquiry is to show how currents of thought in Kant's writings on politics and history lie at the source of political ideologies (such as liberalism and Marxism) predominant today. The other major book, Michel Despland's Kant on History and Religion,<sup>4</sup> basically deals with the same texts that constitute the focus of Galston's study; however, Despland is concerned more with the religious and theological implications in Kant's philosophy of history.

This growing interest in Kant's historico-political thought, particularly in North America, has been promoted and encouraged by the continuing effort of a number of scholars to provide new and improved translations of Kant's writings on politics and history. The work of Lewis White Beck is especially worthy of mention in this regard; Beck has translated and compiled many of the essays on these subjects written

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<sup>3</sup>W. Galston, Kant and the Problem of History, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

<sup>4</sup>M. Despland, Kant On History and Religion, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1973. One other study should be mentioned as well: Carl Raschke, Moral Action, God and History In the Thought of Immanuel Kant, Dissertation Series No. 5, Montana: American of and



by Kant at various stages throughout his long career.<sup>5</sup> So, it is within this well-established and still growing tradition of serious discourse about Kant's philosophy of history that my own study takes root. Very generally, the aim of this thesis is to understand and investigate the implications of Kant's philosophy of history by focusing upon the theme of progress.

Before describing in greater detail the specific orientation and structure of my project, I want to begin with some introductory remarks concerning the context of Kant's thought on history. These remarks are designed to indicate the general thrust and intent of Kant's philosophy of history by outlining the context of his work from two perspectives. First, I will briefly situate Kant's idea of progress in historical perspective, in relation to the prevailing attitudes toward progress dominant in his own time. Following upon that discussion, I intend to sketch the context of Kant's philosophy of history from a perspective internal to his own system; in other words, I will try to situate Kant's idea of progress and his concept of history in relation to major issues and ideas of the critical philosophy. My aim in this second section is simply to clarify the connection between Kant's views on history and the claims he makes on behalf of science and morality. Before isolating that connection, though, let us first turn to consider the historical "climate of opinion" within which Kant's vision of progress took shape.

Kant's lifetime (1724-1804) spanned a major portion of the epoch

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<sup>5</sup>I. Kant, On History, ed. L. W. Beck, New York: Library of Liberal Arts Bobbs-Merrill and Co., 1963. Another more recent translation of Kant's political writings alone: Kant's Political Writings, ed. H. Reiss, trans. H. B.

commonly known as the 'Enlightenment'. If one were to select a single concept that would appropriately characterise the basic trend of Enlightenment thought, one could say that it was a time of 'humanisation'; it was a time when men relied almost exclusively upon the strength of their own reason in all aspects of life and put their faith in the idea of rational human progress involving a continuous improvement of life. Guided by the power and principles of human rationality, scientists undertook an overwhelming investigation of the world of nature and mapped it out as the 'Newtonian' physical universe. When investigation turned to the sphere of human affairs, it was precisely the unlimited power of scientific advancement that seemed also to guarantee an inevitable social and political progress of mankind. In a very broad sense, then, Enlightenment humanisation espoused a fundamental reciprocity and cosy harmony between scientific and moral-political progress. And, to a certain degree, Kant's own attitude cohered with these meliorist affirmations for he too had a sober confidence in the progress of mankind.

However, Kant was not only a 'child' of the Enlightenment in Germany but also one of its most vociferous critics. Kant shared Jean-Jacques Rousseau's deep-seated ambivalence toward the belief that intellectual and political progress were commensurate; in fact it was Kant who first articulated in its most systematic form, the revolt initiated by Rousseau against this type of meliorism and in so doing Kant brought the Enlightenment to a kind of self-conscious maturity. Kant held that a recognition of the discontinuity between intellectual and political progress made questionable a naive belief in automatic advancement, but he also felt that such a recognition does not involve

from worse to better. Actually, Kant's philosophy of history with its concomitant doctrine of progress, is designed as a critical defense of and argument for this very possibility.

Kant was well aware of the ambivalence and uncertainty associated with the attempt to find meaning or over-all purpose in history. But Kant undertook this task because it was imposed on him by the vicissitudes of his own system and because he sought to resist the nihilistic consequences resulting from a decline in the traditional belief in divine Providence, in the historical manifestation of a benevolent divine will concerned with and attending to human affairs. Kant sought to capture and, to an extent, preserve the spirit of that belief in his theories concerning morality, politics, law and their inter-relationship in human history. In the first chapter of this thesis we will see how Kant enlists the aid of moral, legal and political principles to lay the groundwork for his doctrine of progress. However, before describing any further the specific focus of the subsequent chapter, I think it would be appropriate at this juncture to explain briefly how Kant's enquiry into the domain of history unfolds from the critical philosophy as a whole.

As mentioned above, Kant's effort to articulate a philosophy of history was a self-imposed task; Kant turns toward history in response to the presence of a radical tension within his critical system and via this turn Kant attempts to reconcile the opposition between nature and freedom, between the interests of science and morality. In order to understand fully the important role Kant assigns to this turn toward history, it is necessary to see how the problem of the relationship between nature and freedom arises in Kant's philosophy and to do this we

Considered together, the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason set out the basic principles and concerns which ultimately prompt and animate Kant's turn to investigate human history. Already in the first Critique the central concerns are evident in Kant's outline of the three major questions that, for him, are crucial to philosophical inquiry: "1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?"<sup>6</sup> The first question concerns the possibility of establishing the certainty of theoretical or scientific knowledge; the second is concerned with the practical or moral interests of man and the third combines the thrust of the two previous questions in asking about the possibility of what is inextricably bound up with all human striving in this world; that is, the hope for happiness. These three questions cannot, with any integrity, be separated from one another in any comprehensive analysis of Kant's philosophy. They flow into each other; the former establishes the conditions for answering the next one and all three form an integrated system of thought that explores fully the basic dimensions of human activity, both theoretical and practical. In the following discussion we will outline Kant's answers to these questions in order to see how the development of Kant's thought led him in the direction of a philosophy of history.

The Critique of Pure Reason stands out in the history of philosophy as the monumental demonstration of Kant's claim that the validity of our conceptual knowledge is restricted in its application to what is given within the forms of space and time. According to Kant, human

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<sup>6</sup>I. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. N. Kemp Smith, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, p. 635.

experience is fundamentally law-governed. Kant's conception of the role of human reason within experience turns upon the argument that experience is possible only on the condition that the understanding participates in the knowing process by providing the constitutive rules that govern, and thereby give objective unity to, the phenomenal realm. In other words, an investigation of phenomenal nature is possible only because the sphere of nature has as its constitutive principle the law of causality. Natural science presupposes that nature is a complete causal nexus and Kant deduces the transcendental necessity and universality of this presupposition by locating it as one of the concepts that determine all possible objects of experience. So, one of the foundational tenets of Kant's system is that all aspects of the phenomenal realm, both human and non-human, are inextricably bound up within the mechanistic framework of cause and effect.

Of course this brief statement about the analysis in the Critique of Pure Reason cannot be regarded as a fully adequate summary of such a complex and difficult work. All that I want to provide here is an outline of Kant's answer to the first question about human knowledge: the transcendental ideality of space and time constitutes the formal epistemic barrier beyond which theoretical reason cannot determine its object. However, as evidenced in his discussion of the "Third Antinomy", Kant also admits the possibility of a causality other than that of mechanical causality. Kant acknowledges that human reason is driven to seek for the "unconditioned", the absolutely first beginning in the series of phenomenal events which "is not a beginning in time, but in causality."<sup>7</sup> In this regard, although the limits of its jurisdiction

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<sup>7</sup>Critique of Pure Reason, p. 414.

are confined to knowledge of phenomena, reason can still think and affirm the possibility of a spontaneous or free causality.

The second basic movement of Kant's thought, which unfolds as a response to the second major question referred to above, involves a deeper consideration of the essential features characterising this free causality. Basically, this second movement takes place in the Critique of Practical Reason,<sup>8</sup> for it is in this work that Kant attempts to give positive content and meaning to the concept of freedom. It is only when Kant turns to examine reason in its practical application within the sphere of human action that he proceeds to specify the sense in which the concept of freedom is not only possible but also fundamentally necessary.

In the practical realm, the unconditioned necessity which reason seeks is revealed to us, under the name of freedom, as reason's own causality. Freedom manifests itself in our consciousness of the unconditional claim of duty: It is man with his irrevocable sense of duty who is aware of himself as a causa noumenon, having the power to intervene by a free decision of his own in the causal chain of natural events and make an original beginning. Man, as a moral agent, is the locus of free causality; only within the context of moral willing can the human subject transcend the causal nexus of nature and exercise his power of self-legislation in accordance with the moral law. Kant asserts that the moral law is the "sole fact" of pure reason and it is only in

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<sup>8</sup> I. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. L. W. Beck, New York: Liberal Arts Press Bobbs-Merrill and Co., 1956. While this second movement is inaugurated in the Foundations, it is in the Critique of Practical Reason taken up again and consolidated.

terms of this that the concept of freedom is filled out as human autonomy. In other words, freedom and the moral law are reciprocally related; on the one hand freedom is understood as a presupposition for morality, as the "ratio essendi" of the moral law and on the other hand, only through acknowledgement of the moral law can freedom be known as a fact--the moral law is the "ratio cognoscendi" of freedom.<sup>9</sup> The discovery of this reciprocal relationship between freedom and the moral law as the nucleus of the good will, enables Kant to affirm the objective reality of the concept of freedom and furthermore, to delineate and justify the postulates of God and immortality as correlates in the supersensible realm to man's effort to realize his moral destiny.<sup>10</sup>

This brief exposition of the second Critique helps throw into relief the tension between nature and freedom, for the problem concerning their relationship comes into its clearest focus when we examine man as a willing, moral subject. Considered together, the Critique of Pure Reason and the Critique of Practical Reason portray man as having a kind of dual membership in what seem to be two distinct "worlds". As an acting and willing subject, man has access to the supersensible or "noumenal" world; in acting morally he engages in a self-legislated emancipation from natural causality. Alternatively, as a knowing subject, man cannot theoretically determine this supersensible domain even though

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<sup>9</sup>"Man judges, therefore, that he can do something because he knows that he ought, and he recognizes that he is free--a fact which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him." Critique of Practical Reason, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Though I do not intend to explore Kant's second Critique in depth, some major points arising from this text will be discussed later on in this

the accession granted by freedom entitles man to postulate the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as ideas of practical reason. It is only by invoking the phenomenal-noumenal bifurcation that Kant attempts to mediate between the radically distinct powers of human reason, because, according to Kant, it is this bifurcation which resolves the apparent self-contradiction at the heart of reason itself.

But what we are left with now is the systematic expression of a peculiar tension in human consciousness. Indeed, although Kant portrays nature and freedom as logically compatible concepts, the task of finding a real connection between the two stands urgently in need of further attention. Kant himself acknowledges this need clearly, in an introductory statement to his Critique of Judgement:

. Now even if an immeasurable gulf is fixed between the sensible realm of the concept of nature and the supersensible realm of the concept of freedom, so that no transition is possible from the first to the second (by means of the theoretical use of reason), just as if they were two different worlds of which the first could have no influence on the second, yet the second is meant to have an influence upon the first. The concept of freedom is meant to actualize in the world of sense the purpose proposed by its laws...<sup>11</sup>

The passage just quoted conveys the thrust of Kant's position very clearly; to reiterate: 'the concept of freedom is meant to actualize in the world of sense the purpose proposed by its laws.' Now, rather than enter into a detailed analysis of Kant's argument in the third Critique, it is enough simply to point out its general significance for our interests. Kant devotes a large portion of his third major critical

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<sup>11</sup>I. Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. J. H. Bernard, New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1972, p. 12.



work (Critique of Judgement) to an examination of precisely that tension which pervades the entire critical system. His explicit aim is to seek out and delineate the ground of the unity of freedom and nature. By investigating one of the fundamental activities of human cognition--the activity of judgement--Kant sets forth the idea of a reflective judgement which operates in relation to the principle of purposiveness. According to Kant's overall argument then, reflective judgements of purpose may legitimately be applied to the world of nature (as in the biological sciences, for example) and thus allow valid ascriptions of teleological causality to certain phenomena. Once Kant secured the epistemological groundwork for the employment of teleological judgement in the study of organic nature ("Absolutely no human reason... can hope to understand the production of even a blade of grass by mere mechanical causes". Critique of Judgement, p. 258.), he pursued its ramifications by applying the results of his analysis to the realm of human history.

In sections 82 and 83 of the Critique of Judgement Kant discusses the idea of man as the final purpose of nature and he claims that man is the only natural being "whose causality is teleological, i.e. is directed to purposes, and is at the same time so constituted that the law according to which they have to determine purposes for themselves is represented as unconditioned and independent of natural conditions, and yet is in itself necessary."<sup>12</sup> Kant's argument is actually based on two assumptions: first, that man is a being whose causality is

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<sup>12</sup>I. Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. by J. H. Bernard, p. 285.

teleological, i.e. that his actions are directed to some rational purpose, and secondly, that man is the final purpose of nature because the law which determines his rational activity is the unconditioned moral law. Kant's final argument, however, is the most crucial: if human history as a whole manifests purposiveness and the highest expression of man's purposeful activity is action determined in accordance with the unconditioned moral law, then history (as a sequence of phenomenal events) may have some connection with morality since both are expressions of human purposeful activity. In short, Kant argues that it must be possible to bridge the gap between history (the sequence of purposeful natural events) and morality (viewed as purposeful free action).

The point here is obvious: in the third Critique Kant tries to mediate the systematic tension between freedom and nature. And, it is this apparent disjunction that also constitutes the point of departure for Kant's philosophy of history.

Without compromising either theoretical or practical reason and without distorting either the phenomenal or noumenal realms, Kant tries to find an accord between nature and morality so that freedom can be seen to operate within nature and nature will not be viewed exclusively as recalcitrant to man's moral purposes. In attempting to work out this accord, Kant deals essentially with the third basic philosophical question referred to above--"What may I hope?" The question concerning hope derives from the recognition of the limitations of reason on the one hand and the acknowledgement of the obligation to realize moral purpose in the "world of sense on the other. To put it succinctly, the question "what may I hope?" expresses the deep

freedom and it admits a nagging doubt about reason's ability to penetrate the sensible order and shape the world of concrete human events, the historical world wherein nature and freedom intertwine, in accordance with the laws of freedom.

It is evident that the question of hope arises so forcefully in Kant's thought because of the seemingly irrevocable state of tension involved in his conception of the relation between man as a member of the sensible world and man as a participant in the noumenal realm. The legitimacy of the hope for overcoming, or at least mitigating this profound tension, Kant attempts to establish by bridging the gulf between the two polarities of his critical system in his writings on history. Before introducing those writings, however, it is necessary to note further that the problem of the tension between nature and freedom is transposed somewhat in the continuing development of Kant's thought.

Since the question of hope bears primarily upon the interests of man's moral or practical reason, Kant attempts to determine the limits and the content of what man can legitimately hope for, within the framework of a further examination of the nature of practical reason. Within this framework, two practical concepts come to represent or to stand for the theoretical concepts of nature and freedom; in other words, when it is addressed from the standpoint of practical reason, the tension between nature and freedom is expressed in terms of the discontinuity between happiness and virtue. Here, then, Kant's task becomes that of finding an accord between virtue--which represents the realisation of man's moral or noumenal personality--and happiness-- which comprises the . . . of . . . dec . . . by

empirical nature is concerned. In this context the question of hope asks about the relationship between virtue and this-worldly happiness; the question, "for what can I hope?", enquires into the possibility of reconciling virtue and happiness. Finally, in its widest scope, the question of hope asks about the possibility of harmonising morality and politics because, according to Kant, any possible reconciliation of virtue and happiness in this world hinges upon the continuity or the discontinuity between the moral and political progress of mankind.

At this point we are in a position to outline the basic stages of the analysis to be developed in the thesis. For the first stage involves clarifying the relationship between the fundamental principles in Kant's moral and political theories. The analysis will begin within this context because the continuity, or lack of continuity, between Kant's theories of morality and politics reflects fully the problems involved in the attempt to reconcile virtue and earthly happiness.

The first chapter of the thesis, then, will focus on Kant's understanding of the relationship between morality and politics.<sup>13</sup> Initially we will consider the extent to which moral and political concerns tend to coincide: Morality and politics are in a sense co-extensive for Kant insofar as both teach the ends of abolition of war

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<sup>13</sup>The textual basis for this discussion, a discussion which is not intended to be highly exegetical, can be found in a number of Kant's practical writings: The Critique of Practical Reason; "Perpetual Peace" (On History, ed. and trans. L. W. Beck, 1963); "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True In Theory, But It Does Not Apply In Practice'" (Kant's Political Writings, ed. H. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, 1971); and The Metaphysical Elements of Justice, Part I of the Metaphysics of Morals (trans. J. Ladd, New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1965).

and establishment of worldwide peace. However, the major portion of the analysis in Chapter One will deal with certain grave points of disparity between the concerns of morality and politics. As the analysis unfolds we will see that to a very real degree Kant's theories of morality and politics are incongruent and this incongruity is reflected in the fact that the tension between virtue and happiness remains with full intensity. Toward the end of Chapter One, we will gradually see how Kant's turn to history arises as a necessary complement to his political and moral theories. We will see how Kant's need to find the grounds to legitimise man's hope that his moral purposes might be realised (or at least reflected) in the world of sense, leads him to consult human history; Kant seeks in history for some evidence of harmony or co-operation between nature and freedom in order to validate the hope that man's moral and political interests (virtue and happiness) will become progressively conjoined in the future.

While the conclusion of the first chapter in the thesis sets the general "scene", so to speak, and outlines the basic motives for Kant's turn to investigate history, Chapter Two advances the analysis by focusing more intensively on the writings on history themselves. In the second chapter, then, we will move into the heart of the thesis and we will proceed by concentrating on central, selected texts so that a secure exegesis of Kant's basic arguments may be ensured. Among the many essays in which Kant thematizes aspects of his thought on history, those most germane to our study are the following: "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View", (1784); "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History", (1786); and "Perpetual Peace", (1795).<sup>14</sup>

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Chapter Two begins with a consideration of Kant's idea that history, which comprises the whole panorama of seemingly meaningless human events, can be interpreted as having a "telos" of its own independent of the causal matrix of nature and the sphere of individual freedom. To be more specific, Kant conceives of history or the historical process as sharing in and even guaranteeing the moral-political ends of civil justice and peace. In working out this conception of history, Kant attempts to dispel the apparent unpredictability and arbitrariness of the sequence of human events with an idea of historical progress characterised by both the purposiveness of morality and the necessity of natural determinism. In this regard history is understood to move above or beyond the sphere of individual free will, while at the same time bearing an immanent telos which somehow conforms to man's moral purposes. To recall Kant's crucial argument in the Critique of Judgement, we will remember that reflective judgements of purpose allow us to view history both as purposive and thus as rational (i.e. bearing an immanent intelligible telos) and as the sphere of collective human action (i.e. world historical-political events regarded as a product of the collective action of the human race as a whole). According to Kant, history must be seen as a progressive movement of events toward a moral goal in order to be given an intelligibility, meaning, or value. Thus, Kant envisions historical progress as aiming to secure the necessary conditions for the full actualisation of human reason and freedom.

It is in Chapter Two that the critical edge of our analysis will be increasingly sharpened, for in this section we will try to measure the extent to which Kant's conception of history succeeds in mitigating the

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If Kant's turn to history is to be successful, it must respect the established parameters of the critical system; his conception of history should work in such a way as to abrogate neither the theoretical claims of natural science nor the practical concerns of the morally free individual. As the study in the second chapter develops, however, we will encounter once again at the core of Kant's conception of history the ambiguities and problems which Kant's turn toward history was intended to overcome. In the conclusion to Chapter Two we will attempt to determine the extent to which Kant's views on history can be sustained without compromising the central principles of his moral philosophy. For instance, the following question arises regarding Kant's teaching that history has a "telos" of its own: if historical progress is a process wherein man is led, largely involuntarily, from a state of conflict and potential war to a condition of world-wide peace, how can the meaning of freedom of the will be sustained in the rigorous sense and with the full intensity in which it was originally presented in Kant's moral philosophy? This question and other related problems will occupy the focal point of discussion in the conclusion to Chapter Two.

But, in order to pursue these questions concerning Kant's conception of history, it is necessary to extend the frame of reference for our analysis: This extension is necessary for in his work, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone,<sup>15</sup> Kant presents significant arguments concerning the relationship between nature and freedom, virtue and happiness and their possible reconciliation in the progress of human history.

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<sup>15</sup>I. Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. T. M. Greene, H. New and

In Chapter Three of the thesis, then, we will examine Kant's Religion Within the Limits... in a search for insights that may help to clarify certain questions and problems that remain subsequent to the analysis of Kant's concept of history. Perhaps the best way to indicate briefly the basic issue under scrutiny in the third chapter, is to set forth the central question animating our study of Kant's text on religion: Bearing in mind the considerable strain and stress which Kant's conception of history places on his doctrine of morality, does Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone present a philosophical retreat on Kant's part from a fully developed philosophy of history, a retreat back into the atemporal and fundamentally ahistorical realm of individual morality?; or, alternatively, does this text advance new insights that may extend beyond the specific scope of the historical writings as such, but nevertheless do serve to tie together some of the diverging lines in Kant's thoughts on history?

As the analysis proceeds in Chapter Three, this preceding question increasingly comes to surface so that it will occupy the focal point of attention in the fourth, concluding chapter of the thesis. In the conclusion, the, we will draw together in a brief summary the major points presented throughout the three stages of our analysis of Kant's thought. On the basis of that summary, and in response to the question posed above, we will offer a few critical comments concerning Kant's idea of progress and his conception of history. These comments will be advanced explicitly in response to certain critical judgements put forth by other commentators on Kant's philosophy of history, specifically Carl Raschke and Despland.

However, before we are in a position to venture any general



any of these other spokesmen, we must travel a long critical path. The path opens out upon Kant's moral and political doctrines, so we will now turn to consider how Kant's conception of history arises as a kind of mediating way between diverging orientations in his moral and political theories.

## CHAPTER I

The primary aim of this chapter is to elucidate how Kant's theory of politics is interwoven with his doctrine of morality. Since this is basically a study intended to clarify the nature of the issues that led Kant to develop his philosophy of history, its general purpose is to serve as an introduction for the subsequent chapters. Consequently, I do not propose to undertake a detailed and comprehensive examination of the many facets of Kant's political theory; rather, I will approach the subject from a wider perspective that will enable me to illuminate an inherent tension in Kant's political thought, for it is this tension that prompted Kant to undertake a philosophy of history. Since Kant did not set out his whole political theory in any single text, the inquiry will be based on those writings in which Kant develops some central aspects of his political doctrine; texts such as: Theory and Practice, Part I of the Metaphysics of Morals and Perpetual Peace.<sup>1</sup> Because the essay entitled Perpetual Peace contains the clearest statement about the relation between politics and morality, this document will be the focal point of our analysis.

At one point in Perpetual Peace Kant cites the following passage

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<sup>1</sup>I. Kant, "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True In Theory, But It Does Not Apply In Practice'", Kant's Political Writings, ed. H. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1971 (shall hereafter be cited as "Theory and Practice"). Metaphysics of Morals Part I, Metaphysical Elements of Justice, trans. J. Ladd, New York: Library of Liberal Arts Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965. On History, ed. L. W. Beck, "Perpetual Peace", 1963.

from the Scriptures: "Be ye wise as serpents; ...and guileless as doves."<sup>2</sup> In an important sense this passage serves as an excellent illustration of the fundamental issue that animates Kant's political thought; the juxtaposition of serpents and doves captures the essence of a crucial paradox lying at the core of Kant's theory of politics. For Kant, politics--the art of being wise as serpents--must be conjoined with morality--the duty to be guileless as doves. Indeed, the intent and import of Kant's entire political philosophy is to a large extent vitiated if the above paradox is not taken seriously. Any penetrating study of Kant's thought on politics must finally deal with his affirmation that true politics is the application of morality. In the following discussion then, it is our concern to show how this formula actually characterizes the political horizons of Kant's thought. Later, we will turn to consider specific difficulties in Kant's attempt to complete the union of ethics and politics, difficulties that eventually orient the horizons of his political thinking into the direction of a philosophy of history.

It is necessary first of all to begin our inquiry into Kant's understanding of the convergence between morality and politics with a discussion of the factors that, according to Kant, differentiate these two spheres. As our analysis develops it will become evident that these differences assume greater importance as a source of seemingly irreconcilable tension.

Quite generally, the political sphere is circumscribed exclusively by the external aspect of human action. In this regard politics has no

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<sup>2</sup>"Perpetual Peace", On History, trans. L. W. Beck, p. 117. This passage was originally quoted from

direct bearing upon the inward dynamics of the will and is apparently indifferent to questions about human virtue and purity of the will.<sup>3</sup>

The primary concern of politics has to do with the question of human happiness; this is evident in Kant's conception of the basic end of political action--to secure universal and permanent peace as the highest juridical condition of man.<sup>4</sup> Another aspect of the disjunction between morality and politics is evident in Kant's distinction between two modes of practical reasoning. Pure practical (moral) reason determines the will in accordance with a categorical imperative and defines obligation as a strict and unconditional duty. Alternatively, technical practical reason, the kind of reasoning which might characterize political skill, is basically hypothetical.<sup>5</sup> Here action is considered only as means to an end because technical practical reason formulates criteria with reference to the material of maxims rather than to the universality and necessity of their form.

<sup>3</sup>The word "apparently" is appropriate here for we will show later on in the analysis that Kant seeks to ground his theory of law and principles of justice in the a priori concepts of pure practical reason.

<sup>4</sup>To anticipate later developments it is interesting to note at this point that in Kant's own effort to bring together politics and morality, peace can be understood as a political end that is at the same time a moral duty; in this context then, peace takes on added emphasis with respect to man's higher vocation as a moral subject. While the idea of peace assumes considerable moral significance, it still remains related to the natural human desire for happiness. So, while the moral good is defined in terms of absolute purity of the will, the political good remains an admixture of both moral and natural human interests. (See Hassner, p. 557.)

<sup>5</sup>This distinction is taken primarily from Kant's Introduction to the Critique of Judgement, trans. J. H. Bernard, 1972, p. 8.

So, taken by itself, political knowledge seems to rest on a "utilitarian" basis; the value of certain means is assessed by the extent to which they bring about a particular end. However, Kant regards such a "utilitarian" politics as no more than a doctrine of prudence, for it lacks the essential ingredient necessary to make it something other than simply a matter of prudential concerns and technical skill. Considered by itself, politics lacks the fundamental principle restricting freedom under law. According to Kant, a sound theory of politics requires a principle of constraint which can only be derived from morality and which will then transform political knowledge into what Kant describes as "political wisdom".

The problem here becomes that of finding the ground of a harmony between politics and morality which will give political prudence a lawful basis. And, Kant responds to this problem by isolating the a priori concept of 'right' and defining it precisely in terms of its function as a limiting condition of politics. Kant's explication of the way in which the concept of right functions with respect to politics is complex and merits deep scrutiny; basically though, his conclusion is quite straightforward. We find Kant's clearest statement on this matter in "Perpetual Peace" where he sums up the answer to his problem in the following manner:

If there is no freedom and no morality based on freedom...certainly politics...is the whole of practical wisdom, and the concept of right is an empty thought. But if we find it necessary to connect the latter with politics, and even to raise it to a limiting condition thereon, the possibility of their being conjoined must be conceded.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>"Perpetual Peace", p. 119.

The possibility of uniting morality and politics is therefore an extremely important issue for Kant and the question of the validity of politics turns upon the effort to root political principles in the a priori foundation of pure practical reason. Without such a foundation politics, which is not self-vindicating as is morality, can make only relative claims in relation to particular circumstances. For Kant, then, politics must be based on universal and necessary truths; it must become a "science of right".

As indicated in the above quote, Kant holds that true politics is linked directly to the content of morality and this affirmation unfolds from the premise, given by pure practical reason, that freedom is the essence of humanity. In fact, the foundation of Kant's theory of law, set out in the Metaphysical Elements of Justice, is expounded on the basis of the concept of freedom in the mutually external relationships among men. Scrutiny of that text shows that, for Kant, the fundamental rights of liberty and equality have their source and content in the radical freedom associated with all rational beings. It is appropriate now to focus for a moment on the substance of Kant's theory of law in order to illuminate more clearly the moral basis of his political teaching.

There is one important argument that I want to isolate with regard to Kant's legal theory, an argument that is part of Kant's analysis of the relation between the concepts of external freedom and public law. "External freedom or political liberty, which Kant defines as "independence from the constraint of another's will",<sup>7</sup> is the sole

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<sup>7</sup>Metaphysical Elements of Justice, trans. J. Ladd, 1965, p. 43.

innate right belonging to men by virtue of their humanity. It follows then that the legality of any civil constitution must be determined primarily by the extent to which it protects and preserves the right to freedom of all members of society. This means basically that each citizen has the right to act in accordance with the dictates of his own will, so long as he does not interfere with the will of others. In this regard, Kant's definition of right emphasises above all the inclusion of a corresponding obligation: "right is the restriction of each individual's freedom so that it harmonizes with the freedom of everyone else."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, public laws function as external mechanisms of constraint; they ensure that the obligation never to encroach upon the freedom of others is observed.

It may appear paradoxical to speak of a civil constitution as a relationship among free men who are at the same time subject to coercive laws, especially since Kant's original presentation of freedom emphasises the non-coercive character of the freedom associated with a good will; nevertheless, Kant does not consider legal or external coercion as an abrogation of liberty. Rather (and here we should acknowledge Kant's debt to Rousseau),<sup>9</sup> the possibility of civil liberty actually depends upon the external constraint of law. Lawless freedom simply means anarchy, and in the anarchic state men are not free;

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<sup>8</sup>"Theory and Practice", p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>For Kant the political question about the general will is a de jure question, i.e. that the consent of all citizens is capable in principle of being given. For Rousseau, on the other hand, it is a de facto question--i.e. every citizen actually votes in the legislative body.

they are in fact perpetually vulnerable to another's arbitrary will. Legal coercion is requisite to political liberty precisely because it is designed to represent the general will of all members of a civil society. Public law represents that to which every citizen in principle gives his consent; it determines the only legitimate context in which men can retain their freedom both as legislators and as subjects in external union with others.

Accordingly, integral to Kant's conception of justice--"the aggregate of conditions under which the will of one person can be conjoined with the will of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom,"<sup>10</sup>--is the principle of lawful authorization to use coercion. The purpose of law is to enforce at least the outward appearance of respect for the rights of man and, in Kant's view, this respect for rights--the cornerstone of justice--supplies the conduits between the political and the ethical spheres. While Kant does derive the substance of his political doctrine, the rights of man, from the concept of freedom, the formal principle of justice also leads ineluctably to the idea that men are to be acknowledged and treated as ends-in-themselves. The principle of justice takes into consideration only the form of the relation between the wills of free beings and enjoins action exclusively in accordance with a universalisable law.<sup>11</sup> Here, particularly with respect to the concept of justice, we can now see the contours of the

<sup>10</sup>Metaphysical Elements of Justice, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Kant's law of justice is stated in the following manner: "Act externally in such a way that the free use of your will is compatible with the freedom of everyone according to a universal law." Metaphysical Elements of Justice, p. 35.



relationship between morality and politics. Indeed, as far as the external sphere of human interaction is concerned, there are grounds for arguing that Kant ultimately reduces morality to justice.

William Galston advances such an argument by referring to the Metaphysical Elements of Justice, where it is clear that Kant gives distinct priority to what he terms 'legal duties' over 'duties of virtue'. The reason for this is that legality, and not virtue, dictates the strict or 'perfect' duties circumscribing external relations among men. Duties of virtue define only 'imperfect' or general duties men have toward one another. Galston suggests further that the thrust of Kant's legal-political theory points in two complementary directions: on the one hand Kant grounds politics and law on a moral conception of man; but on the other hand this very conception, developed further in the political and legal writings, appears to culminate in a "politization of man".<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly the lines of Kant's moral formalism do come

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<sup>12</sup>W. Galston, Kant and the Problem of History, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 177. Pierre Hassner argues this point in a vein similar to Galston. Hassner's reading of Kant's moral-political writings issues in the claim that not only is Kant's politics moral, but his morality is essentially political. Hassner points out that the concept of right, for example, like the concept of autonomy upon which it is based, reveals the distinct social or political vector of morality. Hassner argues that Kant's analysis of the a priori basis of the just civil society, i.e. respect for the rights of liberty and equality, is the political expression of the primacy of practical reason. But this means, for Hassner, that only the good or fully rational will is to be respected. Hence, all men need not be treated equally. So Hassner suggests that Kant does not insist men should be treated equally because they are in fact equal, but rather, because it is a duty to treat them equally. Respect for rights is therefore grounded directly on the second formulation of the categorical imperative. From this Hassner concludes: "If Kant derives his political doctrine of the 'rights of man from morality, it is because Kant is led to define morality as respect for rights of man." "Immanuel Kant", History of Political Philosophy, ed. Strauss and Cropsey, 1972, pp.

extremely close to defining the political horizon in terms of the concept of universalisability and the ideas of autonomy, man as an end-in-himself and an ethical community of rational beings. While there is a differentiation between politics and morality, it is clear in Kant's developing thought that the two spheres are to a great extent interwoven and interdependent.

In corroboration of this, it is evident that the third formulation of the categorical imperative distinctly reveals the political spirit of Kant's morality. The third formulation--the duty "to will in such a way that the law of one's making harmonizes with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature"<sup>13</sup>--clearly expands the concept of duty into the cohesive factor of social order or community. On the basis of this, what above all compelled Kant to reflect on the kind of problems found in "Perpetual Peace" is the need to show how a possible moral community of rational beings can be realized in an empirical or historical political order. In other words, Kant wants to show how the duty to realize a kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature comes within the purview of human political and social action.

Now, it is true that the idea of an ethical community and the idea of a political community are different, since the former refers to a universal moral union of rational beings, and the latter refers to a particular external order; it should be borne in mind, however, that both have a distinct political structure because each is based on the inviolable principles of justice--i.e. on the principles governing

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<sup>13</sup>I. Kant, Foundations of a Metaphysics of Morals, trans. L. W. Beck, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959, p. 104.

the relation among its members. And, as we shall see later, Kant's idea of the final goal of justice is the establishment of a world-wide 'republic', a republic whose conception reflects Kant's original idea of an ethical commonwealth of rational beings.

But in anticipation of what is to follow, Kant holds that the condition of the possibility of establishing such a political community is the complete harmony between politics and morality. The true political order must have a moral content, for in its highest form, it is a state of unconditioned respect for rights. Kant envisages the moral-political community as a society in which its citizens have a kind of internalized spontaneous respect for rights. In this community no external legal constraint is required, for, ideally, all external behaviour would automatically conform to the (moral) law. In this way the union between politics and morality leaves morality itself uncompromised because external law and interior morality converge on respect for rights.

On the basis of the preceding discussion we can now turn to consider Kant's account of the type of political order best suited to the demands of morality. In the following discussion our emphasis will fall on the more specific political prescriptions that derive from the basis of Kant's theory, and the inquiry will lead finally to an examination of the tension inherent in Kant's moral-political thought.

In "Theory and Practice" and particularly in "Perpetual Peace", Kant presents two major proposals deriving from his political teaching: national republicanism and a world-wide federative alliance of states. Republicanism and cosmopolitanism express the political prescriptions of Kant's morality. Taken to . . . they . . . the

for realizing true justice on earth, the condition necessary for universal and permanent world peace. For Kant, permanent peace constitutes the highest political good; it is the end of all moral-political maxims because the state of war, or even the unceasing threat of war, is anathema to moral-practical reason.<sup>14</sup> Hence, it is man's duty to move from the state of nature, which Kant perceives as a condition of war of all against all, toward a state of civil society.<sup>15</sup> More specifically, it is a duty to advance the cause of peace by establishing a civil constitution having laws that are founded on the rights of man. Kant definitively rejects any constitutional form other than the republican one because he believes only republicanism can institute juridical freedom. That is, only the truly republican constitution abides by the principle that "it is the privilege to lend obedience to no external law except those to which I could have given consent."<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, the formal criterion of legitimate public law is

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<sup>14</sup> "Moral-practical reason within us voices its irresistible veto: there shall be no war..." Metaphysical Elements of Justice, p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> It is important for Kant to make the idea of man's movement toward civil society into a duty because only that way can the idea of civil society (which is related to a possible ethical community as its necessary condition) be endowed with meaning or value. Kant's willingness to accept nature's role in this movement in no way deters him from holding the belief that natural mechanisms (even if they serve beneficial political goals) have in themselves no meaning or intelligibility. Only when the movement from war to peace is seen as a duty is it endowed with the kind of value that is based solely on its connection with man's moral purposes.

<sup>16</sup> Another hallmark of republicanism which is significant to Kant is the idea of separation of powers--i.e. that the executive and legislative powers of government are independent. "Perpetual Peace", On History, p. 99.

its coherence with the rule of universalisability; all public laws must in principle represent the general will of all members of the state. In order to ensure the establishment of juridical freedom, Kant, highlights the concept of publicity which he sees as the criterion for evaluating the legitimacy of laws handed down by a governing body. The criterion of publicity or 'publishability' is so important in this context because Kant holds that corrupt and unjust laws breed upon secrecy; laws determined secretly are inherently self-contradictory and inevitably defeat their own purpose.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, public right in principle absolutely requires publicity so that unjust laws, when exposed, will quickly be recognized as such. On the level of civil politics then, the idea of republicanism represents the practical application of Kant's principles of morality and justice, and in that sense, the republican constitution is the highest political embodiment of Kantian liberalism.

But beyond the national level, Kant places an even greater emphasis on the area of international relations. The concept of right, known a priori, is universal in scope. It must therefore be applicable

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<sup>17</sup> The weaknesses of the idea of "publicity" as a criterion of legality are obvious to Kant himself (as we shall see later when he is compelled to invoke still additional guarantees of legal justice). The issue for him at the moment, however, is not how, de facto, unjust laws can be prevented. Rather, the issue involves another question: what are the necessary conditions for any possible just law. For Kant these conditions are simply: (a) that each law be formulated in such a way that every citizen must in principle be capable of consenting to it and (b) that all laws can in principle be made public as a checking measure. No doubt publicity alone is not a sufficient guarantee of just laws, especially in a democracy where the vote of the majority rules the day. But Kant was critical of the democratic constitution for precisely that reason.

in all areas of external relations among human beings. So, regardless of particular differences between individual states, the question of justice inevitably issues in questions of cosmopolitan right and international law. Kant addresses these questions directly in "Perpetual Peace" where he sets out his idea of a world-wide federative alliance of states. There, Kant maintains that the problem of civil as well as international justice turns upon the possibility of establishing universal peace, and this, Kant says can only happen through a world-union of states in a "free and enduring association".<sup>18</sup>

A central feature of Kant's thought about international politics is best highlighted in relation to his conception of the lawful civil constitution. In terms of this parallel relation we can see that Kant applies the criterion of civil legality--the concept of publicity--with equal rigour to the sphere of international law. Accordingly, if the laws of one state governing its international relations cannot be published openly, then the whole purpose of attempting to establish a state of peace is vitiating. For example, if one nation harbours a secret desire to wage war against another, while at the same time capitalizing on the benefits accrued during a state of peace, then the concept of international right no longer holds and the treaty of peace should be abandoned. One nation cannot therefore enter into an alliance with others unless all agree to limit their freedom by means of law. Kant believes that any lawful federation of states, just as any lawful civil society, must be grounded on the rights of freedom and equality among its members, regardless of whether or not a particular nation happens to be more powerful than its neighbour.

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<sup>18</sup>"Perpetual Peace", p. 131.

At this stage it is appropriate to pause for a moment and briefly recapitulate the movement of the preceding analysis in order to see how Kant's effort to vindicate politics and to elevate political concerns above the level of mere pragmatism actually develops in two complementary directions. First, Kant outlines the general basis for the harmony of politics and morality in terms of the transcendental concept of public right, which is derived from pure practical reason and provides the foundation of legality by prescribing constraint of action under law. Secondly, and this is a modification only presented explicitly in "Perpetual Peace", Kant further appeals to the criterion of publicity, similarly found a priori in practical reason, as the basis for evaluating all legal claims. Defined as "the publication of the maxim of intention",<sup>19</sup> publishability is, according to Kant, an easily applied criterion of civil and international law. It ensures, for example, that no intention to rebel or revolt is possible because if published the maxim to rebel, as we saw earlier, is intrinsically self-defeating. Mirroring universalisability in form, publishability stands as the norm for the morality of maxims and thus of actions. Hence, the concept of right and its concomitant principle of publicity together provide the necessary condition of the convergence between morality and politics. By the same token, they provide the necessary condition for the existence of public right and a law of nations.

To pick up our analysis again, I want to focus on the fact that throughout "Perpetual Peace" Kant repeatedly affirms that any conflict between morality and politics is in principle easily resolved.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

In all cases of possible conflict, morality must be given strict priority over politics, for "true politics can never take a step without rendering homage to morality".<sup>20</sup> Kant also rejects all empirical objections to the possibility of establishing universal justice in his assertion that "all politics must bend its knee before the right."<sup>21</sup> Empirical or historical counter-arguments have no real bearing on the issue at hand for pure practical reason tells us that the conjunction of morality and politics ought to be achieved and this conjunction gives political prudence a lawful basis.

There is, however, still an obvious problem associated with Kant's concept of publicity. Kant proposes this concept so that it may serve as a criterion concerning the morality of political action; that is, it provides the measure of lawful political intentions, whether on the national or on the international scale. But Kant also recognizes that publishability alone, though it may be the necessary condition of the agreement between morality and politics, is not the sufficient condition of that agreement. That this is the case is illustrated by the following examples. Those states, for instance, which have the power to conquer their neighbours and subject them to despotic rule are generally in a position to publish openly their aggressive intentions without fearing the consequences. Alternatively, if only one nation seeks to follow consistently the political precepts conforming to morality, while all others strive to increase their power, the moral

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 128.



nation cannot by itself survive. Bearing this in mind we can understand why Kant concludes that "the condition of the possibility of international law...is this: a juridical condition must first exist."<sup>22</sup> In other words, before international law as well as public right can be established, justice must already dominate the political and social order. Therefore, the general condition for the coincidence of morals and politics is a universal rule of law among men and an agreement among nations to eliminate war. Once again, pure practical reason confirms the necessity of a federative alliance of states if these conditions are to be achieved and if the legitimacy of politics is to be vindicated.

On one level then, the effort to bring together morality and politics seems to hold few problems for Kant: "Though politics by itself is a difficult art, its union with morality is no art at all, for this union cuts the knot which politics could not untie when they were in conflict."<sup>23</sup> To achieve this union is, in effect, according to Kant, to resolve any potential conflict between politics, regarded as a practical doctrine of right, and morality, regarded as a theoretical doctrine of right. Practical reason, on both counts, dictates the necessity of peace through a federative alliance of nations. Peace is therefore not only an end or good naturally desired by man (assuming that men on the whole want to eliminate the personal threats engendered by strife and discord) but it is also, from the moral-political standpoint, a 'supreme' good. In other words, peace is an end which is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

at the same time a duty. Morality, in all its rigour, demands that man work to achieve a universal pacific state. Moreover, as Kant frequently insists, it would be contradictory or demeaning to recognize the authority of duty and yet protest that we are incapable of doing it.

So far then, we have examined Kant's attempt to demonstrate the a priori foundation of politics. By itself, it is a rather intriguing development in Kant's thought to find him saying that a specific political doctrine based on republicanism and world-wide peace can be known a priori to be just. But this is precisely a central motive of his endeavour to unite morality and politics. By showing that the just regime necessarily conforms to the rights of man, and furthermore, by showing that peace is a duty because practical reason absolutely forbids war, Kant theoretically unites morality and politics.

Still left unresolved though, is the issue concerning what general conditions are required for the existence of public right and international law. And, in responding to that issue Kant is presented with some peculiar difficulties resulting, in the long run, from the characteristic two-sidedness of his thought. Let us now proceed to isolate and discuss these crucial difficulties.

First, in Kant's account of true republicanism the emphasis is clearly placed on the moral content of the republic since it is described as the condition of that respect for rights which forms the basis of freedom and human dignity. In this regard, appeal must be made to the working of a good will in order to bring into being the truly civil society. And, indeed, Kant says in "Perpetual Peace" that "the idea of a truly republican government can alone appeal to

the mind of a moral politician."<sup>24</sup> Only a moral politician, whose maxims for political action are shaped by moral-practical reason, conceives of peace not only as an end but also as a duty. The problem of founding civil and international law is for the moral politician not merely a technical but a truly moral task. At the same time, though, Kant maintains that the establishment of civil society in general "can be solved by a race of devils, if only they are intelligent."<sup>25</sup> From this it is apparent that a republican state does not presuppose the moral improvement of its citizens and, evidently, the very founding of civil society in general depends on nothing more than technical skill in using the "mechanisms of nature" for ruling men. In this context, it would seem that the end of civil peace would still be achieved without regard as to whether it is conceived as an ethical or technical problem. According to Kant, men naturally desire to check each other's selfish inclinations and for that reason alone they will tend to subject themselves to law. While a compact drawn up by the most evil of creatures may not conform to the principles of true republicanism, even a regime of devils must use laws, and Kant holds that any civil society structured by laws tends toward justice in a way that anarchy in principle cannot.

On the surface, Kant's position here appears rather difficult to reconcile with his argument about the necessity to unite morality and politics. Yet this position is held to in Kant's further remarks about revolution, which he regards as one of the great obstacles to the possibility of conjoining morality and politics. Because revolution

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

utterly vitiates the bonds of any civil constitution and in essence opposes the whole concept of legality and the rights of man, it poses one of the two major threats to man's moral development. We noted above Kant's ardent censure of revolution in his theory of law where he connects the authorization to use coercion with the concept of justice. This censure derives from the fact that the civil compact has its juridical legislation framed as "laws of compulsion"<sup>26</sup> which serve as external and coercive mechanisms of restraint. In terms of legality alone, then, it makes no difference whether civil society is composed of a race of angels or a race of devils.<sup>27</sup> But legality at least tends toward justice in a way that anarchy cannot and that is why Kant so vehemently condemns civil revolution; he condemns it because it undermines the basis of public law, destroys the possibility of further development toward justice and ultimately because it undermines the possibility of finally uniting morality with politics. In short, he condemns revolution because at root it is immoral.

But here another question arises: if revolution is expressly forbidden, how then does Kant envision the actual establishment of the conditions required for the full realization of justice through republicanism and world-peace? He has already acknowledged the fact that these conditions do not lie with the founding of civil society in general. We have just examined his argument that the organization and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>27</sup> Even the universal principle of justice itself, although it enjoins no actions which are not universalizable and hence moral, necessarily refrains from making any sort of moral intention obligatory.

maintenance of a state is completely feasible without any reference whatsoever to morality. We must, therefore, look in another direction for the general conditions undergirding the establishment of true republicanism.

Kant goes on to say that permanent peace, both civil and international, depends upon a world federation of states. This means that if justice is to prevail even in a single state, there must first exist a world-wide condition of peace so that a truly civil society may emerge in a secure international environment. Kant contends that a single state can never become fully republican and eliminate all internal conflict if it is continually threatened by forces from outside its borders. He therefore concludes: "the harmony of politics with morality is possible only in a federative alliance."<sup>28</sup> the existence of a universal juridical condition grounded in public right and international law depends upon the establishment of world peace through a federative alliance of states. But, if we bear in mind Kant's original statement that the condition of the possibility of international law is the prior existence of a juridical condition, then his further claim that a federative alliance is the condition of the harmony between morality and politics appears to be in contradiction or at least in tension with that earlier statement. On the one hand, the union of politics and morality--i.e. the full realization of a juridical condition among men--depends upon the establishment of peace through a world-wide federative union; on the other hand, the prior condition of a secure international

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<sup>28</sup>"Perpetual Peace", p. 133.

alliance is the existence of a juridical condition among men (a condition in which politics is brought into agreement with morality!). Justice appears paradoxically to be both the ground and the consequence of peace.

Some commentators attribute this ambiguity to Kant's uncertainty as to whether or not the idea of peace is actually realizable,<sup>29</sup> and, this position is corroborated by the recurrence of such uncertainty throughout Kant's discussion. But Kant himself states that the important issue for man is not so much the possibility of peace as the necessity of continuing to work for its realization. Though Kant's own uncertainty may have had a definite influence on the ambiguous manner in which he conceives the issue, there is I think another compelling motive behind the ambiguity.

This motive appears most clearly in Kant's discussion of the second great obstacle to the possibility of conjoining morality and politics: "a union of world citizens before a better constitution is ready to take its place is against all politics agreeing with morality."<sup>30</sup> Kant is bothered by the possibility of a premature world-wide organization of states under one superior power, for he envisions such a condition as the "burial ground of freedom."<sup>31</sup> While "laws of compulsion" can usher in a valid civil compact, there can be no legitimate coercive authority on the international level because

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, W. Galston, Kant and the Problem of History, pp. 201-202; (cf. Hassner, p. 566).

<sup>30</sup> "Perpetual Peace", p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

coercion in this context would eventually lead to universal despotism and, according to Kant, a "soulless despotism inevitably falls into anarchy."<sup>32</sup> It is true that a despotic civil government is preferable to no government at all and may even be compatible with republicanism since the people would at least recognize the authority of law; but the problem of establishing an international alliance is precisely to avoid even the possibility of despotism. While universal despotism might bring about a state of peace among nations, nevertheless, it brings this about only through a serious weakening of all national sovereignty. Kant's vision of true harmony between states by no means rules out the presence of lively competitiveness within an equilibrium of power. But this returns us once again to the evident circularity at the heart of Kant's thought. True civil and international justice depends on world peace, but the condition of world peace is an original juridical condition among men. Hence the so-called "moral nation" can only be established on the basis of international peace. The argument is circular because Kant says at the same time that international peace can only be established on the basis of morality.

Basically, the crucial problem here concerns the fact that, for Kant, the task of securing permanent and universal peace must be regarded as an ethical rather than a pragmatic one. As such, the question of peace demands a moral rather than a technical solution.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 113. Kant insists that an international constitution must result from a compact "which is not founded on laws of compulsion (as in the case of the compact from which a single state arises)." "Perpetual Peace", p. 131. Furthermore, "a league of nations must not involve a sovereign authority (as in a civil constitution) but only a confederation." Metaphysical Elements of Justice, p. 116.

As it will be shown, it is for this reason that Kant can offer no practical guarantee of man's progress toward a condition of world-wide peace.

Thus the weight of his emphasis is always placed more on the idea that if man recognizes the duty of eliminating war and strives to realize the concept of right in all areas of public life, then peace will follow its own logic. As Kant says at one point, "it is the peculiarity of morals, especially with respect to its principles of public law and hence in relation to a politics known a priori, that the less it makes conduct depend on the proposed end, i.e: the intended material or moral advantage, the more it agrees with it in general."<sup>33</sup> What this statement means is, of course, that once politics is made the application of morality, and duty is given priority over the end of political maxims, any conflict between the spheres of morality and politics inevitably disappears. It is evident, however, that the tensions in Kant's conception of how man is to achieve this end become even more radical. Even if men recognize the duty of instituting republicanism and their political action expresses that intent, there are still some profound and unresolved difficulties that require attention.

First of all, Kant holds that practical reason demands a certain political order so that many may progress morally. But, while man is then duty-bound to further progress toward a truly civil society, the possibility of doing so is itself called into question. It becomes highly problematic precisely because, though morality determines the duty of working towards justice, at the same time, it forbids the use of certain means necessary for that end. The presence of this antinomy

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<sup>33</sup>"Perpetual Peace", p. 125.



between means and ends is clearly highlighted in connection with Kant's discussion of revolution. As we noted previously, revolution is strictly prohibited on moral grounds; Kant always insists that even an illegitimate or corrupt government is morally preferable to the absence of government. Morality thus forbids all resistance to civil authority. But this type of resistance may in fact be necessary to advance the cause of true republicanism. Kant's position on this matter appears to entail that those who recognize the duty to act in accordance with moral demands are at the same time prohibited from acting to fulfill them. Any intent to rebel or engage in revolutionary activity, even in the interests of justice, is strictly forbidden.

The tension resulting from this dilemma is best illustrated by Kant's own ambivalent attitude toward the French Revolution. There was, for him, no other recourse but to condemn the revolution, for the revolutionary's actions were clearly immoral. However, Kant admitted that the attempt to create a new society in France based on the principles of freedom and equality involved a commitment taken on in the full spirit of justice. So, as a spectator of this historical event, Kant professed a certain accord with those who were in sympathy with the French Revolution; "this revolution, I say, nonetheless finds in the hearts of all spectators... a wishful participation that borders on enthusiasm..."<sup>34</sup> Consequently, in Kant's view, the revolutionary condemns himself to a strange kind of martyrdom, a martyrdom that is immoral but commendable for he commits immoral acts so that those after

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<sup>34</sup>"An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?", On History, ed. L. W. Beck, p. 144.

him can benefit from the justice he has helped to establish.<sup>35</sup>

In the final analysis then, the only moral or legitimate means of instituting peace is, according to Kant, through a long process of political reform; "Political wisdom, therefore, will make it a duty to introduce reform which accords with the ideal of public law."<sup>36</sup> Practical reason can only advocate the gradual institution of legal reform as the sole basis for mediating man's moral progress. But now the problem is further intensified because Kant also admits that reason is essentially "impotent in practice."<sup>37</sup> In other words, human reason is ultimately incapable of effecting its purposes in the world of sense. The long process of conscious reform necessary for man's moral end appears to lie, on this basis, outside the bounds defined by the presence of a fundamental human limitation. Reason's impotence thus signifies the existence of a profound discrepancy between moral prescription and political action, between morality and politics. So, to conclude this chapter, we will suggest why Kant attempts to bridge this impasse under the aegis of a philosophy of history. In light of man's inability consciously and freely to reform the world in conformity to his moral purposes, Kant is now compelled to seek in another direction for a guarantee of this goal. Since human reason cannot secure peace,

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<sup>35</sup> See W. Galston, Kant and the Problem of History, p. 29 and p. 202. Galston's comments on Kant's ambivalent attitude toward the French Revolution are enlightening and his insights have been helpful in furthering my own understanding of this matter.

<sup>36</sup> "Perpetual Peace", p. 120, n.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

Kant looks to nature, which "guarantees perpetual peace by the mechanism of human passions."<sup>38</sup>

In this way Kant assigns to nature a novel and intriguingly significant role in the process of human development toward freedom. By guaranteeing peace through the 'mechanism of human passions', nature serves to vindicate reason by compelling man to do that "which he ought to but does not do under the laws of freedom."<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added)

In other words, by first applying the concept of purpose to the natural realm, Kant lays the groundwork for subsequently showing how nature also shares in the end of peace and, moreover, can employ the means forbidden by reason. It is interesting to note, however, that the processes of nature are now seen to unfold, not in opposition to, but in the service of, human freedom. To anyone even casually familiar with Kant's thought, this clearly has weighty implications for the Kantian system as a whole. In order to complete the harmonious union between morality and politics, Kant proceeds to weave together the relationship of nature and freedom into a novel pattern, a pattern woven in the fabric of history with the thematic thread of progress. In the following chapter then, we will examine Kant's philosophy of history and see to what extent he is successful in mitigating the tensions left unresolved in his political thought.

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

## CHAPTER II

In this chapter we will turn to explore in detail Kant's thoughts on history. Generally speaking, Kant's philosophy of history is a response to a demand; its task is to overcome the disjunction between politics and morality. Its primary intent is to point the direction of and give hope for progress toward a certain political order, an order that would finally permit the decisive union between morality and politics. More specifically, this means that the philosophy of history must first resolve the tension between political goals demanded by morality and the morally impermissible means these ends appear to require. It is important to note at the beginning though, that the political antinomy of ends and means is but a symptom of a greater and more profound dilemma in Kant's politico-historical thought, a dilemma implied in Kant's earlier statement that reason is 'impotent in practice'.

According to Kant, not revolution but a slow process of legal reform is the only morally permissible means for securing the goal of peace. But in view of reason's impotence, in view of the fact that man cannot of his ~~own~~ accord bring about this reform, progress depends upon the work of some "higher power" which constrains man along a specific path in a more or less unconscious way. Man, says Kant in his small tract on education, "is the only being who is in need of education."<sup>1</sup> This statement is, I think, one which offers an important

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<sup>1</sup>I. Kant, Kant on Education, trans. A. Churton, Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1906, p. 1.

clue to understanding the whole thrust of Kant's philosophy of history. Indeed, it is the idea of education, thematized in terms of a doctrine of progress, that lies at the heart of Kant's turn toward history. In the end, Kant conceives of history as the medium of mankind's "coming-of-age"; it is the arena in which the human race will be brought forth from ignorance to enlightenment, from a state of subservience to inclinations to a state of rationality. At one point Kant declares that the final problem in history and the last to be overcome is man's need for a master. In view of this problem, history is understood as the instrument of some higher ordained pedagogy, under whose tutelage the human race will learn to release itself from its need for tutelage.

From the preceding remarks we can see that Kant's most immediate concern as a philosopher of history is to find some pattern or order in the sequence of historical events, and, he says that in order to discern some regularity in this "idiotic course of things" we must postulate the presence of a definite natural plan "for creatures who have no plan of their own."<sup>2</sup> What is for the individual a meaningless cacophony of different purposes manifested in a disorganized series of human events, when viewed as the appearances of the collective will of mankind, takes shape as a progressive evolution of the race as a whole. Very simply then, Kant's initial task is to seek a purpose in history, a purpose or end which transcends all individual purposes and yet gives each a meaning in terms of the whole.

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<sup>2</sup>I. Kant, "Idea For A Universal History From A Cosmopolitan Point of View", On History, ed. and Trans. L. W. Beck, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, p. 11 (this essay will hereafter be cited as the "Idea").

Finding a purpose in history is indeed a problem for Kant precisely because historical events are inherently unpredictable. Kant defines history as "the appearance of freedom";<sup>3</sup> the substance of history--i.e. human action--is obviously influenced by the free will of individuals. But, Kant points out, as in the case of the patterns evident in human marriages, births and deaths, though these are influenced by the wills of individuals, "the annual tables of them in major countries prove that they occur according to laws as stable as (those of) the unstable weather..."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the complex of human actions must be perceived from the standpoint of the freedom of the will in the large. Only then can we discern a purposive uniformity in the "great drama" of history. Precisely what Kant means, however, by the phrase 'freedom of the will in the large' is perhaps not altogether evident. It is important to clarify this notion because it captures the essence of Kant's overall approach in the philosophy of history. Kant wants to focus attention on the idea of an interpretation of history which is elaborated on the basis of an unique perspective; as the title of his essay suggests, Kant's approach is to apply the idea of progressive history from a 'cosmopolitan' point of view. In other words, the starting point for a philosophical interpretation of history is to be found in the idea

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

of the human race as a whole, rather than in the idea of the individual. And the 'object' of philosophical investigation is the collective free will (expressed in the form of a progressive movement in history) of all human beings. Basically then, freedom of the will in the large can be understood as another way of expressing the concept of a 'generic' free will, a concept of will which is an abstraction from individual, particular free wills and yet which endows the entire human race with a common (although unconscious) purpose in history.

In the first thesis of his article entitled the "Idea For A Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View", Kant takes as his working hypothesis the biologist's presupposition that "nature does nothing in vain". Though human actions are the appearances of freedom and hence in themselves irregular and chaotic, they also come, like all other phenomenal events, under the rubric of natural law. In the context of an interpretation of history then, where the task is to discover a 'progressive evolution' of the human race, taken together these events can be viewed as having an immanent telos.

Basically, the springboard for Kant's philosophy of history is the concept of teleology. When applied to the realm of nature, teleology allows us to make the assumption that all natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end. Without a similar assumption, the realm of history could be envisioned as nothing more than a mechanical nexus of cause and effect. Historical events would then be merely the consequences of "blind chance" and history would only be a process of combination and recombination of the same, vitiating the whole idea of "progressive evolution". In this regard, Kant's application of the concept of tel

much an attempt to explain historical events as it is an attempt to give meaning or value to the historical process as a whole. Hence the concept itself is not to be regarded as a constitutive one; it does not and cannot offer theoretical knowledge of progress. Rather, Kant uses teleology as a regulative or heuristic idea, as a guide for approaching history from a specifically practical point of view. It is basically a means for postulating purposiveness in history, a purposiveness that shares in and promotes the final end of mankind as a species of rational being. In short, teleology serves as the basis for looking at history from the "cosmopolitan" point of view.

But, whereas biological organisms and animals evolve naturally to their end, human evolution toward specifically human ends is much more problematic. Man is essentially different from all other earthly creatures; he alone is endowed with freedom and reason. When he turns to his second thesis, Kant develops this point by focusing on the question as to what natural teleology means with respect to specifically human capacities, and he answers that nature's purpose for man is to develop to perfection in him all the natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason. But human perfection is obviously not something that can be achieved within the span of a single lifetime or generation. Nature can only accomplish her end throughout an ongoing series of generations, "each of which passes its own enlightenment to its successor in order finally to bring the seeds of enlightenment to that degree of development in our race which is completely suitable to nature's purpose."<sup>5</sup> Again, from the individual's standpoint, nature's final purpose holds

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



little meaning. The individual can never enjoy the fruits of history's end (unless perchance he happens to be a member of the "last" generation), for only the species taken as a whole can claim to benefit from nature's plan.

But Kant does not want to condemn individuals and intermediate generations to being mere means toward an end in which they have no hope of participating. Though intermediate generations may not experience the full blossoming of enlightenment at the end of history, they can however, legitimately perceive their present state as an improvement over the past. Kant firmly believes that the effect of enlightenment is cumulative from one generation to the next. Each succeeding generation builds upon the foundations of culture and civilization already set by previous ones. So Kant is unwilling to say that his own age is an "enlightened age", if that phrase means the completion of a process, but he affirms that it is an age of enlightenment, a definite stage in the enlightening advancement of reason.<sup>6</sup> Without this faith in progress, without the conviction that human evolution has a telos which aims at the realization of human perfection, all man's natural capacities, according to Kant, "would have to be counted for the most part vain and aimless. This would destroy all practical principles; and nature, whose wisdom must serve as the fundamental principle in judging all her offspring would thereby make man alone a contemptible plaything."<sup>7</sup>

It is clear from this passage how much Kant stresses the moral

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<sup>6</sup>I. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?", On History, ed. and trans. L. W. Beck, 1963, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup>"Idea", p. 13.

significance of hope in the inevitable progress towards a better future. The subjective validity of practical principles depends a great deal on the integral and fundamental connection between morality and rational faith, between the concept of duty and the concept of hope. That man can and does know without any empirical considerations what he ought to do is the essence of Kant's moral teaching. But the hope that progress in the future will result in a final union between morality and happiness, between duty and interest, is also a central practical issue. Without compromising the rigour of the moral imperative, Kant presents the idea of progress and the support it offers for hope as an indispensable practical postulate for the moral subject. Kant's affirmation of progress is thus principally motivated by moral considerations; practical reason cannot abide with the possibility that man is doomed to an eternity of earthly misery. In an important sense then, morality finds its complement in the hope that historical progress, a progress whose end is to be achieved in this world; will lead to the final reconciliation of morality and happiness.

Anyone familiar with Kant's moral teaching, however, will recognize a difficulty here. For one thing, it would be antithetical to Kant's whole enterprise in his philosophy of history to regard happiness as the dominant concern with respect to the question of progress. Nature's purpose for man, if it is to have any real value, must be something other than his happiness. In both his moral philosophy and his philosophy of history, Kant rejects all forms of eudaemonism. In the Critique of Practical Reason, for example, where Kant defines the concept of the highest good or summum bonum in terms of the union of morality and happiness, he still insists that happiness cannot be the determining

principle of the good will. Essentially, the concept of the highest good is the expression of a duty towards which man must work; the moral law commands us to make the highest good the object of our conduct. In this way, the central concern for the moral subject is not to be happy, but rather, to become worthy of happiness. Accordingly, "morals is not really the doctrine of how to make ourselves happy, but of how we are to be worthy of happiness."<sup>8</sup> Once we become worthy of happiness through moral conduct, only then can we hope, as Kant says, of someday participating in happiness.

Now this argument of the second Critique has, in my view, significant bearing upon how we are to understand the philosophy of history. Kant's crucial assertion in this context, presented in the third thesis of the "Idea", is that nature's purpose for man is not his happiness or well-being; rather, nature works "as if she aimed more at his rational self-esteem than at his well-being."<sup>9</sup> That is to say, nature wants to bring man to a point where he develops a sense of his own self-worth, where he becomes an object of respect. In words virtually echoing those of the second Critique, Kant states in his philosophy of history that nature's concern for man is above all to make him recognize "that he should work himself upward so as to make himself, through his own actions, worthy of life and well-being."<sup>10</sup> (emphasis added).

In light of this parallel, it seems plausible to argue that the doctrine of the summum bonum and the doctrine of progress in history,

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<sup>8</sup>I. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. L. W. Beck, Bobbs-Merrill, 1956, p. 134.

<sup>9</sup>"Idea", p. 14.

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though different in many obvious respects, do manifest corollary themes. Each in its own way is intended to address the issue of hope without falling into outright eudaemonism. Indeed, the assertion that man must become worthy, through his own efforts, of his happiness or well-being is especially evident in Kant's statement that,

Nature has willed that man should, by himself, produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason. <sup>11</sup>

This passage is crucial because it not only clarifies the relation between history and man's final end as a rational being but it also speaks to a whole cluster of issues and problems that surround the doctrine of progress as such. As we have already seen, Kant conceives of nature's purpose for man as the perfection his capacities. Now, on the basis of the third thesis, Kant elucidates what he means by the term perfection. Basically, man's perfection consists of his liberation, through the use of his reason, from the domination of passions, inclinations and instincts. Even more succinctly, man's highest purpose is to be rational, to be free from nature; nature's goal is man's final and complete emancipation from nature herself. <sup>12</sup> Kant emphasizes that human perfection can come only through man's own efforts; it cannot simply be something given by nature, for it marks

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Credit must be given to W. Galston, who suggests this formula as a possible way of overcoming Kant's dilemma of having to view the individual as means for a future goal in history.

the development of something which distinguishes mankind from all other natural creatures--his humanity.

The underlying thrust of Kant's statements is fairly clear. His basic point is that nothing merely given to man can be an object of worthy or esteem and, therefore, he emphasizes the idea that human perfection is something man himself must strive for through the free use of his reason. Progress will eventuate in man's final end only if man tears himself loose from nature, so to speak, for then and only then is he worthy of his destiny. Of fundamental importance in this regard, however, is the way in which the notions of self-esteem and worthiness are so deeply embedded for Kant in the idea of responsibility.

To the extent that man is rational and free, he is, of course, responsible for his actions. And, naturally, to the extent that man assumes responsibility for his progress toward perfection, he becomes worthy of it. It is, in my view, essential to recognize how significantly the theme of responsibility recurs throughout Kant's discussion of progress. While on the one hand, the basis for Kant's conception of progress is the idea of nature leading man unwittingly toward his goal, on the other hand, the true moral significance of progress depends on man being ultimately responsible for his own history. These two strands, both running through Kant's interpretation of history, are equally central to the whole question of progress. Though on one level they may appear to stand in tension with one another, they must still be held together. Neither the theme of nature's role in history nor the theme of human responsibility can be sacrificed in favour of the other. This is especially clear if we turn to consider one particularly unfortunate implication of Kant's statements about history.

Recall how the doctrine of progress seemed to imply the use of some human beings, whether individuals or generations, as means for others. Intermediate generations of men, for example, have no hope of participating in the perfection of the race at the end of history. Without question, their status as means is unacceptable from the standpoint of Kant's own moral teaching. While it could be argued that the whole issue lacks any real moral implications since it is a morally indifferent nature which uses these human beings as means, still, there is, in my estimation, an important sense in which the question can be resolved without this claim. It can be resolved because, as Kant presents it, the end of history--perfection--is in one way inherently connected with the act of working towards it.<sup>13</sup> In other words, if nature appears to work as if she aimed more at man's rational self-esteem than his well-being, there are grounds for arguing that the individual's relation to nature's end for the race is not solely a relation of means to an end. Even when much of his focus is directed upon the progress of the human race as a whole, Kant still never loses sight of the significance of the individual. From one point of view, the "good" is possible for the individual here and now because, by striving toward perfection through the use of his reason, on that basis alone, he already enjoys a rational sense of self-esteem. From the point of view of the human species, of course, the "good" is "not yet", since it depends on conditions that transcend the individual.

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<sup>13</sup> As we shall see later, Kant's final conclusion is more pessimistic. Ultimately, man can never be completely emancipated from nature. There are certain limitations placed on human capabilities which can never be transcended.

It is important to note, however, that when Kant speaks of human responsibility, when he addresses the question about the end of progress in terms of what man himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason and further, when he illuminates the idea of man's worthiness and self-esteem in light of this, he is not necessarily describing the qualities of a moral being as such. That is to say, in a fundamental respect, rational freedom--the kind of freedom through which man emancipates himself from nature--is not in itself moral freedom. In fact one of the central claims issuing from Kant's philosophy of history is that man can learn to be free, rational and thus responsible without at the same time being moral. Kant actually found it necessary, as part of his philosophy of history, to devote an entire article to the task of tracing the evolution of human freedom, thus showing that freedom can be viewed as something which develops through various stages of actualization and not as something which either is or is not. In essence, he wants to show that freedom and reason are not simply given but require what amounts to a long process of education.

In this particular work, entitled "Conjectural Beginning of Human History",<sup>14</sup> Kant makes what he calls a "journey" into the past; he endeavours to trace the development of the human race from its primordial beginnings to the civilized state. In an important sense, this text can be read as an amplification of the third thesis of the "Idea". For here, Kant elaborates in more detail how we are to understand the way in which reason progresses from its original tutelage under nature

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<sup>14</sup>I. Kant, "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History", trans. E. Fackenheim, On History, ed. L. W. Beck, 1963, pp. 53-64. (This essay will hereafter be cited as the "Conjectures".)

up to the present stage of rationality--i.e. human social and cultural life.

Before we begin our analysis of the "Conjectures" however, this might be an appropriate time to indicate how I propose to organize the following section of my study of Kant's thoughts on history. Since I have taken this opportunity to make a break in the discussion by introducing another of Kant's writings on history, it also provides me with the opportunity to introduce the format of my subsequent analysis. I propose to divide the next section into three "moments", dealing first with Kant's account of the past; then with his conception of the present and finally, in the third moment with how Kant understands the conditions of progress in the future. While this does not necessarily reflect the way in which Kant himself organized his writings on history, this format does provide a convenient and helpful way of arranging the material so that it can be presented as clearly as possible.

As we turn to the past and Kant's "Conjectures", it is first worth noting how explicitly Kant casts his own theory of the beginning of human history along lines similar to the Biblical story in Genesis. There are a variety of speculations as to why Kant chose to present his views in this particular manner. Lewish White Beck, for instance, suggests that this is Kant's critical response to Herder's philosophy of history and an attempt to show how "the book of Genesis could be read in light of his Kant's philosophy of history."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, William Galston imputes a more subtle intention to Kant; he understands Kant's

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<sup>15</sup>L. W. Beck, Introduction to On History, p. ix.



concern to be more a matter of philosophical principle. Galston claims that Kant's use of Genesis is a way of underscoring his heterodox interpretation of the Bible and his opposition to the concept of original sin.<sup>16</sup> Neither hypothesis, of course, necessarily excludes the other. In fact Kant's use of Genesis may have been done for any number of reasons. It is clear though, that one of his major interests in the "Conjectures" is to address certain theological questions from a strictly philosophical standpoint. In particular, the predominant question in the "Conjectures" concerns the presence of evil. Hence, one significant dimension of Kant's thought is aimed at thematizing a kind of philosophical theodicy so as, in his own words, to vindicate the wisdom of Providence.

Whatever the motives for basing his own account on Genesis, Kant makes it abundantly clear that his interpretation of the past is merely conjectural. He makes no reference to historical facts, for he insists that the task of the philosopher of history is very different from that of the historian. The latter can base his account on recorded events alone, while the former requires only that we rely on experience, so long as one "presupposes that human actions were in the first beginning no better and no worse than we find them now..."<sup>17</sup> So, while we cannot assume uncritically that from the beginning human reason and freedom are developing progressively, Kant's point is that there is nothing about the character of human action that would lead us to assume that they have regressed. In other words, experience can only tell us that human behaviour has remained the same, it bears no evidence of a

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<sup>16</sup>W. Galston, Kant and the Problem of History, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup>"Conjectures", p. 53.

regression toward evil. It follows then, that the idea of progress, though it has no explicit theoretical status, can still not be contradicted by experience. It follows also that conjectures about the original development of human freedom are not merely idle fiction. Therefore, an interpretation of the past, if at least not contradicted by experience, can give legitimate grounds for hope in the future.

One of Kant's principal concerns in this work is to alleviate the kind of distress that threatens the moral fibre of any thoughtful person when "he considers the evils which oppress the human species so heavily and, apparently so hopelessly."<sup>18</sup> The over-all message of the "Conjectures" is clear: whatever vice and misery befall the human race throughout this "toilsome road on earth", man himself is to blame for his fate. We are utterly responsible for the evils present in our civilized state.

When Kant turns back to trace the first dawning of man's consciousness of freedom, the "dawning" connotes at the same time a "fall" from the natural state of innocence. Man's first use of freedom is in essence an abuse of freedom. As the story in Genesis unfolds, so Kant begins his story by describing a single couple, who live in a state of blissful innocence in an ideal environment not unlike the Garden of Eden. Though the first man could speak and think--in effect, he was equipped with all the conceptual and technical skills necessary for human existence--he is still barely indistinguishable from the animals since all his skills are used only to obey the call of nature. Basically, the first man was guided by instinct alone. But, "soon reason began to stir",<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

and with the stirring of reason came man's first movement away from instinct. He began to use his reason to compare one object of desire with another soon creating in himself, with the aid of imagination, artificial desires which were contrary to those dictated by nature. Man thus became conscious of his reason as a power, a power which extends beyond the limits to which all animals are confined. And so he made his first attempt at free choice. No longer was this original being bound, like the animals, to a single way of life. However, whatever initial delight may have been found in this new state, without knowing it, man was actually standing on the brink of an abyss. Freedom also carries with it profound fear and anxiety; an infinite number of objects from which to choose left man with no source of guidance. The only thing not left open to choice was the possibility of returning to the natural state. Human history had been launched with the first act of free choice and from this point it is irreversible and progressive.

What is perhaps most significant about Kant's description of this first stage in human development is the way in which he draws the distinction between what he terms the "history of nature" and human history (i.e. the appearance of freedom). Kant's primary intent is to portray the history of nature as good. In contrast to the burgeoning history of freedom, nature originally seemed to offer man an idyllic existence, precisely because of the absence of freedom in the natural state. It is interesting to note how Kant makes use of the instinct for food as an illustration of this prodigious beginning. He describes this particular instinct as nature's means for preserving the individual; it is one of the basic instincts for survival. Thus by showing how radically reason does violence to the natural desire for food by

eventually causing man to consume things not naturally fit for him, Kant highlights how the first use of reason results in a "fall" away from the goodness of nature.

In the second stage of freedom's development Kant turns to another basic instinct--the sexual instinct--which is described as nature's way of preserving the species. Reason demonstrates its influence here as well by causing man to discover how he can heighten his sexual pleasure if he prolongs the anticipation. That is to say, while natural sexual impulses were normally directed toward immediate gratification, man's reason quickly taught him to remove the object of sexual attraction from the senses so that his feeling of attraction becomes more constant and less transient. As Kant presents it, the Biblical image of the fig leaf serves as an excellent symbol of the extent to which freedom had developed along the second stage.

The fig leaf is basically a symbol for what Kant terms the act of "refusal". When man first denied himself immediate satisfaction of his sexual impulses he performed a feat of monumental importance.

"Refusal" manifests a far greater growth of reason than that shown in the earlier stage because "the one shows merely a power to choose the extent to which to serve impulse; but the other--rendering an inclination more inward (inniglich) and constant by removing its object from the senses--already reflects consciousness of a certain degree of mastery of reason over impulse."<sup>20</sup> The act of refusal resulted in the passage

from mere sensuality to spirituality, from desire to love, and from the feeling of what is agreeable to the taste for beauty. All

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

this leads up to an enormously significant moment in history: "the first hint of the development of man as a moral creature."<sup>21</sup> By a long process of internalizing the sexual impulses and refusing to satisfy them immediately, mankind developed a sense of decency. According to Kant, this was a critical point in the development of freedom because it manifested the first sign of the human desire for respect and esteem. Self-esteem then, is interpreted as being in some way the outward reflection of an inner moral awakening. Moreover, the need for respect serves as the basis for another important phenomenon in history. Because of man's need to have others regard him in high esteem, the desire for respect functions at the same time as the basis for human sociability.

Kant describes this beginning as an epoch-making event; it marks a fundamental transformation from reason's tutelage under nature to the point where reason asserts its first mastery over nature. Essentially, what Kant is here narrating in conjectural form is already familiar to us from the "Idea". As we noted earlier in our discussion of the third thesis, the end of human freedom is final and complete liberation from nature. In the second stage of man's evolution we find him now securing at least certain dominance over nature. Only when "mankind" proceeds through the third and fourth stages is he at last truly emancipated. In the "Conjectures" Kant also echoes what he says in the "Idea" about the significance of man's rational self-esteem. The step from his sense of his own worth to his consciousness

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

of being an end-in-himself is not a long one, but its implications are incalculable. It signifies the primacy of practical reason and triggers man's ultimate release from the womb of nature.

The third phase in the development of human freedom, that stage which provides the medium of transition from the power to dominate to complete emancipation, marks the beginning of man's ability to plan for the future. In a way, its most distinct feature is man's coming-into-being as an end-setting creature, a being who sets purposes for himself beyond those connected with the immediacy of the present. Basically, this stage signifies the realization of something Kant calls man's "predisposition to humanity", for it establishes man as a living creature who, as distinct from animals, is at the same time rational.

The evolution of the human race has thus progressed from its first beginning with the power to choose among means for satisfying ends set by nature to the point at which man dictates his own ends "according to his role as a human being."<sup>22</sup> This particular moment, however, is more than ever characterized by troubles and fears. Along with the power to be conscious of and plan for the future comes man's awareness of his own mortality. It brings to man the most devastating fear of all--the fear of death. And more than ever man feels the burden of his toilsome and anxious life on earth.

Finally, man takes the fourth and last step: "He comes to understand, however obscurely, that he is the true end of nature, and that nothing that lives on earth can compete with him in this regard."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

This, says Kant, raises man altogether above community with animals and, by the same token, signifies man's entry into a relation of equality with all rational beings. It means, of course, that all men are equal and must be treated as such. But it also means that man now is conscious of possessing a quality which makes him equal even to divine rational beings.<sup>24</sup> Hence, it would seem that God himself has no right to treat man simply as a means for satisfying His own divine purposes. The idea that all men are fundamentally equal as ends-in-themselves thus prepares the way for the establishment of a lawful civil society. As Kant presents it, this idea leads to the gradual imposition of restraints in man's relation to others and serves as the propaedeutic to the establishment of universal law among men. The fourth stage then, represents the last step taken by "restless reason"; it represents man's "release from the womb of nature."<sup>25</sup> The whole process, claims Kant, must be seen as nothing less than progress toward perfection, as man's transition from animality to humanity, from bondage to instinct to rational control,"-- in a word, from the tutelage of nature to the state of freedom."<sup>26</sup>

For Kant, the crucial point of this whole exposition is, as noted

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<sup>24</sup>This is not, however, intended to mean that Kant 'divinizes' man. Rather, Kant sees the last step of reason's emergence as something which has ratified man's membership as an equal in the class of all "rational beings". Man is always a natural being as well, but Kant wants to make it clear that humans are both natural and rational beings. Given the fact that man is and always will be both, his entry into the domain of all "rational beings" (such as God, for example) will never be more than partial.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.,

earlier, to show that man must view himself as responsible for whatever vice and misery befalls him in History. An exercise such as this serves to teach man that he must blame the evils oppressing him neither on Providence nor on an original sin committed by his forefathers. Kant is convinced of the irrevocability of progress, despite the hardship it has caused and still causes the human race. "Restless reason"-- the immanent principle of motion in history--would never allow us to return to the age of simplicity and innocence. The wish some have for returning to the state of nature is, for Kant, nothing but an empty yearning because it is futile to wish for something man had originally chosen and would still choose to forego.

Though nature implanted in man the potentiality of reason, the notion of responsibility implies that reason's actualization has to be a process of man's self-actualization. If we were to view human history, stretching from barbarism to culture, as a process of the education of freedom, it would seem that, for Kant, the destiny of the human race depends most of all on man's efforts at self-education. Human freedom is, of course, rather meaningless unless man himself consciously struggles to be free. But what is perhaps equally important in connection with the idea that man is responsible for his own history is the implicit affirmation that man's responsibility for his condition must also give express testimony in favour of his power to better himself in the future.

In this way we are brought to the present. Kant describes the present state of man as a state of culture. Among the general features of the state of culture are such things as the prevalence of social and civilized life, progress in the arts and sciences and an over-all increase in enlightenment. In short, culture represents the arena of



man's rational control over all aspects of his nature. At one point, Kant describes culture as "the genuine education of man and citizen."<sup>27</sup> Culture mediates both the perfection of human capacities and the necessity of restraining external freedom under law; it teaches man both skill and discipline.

But what is unfortunately most significant about the present state, according to Kant, is the prevalence of human wickedness. Along with the cultivation of reason inevitably comes the cultivation of vice. All in all, the development of culture has thrown man into a very ambiguous state, a state in which he becomes the focal point of an unresolved tension. The present marks a point in history when man is caught up in the conflict between nature and culture. What his natural instincts would still have him do, man must now fight and suppress in the civilized state. Kant sees in this conflict the root of "all evils which express human life, and all vices which dishonour it."<sup>28</sup> It is man's lot to live out the tension between the forces of nature and the impact of culture, "until such a time as finally art will be strong and perfect enough to become a second nature."<sup>29</sup> The goal of culture--that 'genuine education of man and citizen'--is human perfection; through culture man learns to become fully rational, i.e. to perfect his skills and to live under law. Indeed, for Kant, this is the ultimate end for the human species, when nature's pedagogy leads man to forsake all the vicissitudes

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

of what was originally part of human nature itself.

But, in the present, the ambiguity and tension remain. The state of culture ensures neither morality nor happiness. Insofar as progress has led man beyond the life of instinct; it manifests an increase in rationality. But that in itself does not constitute progress toward morality. Even less does it constitute progress toward happiness, especially in view of the misery, hardship and struggle man still encounters. The fact that progress in culture reveals neither moral progress nor progress toward happiness is most of all evident in the continued presence of war. Injustice still prevails in all areas of society, leaving man, who has broken loose from instinct, in a very unwholesome condition.

Of fundamental significance however, is what all this implies with respect to Kant's conception of freedom. Bearing in mind Kant's initial description of the substance of history as the appearances of freedom, it is now clear that Kant does not necessarily mean moral freedom--i.e. the freedom associated with a good will alone. Emil Fackenheim argues this point and claims that Kant's whole exposition is based on the supposition that there must be and in fact is history without moral freedom. This would lead one to conclude that Kant distinguishes between moral freedom as such and another kind of freedom, between autonomy and a kind of freedom not necessarily determined by the moral law.

Indeed, Fackenheim suggests that what Kant describes in the first three stages of man's historical development is not the expression of moral freedom, but rather, the expression of "cultural freedom."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>E. Fackenheim, "Kant's Concept of History", Kant-Studien, XLVIII (1956-57), 381-392.

In his interpretation of Kant, Fackenheim distinguishes between the concept of freedom which denotes self-determination in accordance with the moral law and a concept referring to the sort of freedom which, though self-determination of a sort, is only partly independent of natural desires. Fackenheim does, however, recognize some attendant problems with this. First, if history as a whole encompasses man's movement from the life of instinct to moral freedom, and, though Kant traces fully the link between subjection to instinct and cultural freedom, what is left still unaccounted for is the link between cultural freedom and morality. Moreover, Kant has as yet failed to trace any necessary direction in the development of cultural freedom itself. Kant must still show how history offers a sign of progress in the future; he must still show how man is to realize his moral destiny.

In order to understand fully Kant's conception of the link between the past and the future, we must now leave behind the "Conjectures" and return once again to the "Idea". For it is there that Kant indicates most clearly how the step from barbarism to culture must eventually lead to the transformation of a society of men into a moral whole. We broke off our discussion of the "Idea" at the third thesis, we will now return again to the fourth.

It is evident to Kant that nature's plan for the human species continues to unfold in a way most conducive to the full development of human capacities. The next step along the way, a step which goes beyond the state of culture, is the establishment of a universal lawful order among men. In one sense then, at a certain point the problem of history resolves into a political problem. One might describe man's transition from the past to the future as a move from the state of nature to the state of culture.

a state of culture and law. But in the "Idea" Kant does not ascribe the driving principle of this movement to the impulse of "restless reason". Rather, in the fourth thesis, Kant reverts back to focus on the natural laws governing human history so as to discover by what means nature collaborates with reason. In this context, what is now depicted as driving man to perfect his capacities is his antagonism in society. Kant sets forth the proposition that nature's means of driving man forward is a mechanism called the "unsocial sociability" of men, and he defines it as "their propensity to enter into society, bound together with a mutual opposition which constantly threatens to break up the society."<sup>31</sup> According to Kant, man is constantly torn between two opposing forces; on the one hand, he is drawn toward others because of his tendency to sociability, and on the other hand, because of his selfish inclinations, he tends to oppose others. Regardless of how many difficulties the mechanism of "unsocial sociability" may entail for the human race, Kant believes this social dialectic of mutual harmony and conflict to be the only thing which guarantees progress. Left to his own devices man would forever remain passive and lazy. Thus, by exploiting human vanity, competitiveness and the insatiable lust for power, nature guarantees that law among men will prevail.

Two points need to be brought out in connection with Kant's fourth thesis. The first revolves around Kant's continued efforts to vindicate the work of Providence in history: while incompatibility, vanity and selfishness are in themselves a source of distress to those who contemplate the panorama of human affairs, Kant holds that at the same

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<sup>31</sup>"Idea", p. 15.

time these give clear testimony to the wisdom of that "higher power" which draws man along the path of history. The fact that history appears as a sequence of immoral acts now takes on some sort of redemptive meaning. Antagonism gives rise to rational culture and rational law; it is the mainspring of enlightenment. The second point and, perhaps the more crucial one, speaks to the problems originally encountered in Kant's political theory, problems that initially led him to develop his concept of history.

Here we should recall how Kant's theory of politics gave rise to an antinomy of ends and means (see above pp. 42-43). Morality demands a certain political order--a society most compatible with freedom under law, i.e. republicanism--but morality at the same time forbids the means of establishing such an order. Practical reason cannot will those acts required to forge the path toward universal republicanism. But here, in the fourth thesis of the "Idea". Kant places heavy emphasis on the role of nature in this regard. He endeavours to show how nature, by means of the dialectic of mutual antagonism and harmony, assumes responsibility for immoral acts. Consequently, the moral burden of evil is lifted from man's shoulders, since war and revolution, for example, are regarded as the work of nature ultimately leading to the creation of a rational society. Man seems simply to be drawn along by history in a more or less unconscious manner. The antinomy of ends and means then, disappears because nature guarantees the spread of law and peace by using precisely those means prohibited by practical reason.

But, in the final analysis, Kant's solution to the political problem merely shifts the whole questionable issue into the arena of

history. Now that Kant has vindicated man's role in the sequence of immoral acts evident in human history, now that nature, in effect, has taken on responsibility for evil, the question arises: in what sense then, can man be understood as responsible for his own history? Kant's "anthropodicy", so to speak, is feasible only if he sacrifices the fundamental idea of human responsibility. Kant himself appears to be somewhat inconsistent in the way he broaches the problem. For example, while in the "Conjectures", Kant stresses the self-moving character of reason and emphasizes that man himself is to blame for vice and misery, in the "Idea", reason is described as being essentially quiescent, requiring the work of nature through human passions and opposition among men for its awakening.

One way of explaining this paradox is to draw attention to some important differences between these two works. First of all, it is clear that in the "Conjectures" Kant stresses the distinction between human history and nature. Here he is primarily concerned with tracing the development of reason and freedom. In a sense, he is showing how the human race became free and conscious of its freedom through a long process of education. On that basis, the present stage signifies the blossoming of an age of rationality; man now has the choice of working toward his moral destiny. Hence the present is pre-eminently an age of responsibility. But, precisely because man himself has the freedom to choose, precisely because man himself is responsible for his future, the whole idea of progressive education cannot dictate a necessitarian view of the future. The fact that there has been progress up to the present does not mean that future progress is inevitable. For Kant, the future remains the task of man.

In the "Idea", however, Kant appears to contradict the position he takes in the "Conjectures". History and nature are not so clearly distinguished as they are in the "Conjectures" and, since nature is the driving force behind historical development, progress seems inevitable and determined. Presumably, the underlying intent behind Kant's assertions in the "Idea" is to address those issues surrounding his political theory; issues such as the antinomy of ends and means and, more fundamentally, the problem of the impotence of reason. Natural teleological development thus ensures the political ends of law and peace. Nature is seen as educating man through war and conflict; in effect, by means of war nature teaches men the logic of peace. At one point, Kant says that while men may desire concord, "Nature knows better what is good for the race; she wills discord."<sup>32</sup> What nature then guarantees in terms of progress is a "cosmopolitan condition" among men, for only on that basis is durable peace possible.

In Kant's fifth and seventh thesis, for example, we can see how Kant integrates his idea of natural teleology with his political doctrine of civil and international republicanism. Here he declares that the greatest problem of the human race, to the solution of which nature drives man, is the establishment of a perfect civil society based on law. But the prerequisite for this, a prerequisite already familiar to us from Kant's political theory, is the establishment of lawful external relations among states. And, as we see it now in light of Kant's concept of history, it is nature that takes on the role of forcing man, through war, to establish international law. But, all this only

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

serves to radicalize the paradox with which we began. Kant's conception of natural teleology as the basis of man's progressive education seems to exclude all notions of human freedom and responsibility.

In the final analysis, the differences between the "Conjectures" and the "Idea" are probably due to the wide diversity in content of each essay. Admittedly, Kant approaches the issues in both works in similar form: he traces a developmental view of the human race. But the similarity ends there. In a sense, the heterogeneity of the "Conjectures" and the "Idea" is typical of the kind of heterogeneity involved in putting together philosophical anthropology and philosophy of history. That is to say, although the "Conjectures" does represent another side of Kant's contribution to the philosophy of history, it is above all an "internal" history. The "Conjectures" represents Kant's attempt to trace the development of reason and the emergence of freedom as interior specifications of man's teleological composition. One might even suggest that the basic thesis of the "Conjectures" is built upon the analogy between ontogenetic and phylogenetic development; Kant's "evolutionary" account of origin of the species (phylogeny) is in a way the recapitulation of the development of the individual--man "writ large", so to speak.

On the other hand, the "Idea" fits much more securely within the boundaries defined by philosophy of history proper. The "Idea" is very clearly an "external" history which is intended to examine the necessary conditions for the belief in man's historical progress from war to peace. There the most prominent theme is not the emergence of reason and freedom, but rather the "cunning" of nature and how she leads man through the mechanisms of the passions towards a rational society. Kant has simply adopted a less speculative and more 'scientific' or



'empirical' approach in the "Idea"; since man's movement away from war is purely mechanical, questions of responsibility and freedom tend to fade into the background.

It is interesting to note as well that the distinction suggested here between 'internal' and 'external' history, vis a vis the relation of the "Conjectures" to the "Idea" dovetails with Kant's own distinction between internal and external purposiveness in the Critique of Judgement. In this work Kant discusses the idea that man in his external relations may have only the rank of means within the schema of natural purposes. Yet from another standpoint, man is also the ultimate purpose of creation itself. Hence, in the "Idea" Kant's 'external' history does seem to rank man as nature's means for the benefit of future generations. In the "Conjectures", however, man's reason and freedom and precisely those unique features of humanity that elevate man to the status of an ultimate unconditioned purpose in himself. Kant's conclusion confirms the necessity of adopting such a 'dual standpoint' approach to his work: "And so man, although in a certain reference he might be esteemed a purpose, yet in another has only the rank of means."<sup>33</sup>

Even if such a 'dual standpoint' approach serves to mitigate some of the tensions surrounding the philosophy of history, there are still problems, as we shall see later. Before we conclude this chapter, however, let us focus our attention on Kant's concept of nature and its role in the dynamics of historical progress. Basically, nature's function is only a negative one; her pedagogical methods consist primarily in disposing of hindrances to permanent peace. Nature's cunning serves merely to

neutralize man's selfish inclinations, establishing at most only an equilibrium of opposing forces. The key term in the phrase 'unsocial sociability' is 'unsocial'; mutual opposition forces only a certain compatibility under law. Therefore, one can hardly view Kant as espousing a deterministic conception of history. Natural teleology may bring man to a state of legality, but legality is not the end of history. The true end of history entails a qualitative revolution; it entails transforming "a society of men driven together by their natural feelings into a moral whole."<sup>34</sup> (emphasis added). The state of lawfulness and culture is not in itself a moral condition. At best it is only the political condition most in accord with morality. Hence, progress is in a sense guaranteed only to a certain sub-moral point; institutional progress is all that nature can offer mankind. But, as Kant puts it, "everything good that is not based on a morally good disposition, however, is nothing but glittering misery."<sup>35</sup> While Kant considers institutional progress and enlightenment necessary propaedeutics to moral betterment, he ultimately fails to clarify the source of moral progress itself; perhaps he must so fail or hesitate in order to avoid making moral progress into something intra-historically determined.

In this regard I think Pierre Hassner has succeeded very well in isolating the central problem that lies at the root of Kant's philosophy of history. Hassner's statement is wellworth quoting in full:

The final problem of Kant's philosophy of history is to grasp the moral bearing of progress in culture, civilization, and lawfulness, which converges, on

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

the level of the education of mankind; with the problem of the possibility of the moral education of the individual.<sup>36</sup>

The entire set of conditions brought about by the progress of the human race in terms of law, culture and enlightenment is only the necessary condition for the moral improvement of individuals; they are not and in fact cannot be the sufficient conditions. As Hassner says, in the end, "neither the nature of societies nor that of men are truly changed, nothing is truly guaranteed, and, strictly speaking, nothing is truly saved."<sup>37</sup> The final moral unification of men and permanent peace depend for their establishment on the presence of a moral individual, on the intervention of a true moral intention in history.

This is so, Kant declares, because the most difficult problem in history and the last to be solved arises from the fact that "Man is an animal which, if it lives among others of its kind, requires a master..."<sup>38</sup> Man needs a master, a master who can only come from the human race, and yet a master who is perfectly just in himself. While the dialectic of "unsocial sociability" and the mutual opposition among men is the mainspring of progress toward legality, only a perfectly just 'master' can take on the two-fold task of transforming a society of men into a moral whole and of educating individuals to become moral. But, once again, Kant fails to make clear precisely in what this education consists and, in the final

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<sup>36</sup>P. Hassner, "Immanuel Kant", History of Political Philosophy, ed. Stauss and Cropsey, 2nd ed.; Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972, 554-93, p. 589.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 586.

<sup>38</sup>"Idea", p. 17.

analysis, he is forced to fall back on vague terms such as "prepares", "makes way for" and the like. The unresolved question remains: in what sense can education, which for all intents and purposes is essentially a long process of reformative habituation, inspire in individuals a respect for duty?

The whole issue of progress remains fundamentally ambiguous until the question of education is resolved. Kant must still show the necessary connection between the "long step" toward morality and the "moral step" itself. It is hard to see how an imperceptible transition from the pre-moral to the moral condition would be compatible with the radical moral choice between passions and duty that is implicit in Kant's conception of morality.

Indeed, Kant's own comments in some of his later writings tend to confirm this view. For instance, in a section of the Critique of Judgement, where he discusses some of the key themes in his philosophy of history, Kant distinguishes between man's ultimate purpose in history and his final purpose. Nature brings about the ultimate purpose of man by making him, through discipline and the perfection of his skills, a being of culture. These two conditions, says Kant, only make men receptive of higher purposes than nature herself can supply. But the final purpose which pertains to "Man considered as noumenon,"<sup>39</sup> as Kant describes it in the third Critique, necessarily transcends any form of natural teleology.

In another of Kant's works, entitled "The Strife Between the Faculties", he poses the question: what profit will progress toward the

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<sup>39</sup>I. Kant, "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?", trans. E. Anchor, On History, 1963, p. 151.

better yield humanity? Kant's response is definitive: "not an every-growing quantity of morality with regard to intention, but an increase of the products of legality in dutiful actions, whatever their motives."<sup>40</sup> The political problem, the problem of establishing a civil society under law, is capable of being solved even by a 'race of devils'. It can be solved without the moral foundation of mankind having to be enlarged in the least. But to establish a true moral commonwealth among men, to transform a society of men into a moral whole, for that, says Kant, "a kind of new creation (supernatural influence) would be necessary."<sup>41</sup>

As far as the individual is concerned, the problem of moral education and moral conversion lies at the heart of Kant's difficulties. An educator, whether the state or nature, may teach us to develop our reason and to master our instincts and so lead us to the border of morality, but this cannot guarantee that final conversion which is necessary to make us moral. In the end, Kant admits, if a man is to become not merely legally but morally a good man, this can only be effected through a revolution in the man's disposition; it requires a kind of "rebirth", a "change of heart."<sup>42</sup> Both the suggestion of a new creation through supernatural influence and the idea of conversion convey obvious theological overtones. We shall see in the following chapter, where we will turn to explore Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, how both themes

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<sup>40</sup> I. Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. H. Bernard, p. 285.

<sup>41</sup> "An Old Question Raised Again...?", p. 151.

<sup>42</sup> I. Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. and and p.

figure significantly in Kant's inquiry; also, we shall see how Kant transposes into his own framework the theological connotations associated with these important themes. But before we study Kant's philosophical theory of religion and its relation to the philosophy of history, let us first trace the path we have travelled thus far.

Perhaps the most appropriate starting point for a brief summary of Kant's philosophy of history is to focus again on the initial problem with which we began: reason's impotence in practice attests to the presence of a fundamental human limitation. Because of this, Kant is compelled to say that man needs a master, that man is the only being who needs education. So, in the philosophy of history, we find Kant responding to this problem by illuminating two sources of pedagogy. First, nature is assigned the role as man's teacher insofar as she leads him to transcend her purposes by bringing him to the point where he becomes a rational being who sets purposes for himself. Following upon this, civil society--the product of human rationality--serves as a pedagogical medium by challenging man with the establishment of law and peace. But, while historical education in its entirety, including both nature and the state, promises a more rational civilization, it cannot promise the final abolition of evil. Man's need for a master in the political context implies above all that coercive laws still remain the lot of mankind. Kant's conception of the role of society in man's educational process is thus cast in a very ambiguous light. Though Kant does not want to give up his conviction that progress, even moral progress, can only occur in and through society, at the same time, he is driven to admit that a society of men, no matter

educating a race of devils to become moral beings even though it might make them obedient citizens.

Hence, the search for a master must go on. Indeed, in one sense, man's dependence on a master increases and becomes even more radical in Kant's thought. As his thoughts on the question of progress matured and developed Kant was led to focus with growing intensity on the presence of evil in the world. More and more he came to see evil as the greatest obstacle to human progress, as something so deeply entrenched in human nature that its overcoming requires a revolution in the interior disposition of man's heart. Man's need for a master and man's need to overcome the tendency to evil are the central issues that Kant confronted once again and intensively in the Religion. We must now turn to that text to pursue Kant's advancing argument.

### CHAPTER III

When we turn to Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone<sup>1</sup> we meet with intriguing but somewhat uncharacteristic developments in Kant's thought. For one thing the work is structured in a way which tends to militate against its internal cohesiveness. The Religion consists of four books, each of which was originally an independent essay: the first concerns the radical evil in human nature, the second concerns the "conflict" of good with evil, the third concerns the "victory" of good over evil, and the last book examines what Kant calls "service and pseudo-service" under the sovereignty of the good. On a purely formal level there is an implicit allegorical intent behind this structure--Kant is depicting the Christian "story" about man's fate and final destiny in terms of man's original sinful "predicament" and his final

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<sup>1</sup>I should qualify at the outset the nature of the examination undertaken. While generally speaking, the Religion contains the substance of Kant's philosophy of religion and is most commonly read in that light, my own approach is to de-emphasize the explicitly theological implications of Kant's views and to place more stress on the thematic continuity between the Religion and Kant's writings on history. Though a number of Christian themes and concepts figure prominently throughout this text, unless they speak directly to our main area of interest, they will be omitted from examination. For instance, Kant's interpretation of the coming of the "Son of God" and the meaning of this event for him, though interesting from the point of view of philosophy of religion, is not, for our purposes, a necessary subject for lengthy analysis. Similarly, Kant's insights into Christian theological concepts--which he terms "parerga"--such as the concepts of "grace", "atonement", "miracles", "justification" and other mysteries, will not be brought within the purview of the following study. As will be explained above, there are two main subjects of interest in this chapter: the doctrine of radical evil and the idea of a moral association of men that, for Kant, takes its visible and historical shape in the form of the church. The first articulates the deep problem lying at the core of Kant's doctrine of progress, and the second provides the basis for a solution. (The Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone will hereafter be cited as the Religion.)



"salvation" from this predicament; however, Kant's main interest was not so much to interpret the Christian "drama" as it was to present the constitution of the "religion of reason". But the fact that he appeared to have appropriated uncritically certain Christian dogmas was a shock to Kant's contemporaries. This was especially the case with respect to Kant's doctrine of radical evil. To someone like Goethe, Kant seemed to be compromising and perhaps even prostituting the highest principles of the critical philosophy in an attempt to seduce Christians into the fold of Kantianism:

Kant required a lifetime to purify his philosophical mantle of many impurities and prejudices. And now he has wantonly tainted it with the shameful stain of radical evil, in order that Christians too might be attracted to kiss its hem.<sup>2</sup>

Though Kant's contemporaries received the Religion as if it were, at best merely tangential to, and at worst a serious undermining of, the critical philosophy, still this text develops in significant ways key themes originating in the philosophy of history. In an important sense, Kant's inquiry into religion bears upon a particularly central question inherited from the writings on history; that is, do the religious dimensions of human life show evidence of a moral progress on the part of mankind? It was the problem of evil, traditionally dealt with in terms of theodicy and philosophy of religion, which presented the most radical challenge to the idea that man can reform the world and led to a serious questioning of all our hopes in that possibility. Hence, it

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<sup>2</sup>Taken from E. Fackenheim, "Kant and Radical Evil", University of Toronto Quarterly, XXIII (1953), 339-53. Originally quoted from Goethe's letter to Herder, dated June 7, 1793.

was the problem of evil that moved Kant to continue his search for solutions to the problems that already confronted him in the philosophy of history. As we take up the study of this particular text, we will see how Kant focusses on the concept of a moral-religious community in its social and historical dimensions so as to offer a solution to the problems inherent in his original idea of progress in history. The idea of a moral-religious community of men, however, is now distinguished from the civil or political association Kant spoke of under the rubric of his philosophy of history. While the problem of evil led Kant to regard with increased skepticism the possibility of a moral transformation of mankind through political reform, the idea of a moral-religious community offered grounds for a renewed hope that the moral betterment of men is still a historical possibility.

As it is expressed in the Religion, Kant's idea of the moral commonwealth occupies a central position in relation to Kant's other works on morals and politics. Though it differs from Kant's political conception of a "world republic" (as found, for example, in "Perpetual Peace" and in the writings on history), it does bear certain features that are rooted in Kant's ideal of true republicanism. Similarly, there is an obvious connection between what Kant says about the ethical commonwealth in the Religion and his earlier moral teaching about the kingdom-of-ends. This indicates the presence of a guiding thread linking these works together, a thread which connects all three conceptions of a possible moral association among men to an original and common root. In this regard, Lewis White Beck suggests that Rousseau's vision of the true

While Rousseau established the essential connection between law and freedom primarily in the political sphere, where his doctrine was adopted with little change by Kant, the doctrine of autonomous government by free citizens of a republic is deepened by Kant into a moral, metaphysical and even religious conception.<sup>3</sup>

Essentially, the two most significant and original doctrines expounded in the Religion (i.e. the doctrine of radical evil and the idea of a moral-religious community), constitute a turning point in Kant's thought. The problem of evil caused him to review the idea of historical progress in a way which questions the possibility of moral education. Indeed, when it is conceived as a radical corruption "in the heart",<sup>4</sup> the reality of evil brings into doubt the very foundation upon which the idea of progressive education was built. If, as Kant maintains in the Religion, evil is innate in human nature, then the affirmation that man is inherently educable--that man has a predisposition towards the good which only requires something or someone to remove obstacles in the way of bringing it forth--is exposed to radical doubt. In the philosophy of history, evil was interpreted as nature's means

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<sup>3</sup>L. W. Beck, "Kant's Two Conceptions of the Will In their Political Context", Studies in the Philosophy of Kant, New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965, 215-229, p. 224.

<sup>4</sup>It can be argued that Kant's concept of radical evil is nothing new; that it simply makes explicit the "other side" of Kant's view of the moral law--i.e. that 'absolute good' only makes sense in terms of 'absolute evil'. This may in fact be a telling point against Kant's doctrine of radical evil (see Fackenheim's article). But, if it is valid it calls into question the very foundation of Kant's ethical theory because as Fackenheim points out, if the will can choose between two equal and opposite alternatives, the 'moral law' is certainly no longer absolute. As we shall note later on, the idea of willing the moral law as the sole basis of freedom becomes relativized. The implication is now that one can will evil and still be free.

for making men more civilized and rational; in other words, evil appeared as a means toward good. Now, in the Religion, evil appears to have a permanent foothold in the scheme of things. Consequently, the idea of moral progress in the future which is still a central concern for Kant, becomes the focal point of a whole cluster of new tensions and dilemmas; as we shall see, the effort to rescue this idea issues in a conception of religious life in the community and in history which has profound bearing upon the problem of man's moral education.

Immediately, in the first page of the first essay (entitled "On Radical Evil in Human Nature"), Kant lays to rest the naively optimistic belief that mankind's moral progress is indubitable. This optimistic view, according to Kant, had gained much popularity among his contemporary philosophers, especially those interested in education, who believed that the world steadily forges ahead from bad to better or at least that the predisposition to such a movement is discoverable in human nature. Kant remarks caustically that if this belief "is meant to apply to moral goodness and badness (not simply to the process of civilization), it has certainly not been deduced from experience; the history of all times cries too loudly against it."<sup>5</sup> Of course Kant is not at all arguing that the world ought not to progress from moral badness to moral goodness; we have already seen that much of what he says in the writings on history is directed towards showing how the process of human history can be construed in a way that conforms to what ought to be. But here Kant acknowledges that if we look to experience for verification of how things ought to be, we find instead that experience as such

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lends more credence to an opposite claim--the claim that "the world lieth in evil."<sup>6</sup>

So, Kant begins his argument with the givenness of evil as a universal human condition: evil is evident both in our everyday experience of living in the world with others and in the introspective perception of the impurity of our own actions. But, in order to account for evil, in order to understand the root of this "corruption", Kant seeks first the underlying condition of the possibility of evil actions; that is, what must take place within the will if evil is to be performed. In the following pages the basic components of Kant's complex argument about the underlying condition of evil will be examined.

It is important to note that when Kant speaks of evil as something innate, as something to be predicated of the entire human race, it is not to be understood as an inherited condition of man as set out in the doctrine of original sin. Basically, evil actions are manifestations of an underlying evil "disposition" for which each man himself is responsible. This "disposition" Kant understands to derive from a radical and innate propensity on the part of man freely to do evil, a propensity which belongs to the "nature" of man. Each act of free will strengthens a good or evil disposition in us, and this strong disposition, whether good or evil, becomes the ultimate subjective ground of our adoption of maxims. Once it is established as such, this underlying disposition accounts for a continuity of moral identity and responsibility. To put it directly, man's character is either morally good or evil depending on the disposition he has freely created in himself.

When Kant says that man is evil by "nature" his reference is not to man's natural impulses and inclinations, neither is it to his "nature" as a "rational being". Kant understands the word "nature" in a very specific sense, as something referring to "the subjective ground of the exercise (under objective moral law) of man's freedom":

When we say, then, Man is by nature good; or Man is by nature evil, this means that there is in him an ultimate ground (inscrutable to us) of the adoption of good maxims or evil maxims (i.e. those contrary to law), and this he has, being a man, and hence he thereby expresses the character of his species.<sup>7</sup>

Natural impulses per se are neither morally good nor evil; rather, the thoroughgoing character of evil is imputed to man, according to Kant, solely on the basis of his free and radical choice between good or evil maxims. These maxims manifest a corresponding disposition which is itself constituted by free choice so that, ultimately, man himself bears the sole responsibility for his nature as a morally evil being.

In working out his account of evil, however, Kant does not neglect his original conception of freedom. In order to deepen that conception, so that man has a choice not only either to will freely (as an autonomous being) or not to will freely at all (which is heteronomy), Kant ascribes a more fundamental choice to man: Man now is understood as having the capacity to choose either good or evil without entirely losing his freedom. In other words, Kant is arguing that conscious heteronomy of the will, or, the ability willfully and consciously to subordinate the moral law to the incentives dictated by the inclinations,

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is nonetheless still a mode of freedom. Man is obligated to subordinate his natural inclinations to the moral law, but, in view of the fact that he can and does willfully reverse the order of incentives, Kant holds that there is in man a basic corruption or "perversity" of the human heart. There is, therefore, in human nature a propensity to invert the proper ethical order of incentives by choosing maxims which subordinate the moral law to the incentives of man's sensuous nature; in this inversion, the incentive of happiness and self-love are made the conditions of obedience to the moral law. This propensity in man Kant refers to as a natural propensity to moral evil, an evil which is "radical because it corrupts the ground of all maxims."<sup>8</sup>

To resume at this point our examination of "disposition", Kant maintains that this underlying and abiding principle of our choice between good and evil maxims for action can only be, itself, either good or evil, not both. While we can say that man's empirical activity is both good and bad, in the sense that this activity inevitably involves a mixture of good actions at certain times with evil actions at other times, this does not mean that the underlying disposition is both good and evil. For Kant, any occasional deviation from the moral law exposes an abiding evil disposition in man. In principle, man's disposition is either evil or it is good with respect to the moral law. Kant deduces from this situation that man as a species must be regarded as radically evil since the life lived by us all is of such a nature as to presuppose a decision for evil.

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In anticipation of later developments, it is important to note at this point that in spite of this "perversity of the heart", Kant also argues that an original predisposition to good is latent in human nature. This predisposition to good consists of three elements in the fixed character and destiny of man: man's predisposition to animality, to rational humanity and to personality. In explaining these characteristics, Kant in a sense codifies and interiorizes his account of the stages in human development presented in the "Conjectures". Although not evil in itself, man's animality or, the instinct of self-preservation does constitute a certain frailty in human nature in that the natural incentives are sometimes stronger than the incentive for obedience to duty. The predisposition to humanity, or man's social and cultural being, is also not evil but does result in a certain impurity in motives. It is in terms of his predisposition to moral personality, which in itself is a predisposition to good, that man is capable of either willing the highest good in conformity to the moral law or deviating from the moral law in the wickedness of radical evil. In recognition of this predisposition to good Kant denies that men will evil purely for evil's sake: "We are not then, to call this depravity of human nature wickedness, taking the word in its strict sense as a disposition to adopt evil as evil."<sup>9</sup> In other words, radically evil though we are, still we are not absolutely evil.

Kant's account of the origin of this disposition or innate propensity to evil on the part of Man (as a species) develops in terms

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



of the separation between what he calls its origin "in reason" and its origin "in time". Since the decision for evil is an act of free will it cannot have any antecedent temporal cause. Hence, Kant dismisses as self-contradictory the statement that free acts can have a temporal origin. Moreover, if the free choice of an evil or good disposition decides man's moral character as such, it would be equally contradictory to suppose that man's moral character has an origin in time. The origin or ground of this "disposition" must therefore be an "intelligible" act, an act which, like the origin of freedom itself, remains inscrutable to us. It follows then, that "in the search for the rational origin of evil actions, every such action must be regarded as though the individual had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence."<sup>10</sup> The biblical account of the origin of evil is, for Kant, an appropriate representation of the truth about human nature since it represents the conditions which we all find in ourselves and, on this basis, it is a morally edifying representation. It is an account which can be put to moral use for the betterment of man.

On the surface, though, the "indwelling" of the evil with the good in man would seem to render the possibility of moral progress inaccessible to the human race. If man is corrupt at his very heart, what sense does it make to speak of man's hope in the attainment of the highest good? But, in spite of the radical evil in human nature there still exists the possibility of restoring the original predisposition to good. For Kant, this possibility lies in man's freedom "to make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good

or evil, he is or is to become."<sup>11</sup> The respect for duty and the incentive arising from the moral law are never entirely lost in man. So there remains the task of re-establishing the purity of this law to which we are bound; that is, we are required to re-establish in ourselves the virtue of doing our duty for duty's sake alone.

This "restoration", as Kant speaks of it, takes place on two levels. In terms of experience, virtue is established through gradual reform in habitual conformity to the law. Insofar as we can judge a man to be good or evil, we can only acknowledge what appears in time. A man's "legal" or outward improvement then, can be perceived only "little by little" in practice.<sup>12</sup> The radicality of evil, however, does not reside in external actions, but in the incomprehensible root of man's will. Therefore, if man wants to become morally good, "this must be effected through a revolution in man's disposition."<sup>13</sup>

Kant refers to this "revolution" as a conversion or "rebirth" which occurs once and for all in the very depths of the heart; the "old man" then "dies" and the new man is "born". This restoration of the good principle is a moral necessity for Kant. It is our duty to bring about this revolution and transform our "cast of mind". Yet, no matter what effort we make to become good, just how this act of self-conversion is possible remains utterly unintelligible. Human judgement is capable of knowing this moral improvement only as an infinitely gradual progression from bad to better. But this gradual reform presupposes a conversion of disposition in the good man, a conversion which is itself unknowable

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

by us. Therefore, only "for Him who penetrates the unintelligible ground of the heart, and for whom this unending progress is a unity, i.e. for God, does this amount to his being actually a good man (pleasing to Him), and thus viewed this change can be regarded as a revolution."<sup>14</sup>

Basically, Kant is saying here that, given the evil in human nature, moral progress requires something more than human effort. But, man must first do all that is in his power to become better and only then can he hope that what is beyond his ability will be provided through co-operation from above. It is unnecessary, Kant adds, for man to know how this co-operation takes place or in what it consists; it is not essential to know what God does or has done for man's salvation, but "it is essential to know what man himself must do in order to become worthy of this assistance."<sup>15</sup> By changing his cast of mind, man makes himself at least open to goodness, even if he is never sure of the stability and permanence of his moral character.

Now, this very compact summary of Kant's doctrine of radical evil cannot do justice to the full complexity of his arguments, but it is sufficient at least to illuminate certain points for further consideration. Because the argument is so complex and because the larger question concerning what the doctrine itself implies with respect to Kant's original ethical theory is still a source of debate among scholars,<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. John Silber in his introduction to the Religion; L. W. Beck, A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, XI, pp. M.

to analyze in depth all the configurations of Kant's thoughts on evil is a task requiring much more detailed analysis than can be offered within the scope of this thesis. To assess the general significance of this first book of the Religion from within this scope, we need to isolate and discuss only a few of the main themes running through Kant's account of radical evil in human nature.

First of all, even a cursory reading of the essay on "Radical Evil" would direct attention to Kant's main point of emphasis. Most of his discussion centres around the concept of responsibility--the fact that man, who is a free and rational being, must be held accountable for his actions, whether good or evil. For Kant, without question, man is himself the author of evil. Most contemporary ethicists would consider this virtually a self-evident truth. With respect to Kant's own analysis of the relation between reason and the will in moral decision-making, though, the notion of responsibility, and particularly responsibility for evil, is somewhat problematic. For example, in Kant's description of the dynamics of moral obligation the individual is portrayed as a being who is subject not only to the unconditional command of the moral law but also to the impulses of his sensuous nature; this implies above all that in order to be free (morally free-i.e. autonomous), the will must act or determine itself in accordance with the rational demands of the moral law. In other words, only a rational will, a will determined by the principles of pure practical reason is truly free. It follows, therefore, that a will determined by the inclinations is unfree since what Kant terms in this case the "heteronomous" will is not self-determined but determined by an object (i.e. the object of desire). In the final analysis the will is

obeys the moral law; that is, a free will can only be a good will.

But this would mean, as Emil Fackenheim points out, that evil can only be explained on these terms as resulting from the weakness of the will. Fackenheim argues that insofar as the individual follows his inclinations he is in fact determined; consequently, he does not really will at all. On such an account, the person who does evil is only "the willless victim of his inclinations."<sup>17</sup> The implication is, of course, that if Kant bases his arguments on an identification of the free will with the good will, he must deny that moral evil as such is possible. For there are essentially no grounds upon which Kant can justify responsibility for moral evil; "free will threatens to disappear into two necessities: a pure will which, qua will, is necessarily good; and the inclinations which are subject to a necessary law of nature and hence morally indifferent."<sup>18</sup> According to Fackenheim, it is precisely to account for man's responsibility for moral evil that Kant felt impelled to review his original conception of freedom in a way which leaves man the choice, not simply between a free (moral) will or the absence of will, but between a good or evil will, each of which is still free and hence still responsible.

But, in the Religion, Kant does not merely affirm the possibility of evil; he insists that evil is innate and radical, that there exists in human nature a propensity to corrupt the "ground of all maxims". This brings to our attention another central concept, a concept that finds its first full articulation in the Religion, namely, the concept

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<sup>17</sup> E. Fackenheim, "Kant and Radical Evil"; p. 345.


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of "disposition". As we have already noted, Kant means by the term 'disposition' something which accounts for the continuity of moral responsibility. It is a "supreme" maxim (a maxim, because it is a freely chosen general rule for acting) which underlies all the particular and discreet maxims that result in their corresponding particular actions. So, Kant ascribes to man (considered as a species) the propensity to choose something other than the moral law as the permanent incentive for obedience to duty.

Although Kant's doctrine of radical evil is in itself intriguing and presents us with challenging developments in his thought, it is nonetheless beset with many difficulties. Not the least of these difficulties is the problem of reconciling Kant's concept of freedom with the concept of 'disposition' or 'propensity'. If Kant wants to affirm, on the one hand, freedom of choice between good and evil, how can he, on the other, speak of an innate propensity toward evil? Before we make any premature judgements concerning this question, we should consider one important point: Kant's concept of disposition does not denote a 'natural' or predetermined feature of human nature. Natural 'evil' (i.e. actions determined by the causality of the passions) is for Kant morally neutral; it is only moral evil (an inversion of incentives) that presupposes freedom. Hence if the concept of evil is to be at all consistent with Kant's ethical premises, he must discuss it in connection with the ideas of freedom and reason and solely in relation to his concept of man as a rational being. Both Kant's claims about 'freedom' and his notion of 'disposition' therefore belong within the same ethical framework because both are logically aligned with the fundamental tenets of moral-practical rea

There is little doubt, however, that even if the two concepts of freedom and disposition belong to the same logical framework many unresolved questions still remain. Part of the problem lies with the fact that Kant offers the doctrine of radical evil as a kind of afterthought to the more systematic ethical theory. Kant introduces some very controversial theoretical innovations in this doctrine and yet he lacks the kind of critical rigour and thoroughness normally associated with his thought. Although we cannot pursue all the questions and problems surrounding this section of the Religion within the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the doctrine of radical evil as a vehicle for some of Kant's last contributions to his moral philosophy. Unfortunately, these contributions only serve to introduce further complications to an already difficult and complex argument.

On one level then, Kant argues that man's disposition is necessarily good or evil, never indifferent, because we can infer from a particular action the kind of enduring principle underlying all actions on the part of the individual. On the empirical level, however, actions appear as sometimes good and sometimes bad, even though the foundations of man's character, from which these actions ensue, may itself be evil. On the other hand, despite the radicality of evil and despite the fact that a good character is something that can only be acquired through a long process of reform, Kant still maintains that each individual evil action must be regarded as though the individual had just fallen from a state of innocence. Otherwise the possibility of man's freedom to restore the goodness of his character is itself called into question. As Fackenheim describes it, it's as though "in each empirical action, at every here and now, our whole being is at stake and



responsible."<sup>19</sup> The propensity to invert the order of incentives and create in ourselves an evil disposition is nonetheless a matter of free choice. Hence, the long process of reform required to restore a moral disposition itself presupposes a conversion: and, at any moment of choice, man's moral character is held in the balance. In recognition of the supreme importance Kant ascribes to the responsibility involved in that moment of choice, Fackenheim concludes:

Nothing in heaven or earth is more important than the moment in which a man--any man--makes himself good or bad. And whenever he makes such a decision, the universe, so to speak, holds its breath.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, though, Kant also speaks of an inherent predisposition to good on the part of man. He does so in order to account for the possibility of moral improvement. So, in the end, though he is certainly not innocent, man is also not to be regarded as hopelessly diabolical: "For man therefore, who despite a corrupt heart, yet possesses a good will, there remains hope of a return to the good from which he has strayed."<sup>21</sup> Men ought to become better; they must therefore be capable of it. Regardless of the radicality of evil, the moral law still commands with unabated authority. In this regard, Kant frequently makes the claim that an evil 'heart' may still co-exist with a will which in general is good. But this also presents us with certain problems. If the imputability of moral evil depends on ascribing to man a will

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> . . .



which is free and yet chooses to be evil, how can Kant maintain that the will in general may still be good?; how can he hold that "a seed of goodness remains in its entire purity, incapable of being extirpated or corrupted?"<sup>22</sup>

Kant responds to this problem by portraying moral improvement as a 'restoration' of the original 'purity' of the moral law, a restoration that takes place in response to the recognition of guilt. He understands the phenomenon of guilt to arise from consciousness of the frailty in human nature--the lack of sufficient strength to follow through with the principles one has chosen and/or failure to distinguish between moral and non-moral incentives; also, Kant recognizes that one can incur deliberate guilt (insidiousness) issuing from a willful inversion of the order of incentives. Insofar as man feels the burden of guilt he is conscious of two things: (1) the fact that he has not fulfilled his obligation in the true spirit of morality and (2) the fact that he still recognizes the authority of moral demands. Both factors seem to indicate a two-fold expression of the will. On the one hand, an evil act presupposes a willful and rational choice to subordinate the incentive arising from the moral law to the incentive arising from the inclinations. On the other hand, the fact that man can and does experience the call of conscience indicates the presence of a will which in general is good, it indicates the abiding influence of a will which is identical to pure practical reason itself.

To differentiate between this two-fold expression of the will, in his analysis Kant often uses two different descriptive terms--

Willkür and Wille. In order to understand how these terms arise and operate in Kant's account of the possibility of a "restoration" of the purity of the moral law, it is helpful to introduce into our analysis an intriguing interpretation of this matter.<sup>23</sup>

In a lengthy introduction to Kant's Religion, John Silber emphasizes the importance of the terms Willkür and Wille in his exhaustive analysis of Kant's theory of the will. Silber's central argument is that, for Kant, the faculty of the will is divided into two parts: the Wille and the Willkür. Silber defines the Willkür as the power to choose between alternatives; this implies that Kant saw the will both as practical reason and as the faculty of desire (something like a faculty of purposive willing). Willkür then, is essentially the power of choice or self-determination. According to Silber, the Willkür is the ground of human action and human virtue as phenomena: "the actions which Willkür performs in the phenomenal world issue from the maxims of the self-same Willkür in the intelligible world."<sup>24</sup> In this sense, Willkür is inextricably involved in both the natural and the moral realms; it straddles both the "phenomenal" and "noumenal" orders. Otherwise, Silber claims, man could never experience as obligation

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<sup>23</sup>The scholarly debate surrounding Kant's distinction between Wille and Willkür is still an active one and offers many valuable insights concerning the kind of development Kant's ethical theory underwent as it matured, but to examine fully the details of this debate is too large a task to be encompassed within the confines of the present discussion. However, because the import of the Wille/Willkür distinction is profound and has implications that stretch back to the foundations of Kant's thought, it is important and rewarding to consider some of the salient points that arise out of this distinction.

<sup>24</sup>J. Silber, Introduction to the Religion, p. xciv.

the conflict between natural and moral law. Man is therefore accountable both for his actions (phenomenal actions) that are contrary to the moral law and for whatever actions are attributable to him as virtuous. Silber thus argues that Kant's concept of will as Willkür is necessary to account for moral responsibility. It is necessary even to account for moral experience as a whole, for it is the only basis upon which Kant can establish interaction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms; "Kant's ethics necessarily involves the proposition that the human will (particularly as Willkür) exists in time and acts both in the phenomenal and noumenal worlds."<sup>25</sup> But, as Silber adds, an analysis of the will merely in terms of its radical capacity for free choice (Willkür) is by no means complete. Kant also made room in the will for the presence of the moral law "by introducing the concept of Wille, which refers to the purely rational aspect of the Will."<sup>26</sup>

Wille, however, does not act, according to Silber. It is simply the source of the categorical imperative; it is not free itself but it is the law of freedom. Viewed in relation to the Willkür, Wille confronts Willkür with its normative aspect, with the demands of pure practical reason. Willkür, therefore, has the power to choose between two incentives: one derived from the pathological desires and one derived from Wille. Evil results if the Willkür chooses to subordinate the incentives given by the rational demands of Wille (what Silber describes as "moral feeling" or respect for the moral law) to the incentive determined by sensuous

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. xcix.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. civ.

inclinations. Alternatively, if the Wille determines the Willkür so that the moral law is itself the sufficient incentive of obedience to duty for the Willkür, this results in the realization of moral "personality" and the highest expression of freedom. Even when Willkür chooses against Wille, however, it is still not wholly undetermined by it. Wille remains as that 'seed of goodness' which is incapable of being extirpated or corrupted. Indeed, as Silber claims, the relation between Wille and Willkür is in principle an inseparable one, for it is grounded in what Kant regards as the inseparability of freedom and rationality.

It is evident that the distinction between Wille and Willkür is extremely subtle and complex; it is worthwhile to focus attention upon it however, for when we apply this distinction to Kant's analysis of evil we find that it does in fact facilitate a better comprehension of the various strands of Kant's argument. It is Willkür then, which is torn between two different modes of being, and two different kinds of incentives. And, it is the Willkür which chooses to subordinate one to the other. Furthermore, it is also in terms of the Willkür that the relation between the choice of an underlying disposition and the choice of particular actions may be understood. That is to say, Willkür chooses not only the maxims of specific actions but also chooses the basic intentional ground (by either choosing the moral law or rejecting it) of all its specific actions. The disposition must be freely adopted by the Willkür, otherwise man cannot be held morally responsible for his enduring moral character as well as his actions. Finally, Kant's conception of man's innate guilt also depends on the division of the will into Wille and Willkür. As we saw earlier, even

when man chooses to be wicked and his specific actions express that intent, he is still aware of his obligations and feels the pangs of guilt. As Silber explains it, despite a corrupted Willkür, the Wille still "preserves the moral feeling in specific acts after it has been banished from the disposition."<sup>27</sup> In the experience of guilt then, the will must therefore be both heteronomous (that is, it must be corrupt because it has acquired guilt) and autonomous (because we are able also to recognize and accept our guilt). Only a two-fold conception of the will such as that given in the Religion can account for this sort of moral experience, and for the possibility of a "restoration" of the original purity of the moral law.

When we recall that fundamental Kantian distinction between noumena and phenomena, it is evident that the division of will into Wille and Willkür serves as a way of bridging the gap between the atemporal moral realm and the realm of phenomena. Evil as such cannot originate in the phenomenal realm since it presupposes a moral decision and results from a firm and enduring disposition that has deep moral significance. But, according to Kant, an evil disposition is contingent and not necessary: Although it has a "rational" origin which is inscrutable to us, it nevertheless results from the exercise of freedom. Hence our enduring moral character (either good or evil) is not a noumenal reality. This character may not be visible in the phenomenal world, but it is still inherently changeable by a free decision of the Willkür and this allows for the possibility of a "restoration" of the original purity of the moral law.

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Now, when Kant proceeds to explain the movement from evil to good which produces such a restoration, he must do so on two levels. On the one hand, a virtuous disposition can be acquired in time only little by little through a gradual reformation. So, moral improvement appears to be a matter of progressive change of practice. On the other hand, though, because the core of evil lies in the disposition, the Willkür must effect a revolution or conversion in the disposition itself. In light of this, then, Kant concludes his account of the reascent to good on a somewhat ambiguous note: "Man is under the necessity, and therefore capable of, a revolution in his cast of mind, but only of a gradual reform in his sensuous nature (which places obstacles in the way of the former)."<sup>28</sup> While an endless progress from bad to better in time may be regarded by "Him for whom this progress is a unity" (God) as a revolution, in the final analysis, men can only judge themselves by what occurs in time; hence moral improvement--the acquisition of a good character--is an enduring struggle of incessant counter action against the propensity toward evil.

To conclude our study of the first book of the Religion, in which we have examined Kant's account of the "indwelling" of the evil principle with the good principle in human nature, some final points remain to be made. At this juncture we can draw some general conclusions about Kant's doctrine of evil, as it relates to the particular theme of our study, namely, Kant's idea of progress. The following passage makes clear what a lasting impact the concept of radical evil had on Kant with respect to the question of man's moral progress:

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<sup>28</sup>Religion, p. 43.

To become morally good it is not enough merely to allow the seed of goodness in our species to develop without hindrance; there is also present in us an active and opposing cause of evil to be combatted.<sup>29</sup>

In Chapter Two, where we examined Kant's conception of the role of nature in man's historical progress, we noted that the basic cause of human vice and evil appeared to be the conflict between man's rational and sensuous nature. In the "Conjectures", for example, Kant ascribed the cause of evil to the clash between culture and nature. Progress toward the good was then depicted in terms of man's continued struggle against his natural impulses until such a time as 'art' (the product of human rationality) might become a 'second' nature. But now we see the conflict between good and evil in a new light. In the Religion, Kant envisions man's struggle toward the good not as an effort on the part of the human will to combat the natural inclinations, but rather as an ongoing conflict between two opposing forces within the will itself and, for Kant, the final meaning of this conflict is this:

...there exists absolutely no salvation for man apart from the sincerest adoption of genuinely moral principles into his disposition: that what works against this adoption is not so much the sensuous nature, which so often receives the blame, as it is a certain self-incurred perversity or, however else one may care to designate this wickedness which the human race has brought upon itself...<sup>30</sup>

The natural inclinations as such are not evil; rather, all that is required is to "tame" them so that they will no longer clash. This

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

coheres with Kant's argument in the writings on history that man's political and legal progress is in fact grounded in a reformative process of discipline under law, so that man's original conflicting desires may be brought into harmony. Nature's role in history is simply to remove hindrances in the way of legal reform, and, in his earlier writings on history perhaps Kant did believe that this was a sufficient propaedeutic for moral progress; perhaps he did feel that progress in rational perfectibility was harmonious with progress towards moral perfection.

In the Religion, however, the goal of moral perfection is much more elusive. In Book Two Kant dramatizes the indwelling of the evil principle with the good principle as a never-ending conflict between them: What this means with regard to man's moral betterment is that our earthly life is 'ever only a becoming'; we will never be in full possession of a pure will. But even this continual progress from bad to better presupposes an original conversion of the disposition and this can only be facilitated by another active force which opposes the "claim" of the evil principle for sovereignty over man. That is to say, man must make use of the idea of an "Archetype" of moral perfection which resides within his morally legislative reason as a permanent ideal, as an aid in man's effort to elevate himself to this ideal.

Now according to Kant, it is a fact of sentient human limitations that we have to think the good principle in human guise, even though it already exists as a pure abstraction in our reason. The historical personification of this morally perfect "Archetype" Kant sees in the representation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In Book Two then, Kant appropriates for his own purposes elements of the Biblical account



of the life and fate of Jesus; basically he interprets the Biblical account as a kind of dramatic allegory of the conflict between the good principle (represented in Jesus Christ) and the evil principle (symbolized as the "prince of this world"). The figure of Jesus Christ serves as a true and inspiring example for men: Evil though man is, he must and can make his disposition unto that of the "Archetype" and the example provided by the historical figure of Jesus will aid him in this change. In one sense then, the idea of an exemplar of moral perfection functions in an immanent way as a source of moral "strength" aiding the individual to overcome his propensity to evil. Even the final suffering and sacrifice of the Son of God as depicted in the Scriptures symbolically represents what ought to take place at the moment of an individual's conversion, from an evil to a good disposition. As Kant presents it, it is as if the "new" man becomes morally another person and the "old" man is sacrificed to accommodate this "rebirth".

Actually, the full significance of the historical person Jesus is not only that he provides a necessary empirical example of what man could have discovered in his reason in the first place. The "Son of God" also acted as a pre-eminent moral Teacher; He inaugurated the "religion of reason" which is valid for all time and to which Christianity is the closest approximation. Within the perspective of human history, according to Kant, the coming of the "Son of God" launched the first publication of the moral law. Kant therefore found it important and meaningful to see Christ as a kind of "hero" in history, as a "liberator" of mankind in the historical development of the human race and as a man who, though human, was himself untainted by the presence of evil. In this regard, the figure of Jesus Christ comes to represent the

beginning of a moral "revolution" in the history of mankind. Kant holds that even though the sacrifice on the cross may appear to signify the failure of this revolution, it did succeed in securing at least an initial "victory" of the good principle over evil:

It [the death of the Son of God] might well refer to the failure of a very good and purely moral design of the Master, namely, the achievement during his lifetime of a public revolution (in religion) through the overthrow of ceremonial faith, which wholly crowded out the moral disposition, . . . We may indeed even now regret that this revolution did not succeed; yet it really was not frustrated, for it developed, after his death, into a religious transformation which, quietly, despite many misfortunes, continued to spread. <sup>31</sup>

The outcome of this revolution was not that evil was conquered once and for all in history; rather, from a moral perspective, this initial victory breaks the bondage of evil and sets free those who continue to do battle with it.

It is difficult to define precisely how significant the Son of God as a historical figure was for Kant; it is clear though, that Kant regards the birth of the Christian religion itself as marking a profound turning point in history. In our examination of Books Three and Four, we will focus upon Kant's conception of Christianity as a historical and public "vehicle" for the universal moral religion--the "religion of reason". So, the inauguration of the Christian faith with the coming of the Son of God represents an important advance in the moral progress of the human race. Though Kant understands Christianity as only one among many historical or ecclesiastical faiths, it serves as a unique

and important instrument for the unification of mankind because it contains the germ of the "religion of reason". Even in the political writings Kant makes reference to the historical role of religion with regard to the possibility of a world-wide, permanent peace. He speaks of religion there, however, in quite ambivalent terms.

In a section of "Perpetual Peace", for example, Kant discusses the problems involved in a premature fusion of states into a world-wide federation (a federation, we will recall, which is the prerequisite for permanent peace) before the moral betterment of mankind is achieved (recall as well that, according to Kant, this would result in a universal despotism which is the 'burial ground of freedom'). Kant argues that nature prevents such a premature fusion from occurring by employing "two means to separate peoples and to prevent them from fusing: differences of language and of religion."<sup>32</sup> In this context, the differences between various forms of statutory beliefs is understood to ensure that men will never become sufficiently compatible to allow themselves to be drawn together under an autocratic ruler. Indeed, history does show us that some of the most devastating wars between nations occurred precisely because of differences in religious faith. But in the Religion it is evident that Kant sees within Christianity (which to Kant represented not only a statutory but also a moral religion) the growth and development of an invisible moralizing force, a force that finds its expression in the religious dimensions of human existence. So, while from the standpoint of the past and even the present, religion had always exerted a divisive influence upon mankind, when Kant looks to the future he envisions a

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<sup>32</sup>"Perpetual Peace" On p. 113

more positive role for that unique religion which teaches man respect for the moral law by recognizing all duties as divine commands, a role which actually promotes the moral progress of the human race.

When we attend to the third book of the Religion, where Kant's focus turns from the "conflict" of evil with good toward the "victory" of good over evil, we see that at the centre of his vision of this future 'victory' lies the idea of a universal moral community among men. But the historical or visible form of this ethical commonwealth is not the political state; rather, it is a community that goes under the name of the church. According to Kant, the role of the church as a historical institution is to convey publicly the enlightened principles of human freedom.

Before we explore further Kant's understanding of the nature and meaning of this community, it is worthwhile to consider first the way in which he builds up the framework for his thoughts on progress. In the second book of the Religion where Kant discusses the "conflict" of good and evil, Kant spoke of this "conflict" primarily in terms of the individual. In the third book, however, he begins to discuss the "victory" of good over evil primarily in terms of human society. It seems that as far as the individual alone is concerned, moral progress is ever only a "becoming"; it entails a continued and never-ending effort on the part of the individual to combat the forces of evil within him. It is clear from Kant's statements that the individual, even if he has undergone a conversion of disposition; can claim "no greater advantage than freedom from the sovereignty of evil."<sup>33</sup> By his own

efforts alone even the morally well-disposed man cannot achieve complete victory over the evil principle. The individual will continue to be exposed to temptations that lead him into evil because, as Kant says, "Envy, the lust for power, greed, and the malignant inclinations bound up with these, besiege his nature, contented within itself, as soon as he is among men."<sup>34</sup> Man's predisposition to humanity, which brings him together with others inevitably leaves the individual in an ambiguous situation. While this predisposition is in itself good, since society in general serves as the matrix of moral growth, at the same time, it is enough that men are surrounded by others "for them mutually to corrupt each other's predispositions and make one another evil."<sup>35</sup> In light of this situation, then, Kant sees the only hope of winning a 'victory' over evil to lie with the establishment of an appropriate association which gives united moral protection against evil. Kant envisions the establishment "...of a society, enduring, ever extending itself, aiming solely at the maintenance of morality and counteracting evil with united forces."<sup>36</sup>

Once again, in this context, we find Kant struggling to develop a coherent theory of progress which speaks both to the problem of moral reform on the part of the individual and to the problem of moral reform on the part of the human race. We have already seen that one of Kant's major concerns in his theory of politics and his philosophy of history.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

is to show how progress on the level of the individual can be brought into harmony with progress on the level of the human race. But in the Religion, under the strain of coming to terms with radical evil, the idea of the individual's moral education hinges upon the possibility of individual conversion. In one sense, this has negative implications with regard to the question of moral education vis à vis the individual. This is the case, I think, because Kant now locates the source of moral improvement as an 'inscrutable' act of conversion which must take place within the innermost parts of a man's disposition. It seems, then, that no external influences can serve to evoke a good disposition; good moral character is essentially self-wrought and a matter of free choice. On the other hand, though, Kant firmly believes that the individual's moral conversion must be further supported and supplemented by the presence of a moral community;

...because the highest moral good cannot be achieved merely by the exertions of the single individual toward his own moral perfection, but requires rather a union of such individuals into a whole toward that same goal.<sup>37</sup>

In the final analysis the moral individual, the morally-well disposed man, must do "battle" with evil on two fronts. Not only must he confront the propensity toward evil within himself, but he must also encounter the temptations toward evil presented to him in human society. This recurrent problem of a moral man living in an immoral society (a problem, we should remember, that emerged in "Perpetual Peace" as well) thus motivates Kant's renewed efforts to discover a kind of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

community where the social reality is a source of strength to the virtuous man rather than a perpetual temptation. In the Third Book of the Religion, Kant discerns in the religious community a moral association of men that will serve a supportive role not only with respect to the individual but will lead also to a progressive moralization of all social relations ultimately leading toward the realization of a moral commonwealth on earth.

When viewed from the perspective of philosophy of history, the religious community seems to take over the pedagogical role Kant formerly ascribed to nature and to the political state.<sup>38</sup> Kant understands the religious community, which contains the 'seeds' of true morality, to be capable of teaching the human race by making public the enlightened principles of human freedom. Only this kind of pedagogy, says Kant, will secure for the world an eternal peace: "Such, therefore, is the activity of the good principle...which sustains the victory over evil and, under its own dominion, assures the world of an eternal peace."<sup>38</sup> This does not, however, imply that the role of a political order is now to be rejected outright as not conducive to that end. On the contrary, Kant states explicitly that an "ethico-civil" society (a society of men bound together under non-coercive moral, rather than coercive juridical laws) can exist in the midst of a political or juridical commonwealth and "may even be made up of all its members; (indeed, unless it is based upon such a commonwealth it can never be brought into existence by man);"<sup>39</sup> (emphasis added). In this regard, an enlightened political constitution is

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

understood to provide the necessary foundation upon which the moral-religious order must be built. And, just as men who fail to organize themselves into a political society will remain in a juridical "state of nature", Kant argues that so too will men remain in an ethical "state of nature" if they fail subsequently to unite under laws of virtue.<sup>40</sup> To restate this conclusion directly, Kant affirms that just as man is morally required to leave the state of nature and enter a politico-civil state, so too is he now morally required to leave the ethical state of nature in order to promote the highest good itself as a social goal.<sup>41</sup> According to Kant, this is a duty which is sui generis, not a duty of men toward men but of the human race toward itself.

But when we inquire as to how the idea of an ethical commonwealth is to be realized on earth or if, in fact, it is even possible to achieve, we find that Kant's response is ambiguous. Though this idea resides in practical reason and takes on objective reality because it is a moral duty, Kant insists oddly enough that this duty must be distinguished from all other moral commands. It must be distinguished precisely because the idea of a universal republic based on the laws of virtue "involves

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<sup>40</sup>"Just as the juridical state of nature is one of war of every man against every other, so too is the ethical state of nature one in which the good principle, which resides in each man, is continually attacked by the evil which is found in him and also in every one else. Men mutually corrupt one another's moral predispositions; despite the good will of each individual...Again, just as the state of lawless external (brutish) freedom and independence from coercive laws is a state of injustice and of war, each against each, which a man ought to leave in order to enter a politico-civil state; so is the ethical state of nature one of open conflict between principles of virtue and a state of inner immorality which the natural man ought to bestir himself to leave as soon as possible." Religion, p. 88.



working toward a whole regarding which we do not know whether, as such, it lies in our power or not."<sup>42</sup> Whereas other moral duties require of us what we know to be within our power, this particular duty involves a further presupposition, namely, the idea of "a higher moral Being through whose universal dispensation forces of separate individuals, insufficient in themselves, are united for a common end."<sup>43</sup>

Kant's ambivalence in this matter is familiar to us, for we have seen it arise before with regard to similar issues in the writings on politics. While in principle the idea of a moral commonwealth is an end which is at the same time a duty, in reality, or more precisely in practice, it appears to be an elusive ideal. In an important sense, this particular "ought"--the duty to work towards the realization of an ethical commonwealth-- does not seem necessarily to imply "can". What it does strongly imply, though, is the idea of divine dispensation or assistance, for it seems that God is the only Being capable of ushering in a universal moral republic.

Kant's hesitancy or ~~caution~~ in this matter is rooted in his constant awareness of the limitations of human reason; for reason, particularly with regard to the duty to realize an ethical commonwealth, seems incapable of satisfying her ultimate moral needs: "The sublime, yet never wholly attainable idea of an ethical commonwealth dwindles markedly under man's hands".<sup>44</sup> For Kant, the possibility of a guaranteed moral progress

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>

of the human race is inherently doubtful: "How indeed can one expect something perfectly straight to be framed out of such crooked wood?"<sup>45</sup> But Kant still insists that man must proceed as if everything depended on him for only then is man entitled to hope for co-operation from above. In spite of the nagging doubt about man's own ability to achieve moral progress, Kant insists that the road to an ethical commonwealth must be paved with good intentions.

So Kant's lingering doubt is always balanced by a sober optimism. He continues to believe that morality must and actually can be communicated publicly. He believes that the idea of an ethical commonwealth can be approached, insofar as it is possible through human organization, in the form of a church. When Kant searches for a historical sign or bearer of moral progress on earth, he now looks in the direction of the religious-social dimensions in human existence and Kant finds in the church an actual union of men which at least harmonizes with the idea of a truly moral society. Historical or ecclesiastical faith works as a public institution serving to promote the moral element in religion. Although it is merely a "vehicle" for the pure "religion of reason", historical faith is a necessary "vehicle" insofar as it conforms to the conditions of human experience. Therefore, Kant assigns to the history of religion significant moral value. In this history the church is understood as the historical medium of a "divine" pedagogy; and Kant sees the Scriptures, for instance, as an important means of communicating to men an enlightened respect for the moral law. In recognition of the importance of historical religion with regard to the moral enlightenment of men, Kant declares:

"In men's striving toward an ethical commonwealth, ecclesiastical faith thus naturally precedes pure religious faith."<sup>46</sup> this is so even though Kant adds the enjoinder that morally, this order ought to be reversed.

Before we consider further the implications of Kant's concept of the church in relation to the idea of moral progress, let us briefly summarize the main points of the preceding discussion. As Kant originally presents it, the idea of an ethical commonwealth springs from practical reason; it is an idea toward which the human race as a whole is duty-bound to work. Given the limitations of human nature, however, Kant believes that such a commonwealth can be approached by men only through religion. Religion serves to make this ethical commonwealth public (Kant maintains that publicity is requisite to a commonwealth), in the visible form of a church; hence, Kant concludes that "the establishment of a church devolves upon men, as a task which is committed to them and can be required of them."<sup>47</sup>

It is evident, however, that Kant's vision of this future development involves an unavoidable dilemma, a dilemma which he explicitly acknowledges near the end of the Religion: Kant recognizes that to found a church as a commonwealth seems to call for more than what can be expected of men "especially since it seems necessary to presuppose the presence in them, for this purpose, of the moral goodness which the establishment of such a church has in view."<sup>48</sup> We saw in our analysis

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

of "Perpetual Peace" how a similar, unresolved tension also remains in Kant's political writings, because permanent peace seems to be both the pre-condition and the consequence of moral betterment. In this context the idea of the highest political good, though having objective reality for practical reason, is an idea whose realizability exceeds the powers of human reason. Now, with respect to Kant's conception of the true church, a similar tension remains. To state it directly, the idea of the church as an ethical commonwealth both presupposes and aims at the moral betterment of men. This tension is to an extent mitigated in the Religion, however, for Kant argues that while the project of establishing a moral commonwealth is a historical challenge for man, its founding is a task belonging solely to God. In light of this qualification, then, the vicious circularity of Kant's argument seems to disappear: Man is not morally obligated fully to realize the ethical commonwealth as the final end of his moral destiny; rather, he is obliged to become fit or worthy to receive the co-operation necessary for his end. So, Kant has no hesitations in saying that man may, and indeed, must hope for a moral "world-epoch", even though he cannot conceive of its actual culmination in experience.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of the Religion, then, Kant's estimate of the possibility of moral progress in history concludes on this note of indeterminacy because moral progress, on the level of the human race as a whole, is understood to depend upon the inscrutable co-operation of God in advancing

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

man's own effort. This indeterminacy<sup>50</sup> characterizing Kant's conception of moral progress seems to move Kant's thought further and further in the direction of theology; in other words, it is this indeterminacy which marks the point where Kant's philosophy of history bears upon matters explicitly addressed in Christian theodicy and eschatology. While there is this trend in Kant's thought, it is nevertheless clear that Kant resists speculation about the nature or kind of co-operation between God and man promoting moral progress; similarly he resists working out any fully developed eschatology. According to Kant, on the level of the human race as a whole, moral progress remains forever a "becoming" in which the culmination is neither guaranteed in nor fully determined by history.

Despite Kant's hesitations concerning the realizability of a moral society, it is important to see that the Religion does open up new dimensions in Kant's thoughts on moral progress. He presents us with a notion not found explicitly in his other major works (although perhaps anticipated by his conception of a universal political "republic" in the writings on politics and history), the notion of an ethical commonwealth as a historical possibility and not just an other-worldly one.

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<sup>50</sup> Intriguingly, at the end of the Religion, this note of indeterminacy appears also in Kant's statement about the inscrutable or mysterious ground of human freedom:

Thus freedom, an attribute of which man becomes aware through the determinability of his will by the unconditional moral law, is no mystery, because the knowledge can be shared with everyone; but the ground, inscrutable to us, of this attribute is a mystery because this ground is not given us as an object of knowledge.

While Kant's previous moral writings tended to emphasize individual and personal autonomy and conceived the possibility of moral improvement in terms of an endless individual progress (thereby requiring the postulate of immortality), we now find a new emphasis in the Religion with respect to what constitutes the destiny of mankind. If my reading is correct, Kant suggests that the moral betterment of mankind is to be mediated through the institution of a visible religious and moral association of men; i.e. through organized religion. Kant's philosophical affirmation of the sovereignty of the good principle and his hope for its victory over evil in human history are, in a very real sense, components of his social philosophy; it is through his philosophy of religion that Kant gives decisive expression to the role of human community, a role which had been only partially developed in his moral writings. So, in the Religion, Kant does not beat a retreat back into the "private" sphere of individual morality; rather, he cautiously advances his thoughts on history and progress further into the "public" sphere of social and moral community: For Kant, a moral community is not constituted initially as a political state, nor as a "league of nations", but through the form of a church.

To fill out this assessment of the Religion as presenting a further development of Kant's thoughts on progress and human history, it is necessary to widen our focus somewhat so that we can view the work in relation to Kant's moral writings and his writings on history. In the conclusion, then, I will situate the Religion within this broader perspective by drawing together some basic components of the analysis presented in Chapters One and Two. On this basis, then, I will briefly

and the impact it offers with regard to Kant's idea of progress and his philosophy of history.

## CONCLUSION

Basically, our concern in this concluding section is two-fold: first, much of what Kant says about the idea of a moral commonwealth in the Religion is markedly similar to his description of the kingdom-of-ends found in the second Critique. Moreover, Kant's discussion of the idea of God and his conception of "rational faith" clearly has its roots in the older ethical writings. All this would lead one to conclude that the Religion bears very little in a substantial way upon the central questions of the philosophy of history. Indeed, on the surface at least, the Religion appears to represent more of a re-affirmation of the a-historical standpoint in Kant's ethical writings than it does a renewed engagement with the problem of progress in history, a problem to which Kant gave his attention in the historico-political writings. Secondly, if it can be shown that the Religion represents a departure from Kant's earlier moral works, then we must attempt to determine how far it can be taken as an extension of the philosophy of history.

As we already noted previously in the third Chapter, Kant's concept of an ethical commonwealth (in the Religion) differs from the kingdom-of-ends insofar as it is presented as a historical possibility. In the second Critique, for example, the idea of an ethical commonwealth is brought into focus on the basis of the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal reality. In that sense, the idea of a kingdom-of-ends refers to a kind of "corpus mysticum" of all rational beings; it presupposes the absolute independence of individual a . . . In con



of a moral community found in the Religion moves beyond the individualism prominent in Kant's idea of a noumenal moral world. Here, Kant emphasizes that morality must develop within a community of virtue; it implies the moral interdependence of persons and indicates the necessity of socializing man into a state of morality.

It should be noted however, that Kant's claims about the dependence of the moral individual on a moral community does not necessarily contradict the principle of human freedom. Whereas the political-social order is founded on coercive laws and thus its conception rests on the paradoxical notion that man must be subject to restraints in order to be free, the idea of a visible religious-moral community rests more on a conception of man's enlightened conformity to law which proceeds from his moral freedom. True enlightenment, Kant declares, will prevail in time until "this form of debasing means of constraint can be exchanged, by unanimous consent, for an ecclesiastical form which squares with the dignity of a moral religion, to wit, the religion of free faith."<sup>1</sup>

It is also interesting to note the difference between Kant's idea of God as it is presented in the second Critique, and the way in which he understands the same idea in the Religion. Michel Despland, in his book on Kant's philosophy of history and religion, argues that the religious implications of the ethical commonwealth do in fact go beyond that found in Kant's ethical writings. Whereas in the earlier work on ethics God is the guarantor of the "summum bonum" or highest good insofar as He guarantees man's happiness in due proportion to his worthiness

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<sup>1</sup>Religion, p. 114.

to be happy, now in the Religion, "it takes an active dispensation of God or divine Providence for it [the moral commonwealth] to become a reality."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the highest good in its social aspect becomes the realized ethical commonwealth. And so, as Despland claims, belief in God is grounded not only in the necessity of securing the second or "perfect" condition of the highest good (i.e. happiness) but also in the necessity to guarantee the first or "supreme" condition of the highest good (i.e. the permanent preservation of the virtuous disposition within the moral community).<sup>3</sup>

In light of these developments, let us now explore the Religion in relation to Kant's philosophy of history. Among the authors who comment on this relation we find two diametrically opposing views. Michel Despland argues in his discussion of the idea of history as a process of mankind's education that the philosophy of religion arrives at a different kind of answer to the search for a "master". According to Despland, whereas the philosophy of history articulates the idea of education as something externally mediated through a pragmatic and essentially non-moral pedagogy, in the philosophy of religion, the educational process becomes interiorized. It is Despland's claim that Kant now makes of education something that must reform inwardly; it must "change the interior disposition of man's heart, and that takes a more delicate hand than the

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<sup>2</sup>M. Despland, Kant On History and Religion, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1973, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup>The idea of the highest good, inseparably bound up with the purely moral disposition, cannot be realized by man himself (not only in the matter of the happiness pertaining thereto, but also in the matter of the union of men necessary for the end in its entirety); yet he discovers within himself the duty to for

blows of fortune and the mechanisms of power among men."<sup>4</sup>

What this means to Despland as far as Kant's conception of man's moral progress is concerned is that, evil being now more deeply entrenched in man, "the dependence upon Providence increases and becomes more radical."<sup>5</sup> In other words, Despland wants to argue that the philosophy of religion presents us with a view of education that is ultimately centred around the concept of redemption. In Despland's account, the idea of historical education of men is, in the Religion, supplanted by the idea of a redemptive salvation of the race by God.

Actually, Despland's whole argument is rooted in what he refers to as the distinction in Kant's thought between the "ethico-juridical" and the "ethico-religious" tendencies. In this way, Despland refers to Kant's writings on history and politics as representing the ethico-juridical tendency, insofar as their main thrust is the idea of progress toward the realization of a perfectly rational society in history. Alternatively, the origin of the ethico-religious tendency is, for Despland, to be found in the second Critique. Here, the main thrust is the idea that man is already a noumenal perfection as an end-in-himself and is therefore to be treated as a member of the kingdom-of-ends. Despland then argues that the Religion is Kant's attempt to merge these two tendencies by presenting the notion of the kingdom-of-ends or, ethical community, as a future visible intra-historical community. Despland contends that with this merging Kant now allows us to hope for a moral

<sup>4</sup> Despland, Kant On History and Religion, p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

progress and for a morally perfect society realized on earth.<sup>6</sup>

While generally speaking I agree with the majority of Despland's claims, I do take issue, however, with his final conclusion. Despland sums up his argument with the following declaration: "the tension between the ethico-juridical and ethico-religious tendency is more firmly rooted in Kant than the synthesis that holds before us the hope of worldly moral and religious progress."<sup>7</sup> Despland bases his conclusion on evidence found in "Perpetual Peace", evidence which points to Kant's final pessimism about the possibility of conjoining morality and politics. For Despland, Kant's statements in that essay show that his sights have been lowered, so to speak. That is, the substance of "Perpetual Peace" suggests (to Despland) that Kant is now only looking for the kind of progress of which even devils are capable.

It seems to me, however, that Despland fails to make certain important distinctions in this regard. First of all, it is to be remembered that Kant differentiates between the problem of organizing a particular civil state and the problem of establishing a world-republic. In this sense, the necessary conditions of establishing a well-organized society are essentially non-moral. History merely exploits the kind of tension between reason and inclinations of which "intelligent devils" are probably the best exemplars. On the other hand, for Kant, the idea of a true world-republic requires a moral solution. A federation of states and perpetual peace cannot be achieved through legal coercion, but must issue from a genuine moralization of mankind. Hence, Kant's

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

philosophy of religion and the manner in which it is intended to address the problem of moral progress in history is not necessarily undermined by Kant's political statement about a "race of devils". Indeed, moral progress in the future, cultivated and impelled through history by the "spiritual power" of religion, still represents an important step beyond the "glittering misery" of political progress toward the formation of a rational state. It even represents a significant step beyond what Kant spoke of in the philosophy of history as a "league of nations". This is so because the idea of a league of nations rests on Kant's conception of the exploitation in history of the conflict between particular states. War then, leads to the establishment of international law. But this results in basically nothing more than a balance of power; it does not solve the problem of establishing permanent peace through universal moral improvement of men, a problem whose solution ultimately rests on the gradual dissemination of the religion of "free faith".

Despland's conclusion, moreover, results from an additional failure to grasp comprehensively the full scope of Kant's philosophy of religion. Though it is true that one aspect of the history of the education of mankind is, in the Religion, now articulated through the idea of Providential redemption, this does not capture in its entirety the essence of Kant's conception of religion. For example, while according to Kant, the idea of God does, for revealed religion (i.e. Christianity), unfold as a transcendent idea, at the same time and in relation to the "religion of reason", 'God' is essentially immanent in practical reason itself. This immanence is clear in Kant's definition of religion--i.e. the recognition of all duties as

history of religion does necessarily speak of man's perfection as something dependent on the redemptive activity of a transcendent God, in another sense, Kant's basic and central contention is that man himself is the executor of his own moral progress.

Carl Raschke, in his book entitled Moral Action, God and History In the Thought of Immanuel Kant, argues in a similar vein. Raschke in fact pushes his argument to the point where he over-emphasizes the immanent aspect of Kant's idea of God. Contrary to Despland, Raschke quickly dismisses the idea that, for Kant, divine dispensation is necessary if we wish to view history as progressing toward the erection of social institutions that favour moral growth. Raschke argues that the postulate of God is simply an "interim" concept, a concept designed merely to fill in the "gap" between what man ought to become and what he is in the present. In this way, Raschke criticizes Kant for failing to remain true to the inner logic of his own philosophical views. For, if Kant had done so, he would have made it clearer that "the idea of a higher wisdom, therefore, is a kind of coded expression of the ambiguity of the future."<sup>8</sup> In Raschke's view, Kant's idea of God is primarily intended as a symbolic representation of a future, and still unknown, moral perfection of mankind. It is Raschke's claim that Kant believes man himself will finally do away with this idea by narrowing the gap between the present and the future through moral progress. Man becomes gradually "godlike" and history "becomes the deification of man and the hominization of God."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>C. Raschke, Moral Action, God and History in the Thought of Immanuel Kant, Scholars Press, 1975, p. 221.

In the end, Raschke interprets Kant's conception of this development to mean that the God of theism inevitably comes to pass over into a sort of God of process.

But it seems to me, if my reading of Raschke is correct, that he errs in the opposite direction to Despland. In Kant's presentation, God is neither exclusively immanent (as perhaps Providence seemed immanent under the name of nature in Kant's historical writings) nor completely transcendent; Kant does not conceive of God either solely as "process" or as active redemption. In an important sense, Kant tries to reconcile these two aspects of the idea of God; he attempts to reconcile them in a way which does full justice to his profound sense of the limits and of the freedom of man. Kant's idea of God is not intended to reaffirm the a-historical locus of human destiny, rather it is intended to secure for man the mandate to work in history.

To dismiss Raschke's point out of hand, however, would be a little premature. Raschke does not so much misrepresent Kant's view of God as he simply fails to take into account additional material (such as can be found in the Religion, for example) which offers new insights into the issue. In fact, Raschke's treatment of the Religion is cursory at best and he appears to base his discussion of the concept of God on Kant's philosophy of history rather than on the philosophy of religion. Raschke's argument than, is rather one-sided in that it neglects Kant's description in the Religion of the degree to which human capacities and powers are essentially limited. Man is and always will be both an animal and a rational being. Though man's capacity for reasoning qualifies him as a 'rational being' and in that sense "divine-like" (as Ras

Kant's doctrine of radical evil necessitates the kind of innovation in Kant's 'critical' theology' as we find evident in the Religion.

If anything, Kant's belief in man's innate propensity toward evil tends to maximize the contrast between man and God. Not only is man qua animal subject to the irrational play of passions and desires (unsocial sociability) but now man qua rational being also manifests an intrinsic flaw--the tendency towards evil. This so-called 'gap' that Raschke suggests is designed to be filled in by the 'interim' concept of God is incontrovertibly permanent.<sup>10</sup> Given Kant's premise that man has a propensity toward evil, Kant's concept of God must be qualitatively different from any sort of generic projection of what mankind may become in the future. Man in history is capable of becoming a cultured being but historical progress can never guarantee the last step towards moral perfection. In a sense, the concept of radical evil serves as a formal limiting concept and it seems plausible to suggest that this limiting concept was proposed by Kant as an unequivocal demarcation point distinguishing man from God. Contrary to Raschke, the Religion says more of man's 'hominization' than of his 'divinization'.

In conclusion then, we must acknowledge that, for Kant, the idea of progress ultimately has no definitive moral solution. Man is and always will be imperfect. As Kant says at one point, "man must always be constrained to do that which reason prescribes through law."<sup>10</sup>

It is precisely because of this fundamental human imperfection that Kant was led to focus with such intensity and to place such a heavy burden

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<sup>10</sup>I. Kant, "The End of All Things", On History, pp. 69-84, p. 82.



on the idea of education. And, it was his recognition of man's need for education that impelled him to write that "the greatest and most difficult problem to which man can devote himself is the problem of education."<sup>11</sup> In the final analysis, man always perceives himself as a historical being and, for Kant, this meant that man must be constrained to make himself into what he ought to become. As it was presented in the philosophy of history, however, nature's pedagogy is essentially non-moral and is thus a continual threat to the freedom and dignity associated with humanity. Similarly, political and legal constraints can only serve as a source of external discipline; political authority can never command respect for the law. Consequently, as it has been the burden of my third Chapter to show, Kant was finally led to seek in the religious institution, an institution located within the wider political sphere, for a source of non-coercive education of man. Although man is an animal which, if it lives among others of its kind, needs a master, the kind of "master" for which Kant ultimately sought was not a "tamer" of men but a true 'pedagogue', an authority given over to instituting that kind of progressive education of the race which constrains through guidance rather than coercion.

It must be admitted finally that in Kant's vision of man's destiny moral perfection may never be realized in history. Indeed, on Kant's own terms, perfection would have to signal the end of time--the end of progress--and yet man is, of course, a being who cannot escape time. We can conclude then, that for Kant, it is not the end of historical

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<sup>11</sup>I. Kant, On Education, trans. A. Churton, D. C. Heath and Co., 1906, p. 11.

progress, but rather, progress itself which must become the object of hope. The moral individual can only survive in the appropriate kind of social order, but the reality of social life is such that man must always be constrained to reform human society, he will always require a "master". Perhaps certain tensions may be an inherent part of man's historical being; but it is these very tensions that ground the "dialectic" through which man's progress itself is impelled into the future. In fact, it is Kant's belief that moral progress can only be nourished through tension and conflict, for, as he remarked in "Perpetual Peace", conflict will always remain "indeed it ought to remain, because it serves as the whetstone of virtue..."<sup>12</sup> For Kant, meaning in history is to be found not only in the reaching of the goal; it must also be found in the preservation of the challenge.

As the reader will no doubt already have noted, the intent of this thesis has been largely expository. I have attempted to set out an exegesis of some of Kant's later works in an effort to elucidate the harmony and theoretical reciprocity governing the relationship between Kant's political philosophy, his philosophy of history and his philosophy of religion. These three aspects of Kant's thought form a systematic whole and, taken together, represent Kant's serious attempt to resolve the tensions and problems that threaten the critical philosophy at its most vulnerable point--the dichotomy between nature/causality on the one hand and freedom/morality on the other. But my desire to undertake a study of Kant's philosophy of history does not necessarily imply that I agree with all its premises. Perhaps then, some final comments of a more critical nature would be in order.

It is not difficult to pinpoint the origins of Kant's philosophy of history within traditional theology of history and Christian eschatology. For instance, Kant borrowed much in the way of secular theory concerning history from theological doctrines: the political destiny of nations was tied to the idea of a divine or pseudo-divine vocation; it involved the idea that any system of meaning for a philosophy of history must be founded on the hope and expectation of an eschatological future; and, finally, there was the conviction that the world lies in evil and has to be saved. In some very obvious ways Kant's philosophy of history is little more than a secular messianism. However, the fact that Kant tended toward eclecticism in the philosophy of history is not the most telling point against him.

The crucial factor is Kant's attempt to develop a philosophy of history by adopting a secularized version of theology of history. History therefore, has meaning because there is some intelligence governing its purposive movement. Yet Kant's own critical framework disallows any traditional statements or claims concerning God as a sort of divine agent or providential deity. Statements about God according to Kant, have validity because they hold belief value, not because they have any theoretical status. Consequently, Kant severed the fundamental connection between an eschatological conception of a salvific future and the accompanying belief in the existence of a divine agency at work in history. In other words, Kant leaves us with what amounts to a secular theology of history which lacks any ontological foundations.

In the final analysis, when Kant speaks of the idea of historical progress he means little more than a set of propositions that have merely regulative status and whose validity depends solely on a

system. History has a purpose according to Kant not because God actually works through it, but because it is morally salutary to give credence to such a claim. It seems to me that in the very attempt to secularize the theological conception of progress Kant has elaborated a history of salvation whose final goal cannot be guaranteed either by man or God; the future exists solely on the basis of expectation and hope.

It may be that in the end the notion of Providence (such as we find in Kant's "Conjectural Beginning", for example) is fundamentally incompatible with the secular idea of history. But apart from this particular problem, a problem that seemed to plague many Enlightenment theories of history (at least those theories that tended to preserve the place of religion within the conception of historical progress toward a secular millenium), another internal and perhaps more critical difficulty reveals itself. That is, Kant's philosophy of history in general manifests a profound ambiguity with respect to the idea of history: we are told to accept our historical destiny as a matter of fate, and at the same time, to believe in man's responsibility and freedom of will, a will which is always directed to a future still open for possibilities.

Ultimately, this sort of ambiguity reveals Kant's inability to develop a successful theoretical mediation between a natural world indifferent to human will and a human will unable to transform that world in conformity to moral purposes. It is in this sense that the Cartesian dichotomy makes its presence felt within the critical system. Kant perceived a genuine discontinuity between nature and mind and the philosophy of history represents Kant's equally genuine attempt to overcome this theoretical dilemma. It is his task to show how intention (moral intention) can be translated into action. The argument fails, however,

for unity of spirit and matter, for unity of moral purpose and bodily action ends only with a restatement of the ~~problem~~ rather than a solution.

Kant's recognition of reason's impotence in the natural world led him to adapt the doctrine of natural teleology to the realm of human history thus concluding with an affirmation of progress. But this effort remains fundamentally hypothetical;--the notion of history inevitably challenges both the essence of man's humanity--i.e. his freedom--and the basis of natural science--i.e. the law of mechanical causality. If history is neither purely natural nor purely human then it is difficult to understand precisely what it is at all. Similarly, it then becomes difficult to see how Kant can accommodate a philosophy of history on ~~the~~ terms defined by the critical framework. The philosophy of history is neither science nor metaphysics (of morals); the question Kant neglects to answer is whether history can stand from the start as a legitimate object of philosophical investigation.

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