

Joel Thiago Klein¹Federal University
of Rio Grande do Norte

Kant's Idea of a Universal History as an Answer to the Question of Hope

This paper analyses four distinct aspects of the question “what may I hope?” and shows how these aspects are contemplated by Kant’s project of a universal history. Therefore, in order to understand the relation between a universal history and the issue of hope, I begin with the analysis of the following excerpt of the *IaG*:

It is, to be sure, a strange and apparently an absurd stroke, to want to write a *history* in accordance with an idea of how the course of the world would have to go [*sein sollte*] if it were to conform to certain rational ends; it appears that with such an aim only a *novel* could be brought about. If, nevertheless, one may assume that nature does not proceed without a plan or final aim even in the play of human freedom, then this idea could become useful (...). (*IaG*, AA 08: 29)²

Two aspects are very important here. *The first* concerns the fact that universal history is a project according to which the world *should be* [*sein sollte*]. Kant uses the verb “should” in the verb tense called *Konjunktiv II*. He could simply have said: ‘*wie der Weltlauf gehen müßte, wenn er gewissen vernünftig Zwecken angemessen wäre*’, which means ‘how the course of the world would have to go, in case it adjusts itself to rational ends’, or even ‘*wie der Weltlauf gehen müßte, weil er gewissen vernünftig Zwecken angemessen sein soll*’, which means, ‘how the course of the world would have to go, because it must adjust itself to rational purposes’. Why did he not choose these forms? In the first alternative, universal history would be a part of the Metaphysics of nature, in the second one, it would be

¹ Professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy at Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil) and Researcher from CNPq (Brazil). The content of this paper is also a chapter of my book “*Kant e a ideia de uma história universal*”, Loyola, 2016.

CV: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6509960442502778>.

² All works of Kant will be cited according to the *Akademie Ausgabe* (Kant, I.: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Hrsg.: Bd. 1-22 Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 23 Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, ab Bd. 24 Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Berlin 1900ff.), following the translation from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Kant, I.: *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-). In the quotes, italics are Kant’s and the bolds are mine.

a part of the Metaphysics of morals. However, he rejects both forms. *The second point* refers to the *utility* of the project, what indicates that universal history has not a theoretical intention, because in this case it should be attempting to offer true-value statements.

After the excerpt above, Kant presents *four kinds of utility of a universal history*: a systematic and theoretical utility for understanding the aggregate of history as system; two pragmatic utilities, find a thread for the explanation of such a tangled game of the human things and the possibility of the art of predicting future political changes as well as to relieve the weight of history as an accumulation of facts and narratives for next generations; and finally, a moral utility, namely:

there will be opened a consoling prospect into the future (which without a plan of nature one cannot hope for with any ground), in which the human species is represented in the remote distance as finally working itself upward toward the condition in which all germs nature has placed in it can be fully developed and its vocation here on earth can be fulfilled. (IaG, AA 08: 30)

However, in the context of transcendental philosophy only the *practical* utility related to the hope can indicate a sufficient ground for transcendental legitimacy of universal history, because all the others are partial and contingent.

If we cross what is in this excerpt with the considerations made by Kant regarding the issue “what may I hope?” in *Critique of pure reason*, one can point out *four* important aspects of the relation between universal history and hope.

1st Aspect: The disinterested interest. The issues presented at the end of *KrV* are not an anthropological analysis of the reason, nor are they result of a generalization made from these selfish interests. For Kant, they are issues to which ‘every interest of my reason’ (both theoretical and speculative) addresses, therefore ‘reason’ is understood here as *pure reason*. One distinctive characteristic of this interest is the *universality*, which means, it is not restricted to a few people or certain cultures, but it arises from the inherent activity of pure reason. The other feature is the *disinterest*, which means that it has nothing to do with the searching for some empirical satisfaction for the individual himself. In the essays regarding philosophy of history, this *disinterested interest* can be found in several passages, for example:

Yet here it remains strange that the older generations appear to carry on their toilsome concerns only for the sake of the later ones, namely so as to prepare the steps on which the latter may bring up higher the edifice which was nature’s aim, and that only the latest should have the good fortune to dwell in the building on which a long series of their ancestors (to be sure, without this being their aim) had labored, without being able

to partake of the good fortune which they prepared. (*IaG*, AA 08: 20)

This text was read wrongly by many commentators as if Kant had legitimated our suffering at the expense of an ideal future of happiness, or, which is even worse, as if he had instrumentalized the past generations and, by consequence, destroyed the grounds of his own moral philosophy.³ In fact, what Kant wants

³ The metaphor of these passage of *IaG*, namely of the generations laboring in bring up a higher edifice, where just the latest should have the good fortune to dwell “without being able to partake of the good fortune which they prepared” (*IaG*, AA 08: 20), gave rise to a long tradition of criticism that focuses specifically on the issue of moral heteronomy or of the instrumentalization of human beings. In other words, Kant would be suggesting that previous generations are treated simply as means rather than as ends in themselves, something that contradicts the fundamental principle of his ethics. Another formulation of this critique would be that the moral improvement of the disposition of species would facilitate the future agents to fulfill the moral duty, which could mean that the agents of later times would be better able to act morally than those of previous generations. This reading would also contradict the fundamental Kantian perspective that all men are morally responsible without any qualification; that is, that there is a universal standard of judgment of merit or guilt regardless of the historical period in which the agents find themselves. This criticism was formulated and discussed, according reverse temporal order, by Stern, P.: *The problem of history and temporality in Kantian ethics*. In: *Review of Metaphysics*, 1986, n. 39, pp. 505–545, p. 534, Arendt, H.: *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982, p. 77, Galston, W. A.: *Kant and the problem of history*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 233, and Fackenheim, E. L.: *Kant's concept of history*. In: *Kant-Studien*, 1956/57, n. 48, pp. 381–398, p. 392; 397). There is another even more radical version of this critique made by Medicus (Medicus, F.: *Kants Philosophie der Geschichte*. In: *Kant-Studien*, 1902, n. 7, pp. 1–22 and pp. 171–229), i.e., that the human generations are not viewed as the means for future generations, but the human species itself is taken as the means for a Nature conceived as a metaphysical entity. Kant was aware of these kinds of criticism because he himself reviewed and answered a similar criticism formulated by his former pupil, Herder in 1785. Herder's critique to Kant's philosophy of history follows two directions: on the one hand attributing to it the status of an averroen philosophy, “according to which the whole human species possesses but one mind, and that indeed of a very low order, distributed to individuals only piecemeal.” (Herder, J. G.: *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. Wiesbaden: Fourier Verlag, 1985, p. 403). On the other hand, pointing out that for Kant the existence of past generations is justified in view of the development of future generations, which transforms individuals into mere means, in other words, it would be a kind of an instrumentalization of individuals. Kant answers to these criticisms in two ways. First, he denies that there is a contradiction at say that the species can reach full development, but not the single individual, because only there would be a contradiction if we claimed that the species can develop, but not the individual, because this would mean the same as to say that no individual horse has horns, but the equine species has. Said another way, there would be a contradiction if the individual could not develop, but there is no contradiction if he just cannot reach the fullness of his development. Secondly, regarding the criticism of instrumentalization, Kant does not offer a clear response, but it can be inferred when he says that despite no individual can achieve their determination, he/she must guide all his efforts to conform with the intention of providence, i.e., the completeness of the development of the individual's dispositions is presented only as a regulative ideal that is very useful to guide their efforts in order to be conform with Providence's intentions, which are, in turn, the same as sustained by the pure practical reason. One aspect often inconsiderate in Kantian theory

to emphasize in this excerpt is the *disinterest* which can be perceived (not always, but often) when the generations work to provide “better living conditions” to the future generations, even disregarding of whether they have a family relationship. *It is an indication, a sign, that can and has to be interpreted as an “incorporation” of that unselfish interest of pure reason.* In another excerpt of *TP* the same aspect is approached:

This hope [*Hoffnung*] for better times, without which an earnest desire to do something profitable for the general well-being would never have warmed the human heart, has moreover always influenced the work of well-disposed people; and even the good Mendelssohn must have counted on it when he exerted himself so zealously for the enlightenment and welfare of the nation to which he belonged. For he could not reasonably hope [*hoffen*] to bring this about all by himself, without others after him continuing along the same path. Confronted by the sorry sight, not so much of those troubles that oppress human beings from natural causes as rather of those that they themselves inflict upon one another, the mind is nevertheless cheered up by the prospect that matters could become better in the future, and indeed with **unselfish benevolence**, since we shall be long in our graves and shall not harvest the fruits we have helped to sow. (*TP*, AA 08: 309. **Bolds added**)

This excerpt shows very clearly how hope and unselfish benevolence (which in this case is the same concept as disinterested interest, but with other terminology) are closely bound in the field of history of philosophy. After the death of Frederick William II in 1797 and the weakening of the law of censorship, Kant returns to this subject in the *Conflict of the faculties*, but with a special focus on the occurrence of French Revolution:

Concerning an occurrence in our time which demonstrates this moral tendency of the human race. This occurrence consists neither in momentous deeds nor crimes committed by human beings whereby what

of the regulative ideal is that, although it always remains an ideal, that is, although it is a concept that can never be schematized, no-one can never define a priori how much of it can be empirically accomplished. According to Kant, the practical ideas can really be given in concrete, but only in part. “Its execution is always bounded and defective, but within bounds that cannot be determined, hence always under the influence of the concept of an absolute completeness.” (*KrV*, B 385) “For whatever might be the highest degree of perfection at which humanity must stop, and however great a gulf must remain between the idea and its execution, no one can or should try to determine this, just because it is freedom that can go beyond every proposed boundary.” (*KrV*, B 374) This position is also founded in *IaG*, when Kant says that the reason could have inspired the States to enter into a federation of peoples without they having gone through so much devastation, shipwrecks and the overall exhaustion of their internal forces (Cf. *IaG*, AA 08: 24). That is, the human being could anticipate its terminal end if we heard the moral commandment.

was great among human beings is made small or what was small is made great, nor in ancient splendid political structures which vanish as if by magic while others come forth in their place as if from the depths of the earth. No, nothing of the sort. It is simply the mode of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself publicly in this game of great revolutions, and **manifests such a universal yet disinterested sympathy** [*allgemeine und doch uneigennützige Theilnehmung*] for the players on one side against those on the other, even at the risk that this partiality could become very disadvantageous for them if discovered. **Owing to its universality, this mode of thinking demonstrates a character of the human race at large and all at once**; owing to its disinterestedness, a moral character of humanity, at least in its predisposition, a character which not only **permits people to hope** [*hoffen läßt*] for progress toward the better, but is already itself progress insofar as its capacity is sufficient for the present. (SF, AA 07: 85. 1-18. **Bolds added**)

This disinterested and universal mode of thinking ‘proves the existence of a moral character in mankind and the reality of the progress’. The power of this ‘proof’ must be put in context of a theory of the rational belief. After all, it is empirically verifiable that there was a considerable amount of people (monarchists, aristocrats and supporters in general) who were completely averse to French Revolution. In this case, in any form it would be possible to legitimate in a strictly theoretical sense an affirmation as the following: “this revolution, I say, nonetheless finds in the hearts of **all spectators** (who are not engaged in this game themselves) a wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm the very expression of which is fraught with danger” (SF, AA 07: 85. 24-27. **Bolds added**). Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the historical sign *only indicates* something [*als hindeutend*]⁴. Because of our rational organization even the *weak evidence* [*schwachen Spuren*] of the approach of the end are very important (Cf. *IaG*, AA 08: 27). This indication only has theoretical value when it is thought of in the context of a *practical regulative knowledge*. This theory, whose attribution is essentially practical, has legitimacy for pointing to some events and *interprets* them *as if* they were proofs. In other words, through the practical interest of the pure reason one can interpret certain events as if they were an “empirical manifestation” of the moral disposition of the human being.

^{2nd} *Aspect: The particularity for granting the status of belief.* In the third question of the pure reason, Kant neither uses the verb “can” [*können*], nor the verb “should” [*sollen*], but the verb “to allow” [*dürfen*]. The answer to a question made with the verb can (*was kann ich hoffen?*) would be an answer that should be

⁴ For a similar analysis of this figure of the historical sign, see Hamm, Ch.: Sobre a sistematizabilidade da filosofia kantiana da história. In: *Veritas*, 2005, v. 50, n. 1, pp. 67–88, p. 84f.

placed in the field of the possible knowledge. It would be an empirical question with an equally empirical answer, because the question refers to all hopes that in fact the individuals may have, such as getting rich through a game of chance or finding the love of life. In this case, every representation of a desired future would be legitimate answers, as far as they do not contradict the laws of possible experience, because in this case they would be empty desires, such as the desire of breaking the laws of gravity and fly without the aid of instruments. However, a question made with the verb “should” [*was soll ich hoffen?*] would be, in principle, meaningless, because it is possible to impose someone what to do, but one cannot impose what one should hope.⁵

The verb “to allow” [*dürfen*] implies a practical condition as “if I do what I should, what may I then hope?”. Therefore, the third question of pure reason “is simultaneously practical and theoretical, so that the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, in its highest form, the speculative question.” (*KrV*, B 833). This means that the answer to this question must refer to what “is” or “would be”, but following the thread of “should”. The answer is not a theory about experience grounded on a theoretical interest of reason, but is a theory about a possible world, as far as we obey our duty. It can be said that the issue about hope has the function of making theoretically conceivable the issue of actualizing the good in a wide sense, which means, to make conceivable the possibility to actualize the *highest good*.⁶ From this, it can be said that the individual attains the right to believe in a universal history only as far as he acts morally. In other words, only the individual who strives to comply with the moral law can have hope that his actions will contribute to the progress, since the right to hope is dependent on the moral action. This conditionality creates a feature of subjectivity in relation to the response, which does not occur regarding the other two questions of pure reason. This “subjectivity” is emphasized by Kant when he uses the first person speech:

For my own part, I nevertheless put my trust in theory, which proceeds from the principle of right, as to what relations among human beings and states *ought to be*, and which commends to earthly gods the maxim always so to behave in their conflicts that such a universal state of nations will thereby be ushered in, and so to assume that it is possible (*in praxi*)

⁵ About the character of belief, see my paper Klein, J. T.: Sobre o significado e a legitimidade transcendental dos conceitos de precisão, interesse, esperança e crença na filosofia kantiana. In: *Revista Veritas*, 2014, v. 59, pp. 143–173.

⁶ Cf. “For it is not always within our power to provide ourselves with happiness, and the course of nature does not of itself conform with merit. Our good fortune in life (our welfare in general) depends, rather, on circumstances that are far from all being in our control. So our happiness always remains a wish that cannot become a hope, unless some other power is added” (*MS*, AA 06: 482.13–16).

and that it *can be*; but at the same time **I put my trust** (*in subsidium*) in the nature of things, which constrains one to go where one does not want to go (*fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*) **In the latter, account is also taken of human nature**, in which respect for right and duty is still alive, so that **I cannot and will not take** [*halten kann oder will*] it to be so immersed in evil that morally practical reason should not, after many unsuccessful attempts, finally triumph over evil and present human nature as lovable after all. Thus on the cosmopolitan level, too, it can be maintained: What on rational grounds holds for theory also holds for practice. (TP, AA 08: 313. 07-19. **Bolds added**)

This peculiar character of the status of belief can be expressed in Kant's terminology asserting that the issue of hope raises only a territory, but not a particular domain in the architecture of the human knowledge.⁷

Therefore, I disagree here to Geismann, who states that:

bezieht sich nur die Frage: Was darf ich hoffen, wenn ich *pflichtmäßig* handle, auf die phänomenale Welt, nicht dagegen die Frage: Was darf ich hoffen, wenn ich *aus Pflicht* handle. Moralität kann als solche in dieser Welt keinen Effekt haben. Also kommt es für einen solchen Effekt auch nicht auf die Triebfeder an.⁸

According to what was shown so far, this reading is mistaken because the pure reason could not answer a question which had the assumption simply as an action *according* to duty. An individual who acts only according to duty has only the right to expect that he will not be punished for any legal institutions, because he respected the external limits of the freedom of others. It is not possible to legitimize any rational hope for this action, after all, the universal history could not be seen as an answer to the action of someone who acted without any intent to which the *rational hope* (belief) aims to answer. In fact, the problem would be even greater, because a person, who acts consciously only according to duty and claims to believe in the progress, would be *lying*.⁹ In other words, this person is aware that his action has no relation to which pure reason prescribes, therefore,

⁷ About the concepts of domain and territory cf. KU, AA 05: 174.

⁸ Geismann, G. *Kant und kein Ende. Studien zur Moral-, Religions- und Geschichtsphilosophie*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009, 110, n. 748.

⁹ Cf. "One cannot always stand by the *truth* of what one says to oneself or to another (for one can be mistaken); however, one can and must stand by the *truthfulness* of one's declaration or confession, because one has immediate consciousness of this. For in the first instance we compare what we say with the object in a logical judgment (through the understanding), whereas in the second instance, where we declare what we hold as true, we compare what we say with the subject (before conscience). Were we to make our declaration with respect to the former without being conscious of the latter, then we lie, since we pretend something else than what we are conscious of." (MpVT, AA 08: 267. 27-35)

it cannot have any relation to what pure reason can answer regarding the issue of hope, namely, about legitimacy of belief in a continuous moral progress of the human species. In this sense, a strictly legal reading of the philosophy of history faces a strong systematic difficulty.

3rd Aspect: Hope is not a kind of waiting, but of believing. The third question is not formulated with the verb to wait/to expect [*erwarten*], but with the verb 'to hope' [*hoffen*]. This option also brings drastic consequences to the meaning of the issue itself. In the case of "to expect/to wait" [*erwarten*], the question would require a theoretical answer with a value of truth regarding the future. It could be tested. This test could be made in two ways (by verification or by refutation): coming to the future state in question and then proving its reality; or to the extent that one can assess the validity of the data analysis and the empirical laws from which the prediction is made and coming to the conclusion that the prediction is not satisfactorily grounded. In other words, *to expect/to wait* for something means assenting with some theoretical statement regarding a future event, which is temporally determined and submitted to the laws of experience and the possible knowledge. But *hope*, however, is presented as an assenting that can be neither verified nor refuted theoretically. In this case, the only thing to do is to present empirical experiences that can be *interpreted as evidences or signs of the progress*, that is, they are presented as arguments that intend to turn more theoretically "tangible" the "concreteness" of hope. In this sense, it is possible to read the following passage:

I do not need to prove this presupposition; it is up to its adversary to prove [his] case. (...) It does not matter how many doubts may be raised against **my hopes** [*Hoffnungen*] from history, which, **if they were proved** [*wenn sie beweisend wären*], could move me to desist from a task so apparently futile; as long as these doubts cannot be made quite certain I cannot exchange the duty (as something *liquidum*) for the rule of prudence not to attempt the impracticable (as something *illiquidum*, since it is merely hypothetical); and however uncertain I may always be and remain as to whether something better is to be hoped for the human race, this cannot infringe upon the maxim, and hence upon its presupposition, necessary for practical purposes, that it is practicable. (...) Empirical arguments against the success of these resolutions, which are taken **on hope**, accomplish nothing here. For, that what has not succeeded up to now will therefore never succeed does not even justify abandoning a pragmatic or technical purpose (for example, that of flights with aerostatic balloons), still less a moral purpose that, if only it is not demonstratively impossible to effect it, becomes a duty. (TP, AA 08: 309f. **Bolds added**)

Therefore, hope is grounded in the certainty that its resolution cannot be refuted neither by *a priori* arguments, nor by empirical arguments; and

conversely “I rest my case on my innate duty, the duty of every member of the series of generations (...) so to influence posterity that it becomes always better” (*TP*, AA 08: 309). In *ZeF*, this point is reaffirmed:

In this way nature guarantees perpetual peace through the mechanism of human inclinations itself, with an assurance that is admittedly not adequate for *predicting* its future (theoretically) but that is still enough for practical purposes and makes it a duty to work toward this (not merely chimerical) end. (*ZeF*, AA 08: 368. 15-20)

In *SF*, Kant questions once again “how is a history a priori possible? - Answer: if the diviner himself *makes* and contrives the events which he announces in advance.” (*SF*, AA 07: 79f. 23-02. It is an ironic answer to those who believe it is possible to offer a theoretical and determining answer to this question, that is, while *waiting* for an event. But in the following excerpt, although the vocabulary is not always as rigorous as in other texts, since Kant uses the verb *erwarten* in many formulations, it is clear by the context that it is about the legitimacy of hope. Only on this reading key it is possible to make the following text coherent:

For we must also not hope for too much from human beings in their progress toward the better lest we fall prey with good reason to the mockery of the politician who would willingly take the **hope** of the human being as the dreaming of an overstressed mind.*

* (...) However late it may be, to hope someday for the consummation of a political product, as it is envisaged here [Plato’s *Atlantica*, More’s *Utopia*, Harrington’s *Oceana* and Allais’s *Severambia*], is a sweet dream; but that it is being perpetually approached is not only thinkable, but, so far as it is compatible with the moral law, an obligation, not of the citizens, but of the sovereign. (*SF*, AA 07: 92. 07-10)

Legitimate hope refers to something that can never happen in a complete and finished form, because to the human being “only the approximation to this idea is laid upon us by nature” (*IaG*, AA 08: 23. 24-25). Believing that this could indeed be held completely would be a ‘dreaming of an overstressed mind’, but not a rationally grounded hope.

Since the universal history is not a narrative thought in the field of prediction, a conformist interpretation, according to which the individuals could simply comfortably await the arrival of a better future, is excluded. Conversely, the universal history is presented as an answer that prevents the individual from slowly becoming a misanthrope. In this sense the possibility of a universal history is put in *TP* in the context of the issue of whether the humankind can be loved or

if it should be a scorned object, to which one does good, but rolls the eyes with contempt (Cf. *TP*, AA 08: 307. 05-08). Therefore, Kant emphasizes that:

Such a *justification* of nature – or better, of *providence* – is no unimportant motive for choosing a particular viewpoint for considering the world. For what does it help to praise the splendor and wisdom of creation in the nonrational realm of nature, and to recommend it to our consideration, if that part of the great showplace of the highest wisdom that contains the end of all this – the history of humankind – is to remain a ceaseless objection against it, the prospect of which necessitates our turning our eyes away from it in disgust and, in despair of ever encountering a completed rational aim in it, to hope for the latter only in another world? (*laG*, AA 08: 30. 21-28).

Before moving to the next aspect it is important to make a consideration regarding a possible issue on the application of the concept of belief/faith to the idea of a universal history.¹⁰ In this case, what is the meaning of belief in the case of history? The belief refers indirectly to a transcendent object, in the sense that it presupposes that the world was created in a way that it is not contradictory to the process of moralization. In this sense, the moral law has no strength enough for sustaining the reality of the progress (the thesis 'should implies can' doesn't apply here¹¹), but it must be assumed that there is no element in the anthropological constitution of the human being that prevents him of creating extended plans (intersubjective, intercultural, intergenerational) that promote the Enlightenment, that is, the assumption that humankind is not opposed to enlightenment. This assumption depends on a teleological understanding of the world, which, in turn, refers on the concept of a good and wise creator of the world (an object that transcends the limits of the human experience). Therefore, one can speak of a belief regarding universal history in a derivative sense.

4th Aspect: Two different answers for two distinct perspectives. According to Kant, "every hope is related to happiness", but this hope must be seen also as bounded to the moral law, not as prudence rule, but as a law that seeks only *the merit of being happy*. But, at least in *KrV*, the concept of happiness that comes as an answer to hope is not a common and empirical concept of happiness, which is not more than an ideal of the imagination. As Düsing demonstrates in a very convincing way,

¹⁰ I want to thank Hans Christian Klotz for calling this point to my attention.

¹¹ About this see Allison, H.: The gulf between nature and freedom and nature's guarantee of perpetual peace. In: *Eighth international Kant-congress*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995, v. 1, pp. 37–49, p. 46; Kleingeld, P.: *Fortschritt und Vernunft: Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995, p. 55.

Kant stellt damit in den *Reflexionen* der siebziger und der frühen achtziger Jahre und z. T. auch in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* einen Begriff der Glückseligkeit auf, der von seinem späteren Begriff der Glückseligkeit deutlich unterschieden ist. (...) Die Glückseligkeit als Bestandteil des höchsten Gutes kann also nicht empirisch bedingt sein. Sie muß vielmehr als intellektuelle Glückseligkeit vorgestellt werden. (...) Diese Glückseligkeit ergibt sich aus der freien Einwilligung des Einzelnen in das Gesetz des allgemeinen Willens; das Bewußtsein dieser Zusammenstimmung ist nach Kant selbst schon ein Zustand des Glücks und der Freude, die hier rein intellektuell sind. (...) [Also] Die wahre Glückseligkeit ist nicht die Befriedigung natürlicher Bestrebungen, Antriebe und Bedürfnisse, d. h. sie ist nicht physisch, sondern muß, da sie notwendiger Erfolg der Sittlichkeit innerhalb des höchstens Gutes sein soll, als Glückseligkeit der "Verstandeswelt" vorgestellt werden.¹²

In other words, it is important to emphasize here that when Kant affirms in *KrV* that all hope of the pure reason is directed to the happiness, in this case, "Glückseligkeit ist eigentlich nicht die (größte) Summe des Vergnügens, sondern die Lust aus dem Bewustseyn seiner Selbstmacht zufrieden zu seyn" (*RefI 7202*, AA 19: 276), as autarchy of pure reason. This concept of happiness, as positive self-contentment, loses its meaning, according to Düsing, and it is replaced in the *KpV* by a mere 'negative self-contentment', in the sense of a conscience of independence of self-determination regarding sensitive impulses. However, I disagree with Düsing, because it seems that there are three distinct concepts of happiness in *KpV*: the first, a "merely empirical" concept, as ideal of the imagination (Cf. *KpV*, AA 05: 22-28); the second, a negative self-contentment that represents, as emphasized by Düsing, a conscience of the independence of its self-determination which, in this case, has nothing to do with the concept of higher good (Cf. *KpV*, AA 05: 116-118); and the third concept, which is thought as the element of the highest good. This third concept is represented as an ideal of practical reason that has to think on a system in which the virtuous individual is recompensed by his action. In this case, the human being needs elements of the first concept of happiness, that is, must relate to a present positivity in the satisfaction of the sensitive impulses, but also needs elements of the second concept, i.e., must be a consequence of a will determined by moral law. In other words, the third concept of happiness is not merely negative, because it is nor a mere contentment knowing that one has acted out of duty, but it is also not merely empirical, because it does not depend on a simple ideal built by the faculty

¹² Düsing, K.: Das Problem des höchstens Gutes in Kants praktischer Philosophie. In: *Kant-Studien*, 1971, n. 62, pp. 5–42, p. 23f.). See also Düsing, K.: *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*. Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1968.

of imagination. It is possible to state that the third concept of happiness represents a world in which empirical consequences of the good actions of the moral subject would also bring beneficial results. In other words, it is the representation of an empirical world that would be according to the wishes of a moral individual instead of a representation that is according to the selfish wishes of some subject.¹³ It seems that this is exactly the definition of happiness that constitutes the third concept:

Happiness is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*, and rests, therefore, on the harmony of nature with his whole end as well as with the essential determining ground of his will. (KpV, AA 05: 124. 21-25)

The relation between hope and this moral concept of happiness can also be double, depending on the relation in which the agent is represented. It is suggested here that the third issue of pure reason can be separated in two different questions: (3.1) 'When I do what I should, what may I wait *for me?*'; or (3.2) 'When I do what I should, what may I wait *for humankind?*' Naturally, the answers to each of these questions are different, although they have common elements.

In the first case, the answer focuses on the perspective of the moral individual and refers to an after-world, because the rules of nature cannot be broken by any divine interference. In this sense, the representation of a highest good can only be thought in a legitimate way in a world that is not the empirical one we know, by consequence, this representation needs the postulates of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.

In this sense, the rational religion offers an answer to the question about the hope from the point of view of the individual agent and it cannot be linked to any universal history *in strict sense*, because

we cannot expect to draw a *universal history* of the human race from religion on earth (in the strictest meaning of the word); for, inasmuch as it is based on pure moral faith, religion is not a public condition; each human being can become conscious of the advances which he has made in this faith only for himself. (RGV, AA 06: 124. 11-13)

Moreover, the answer to this question is rather precarious, because the "after-world" remains completely unrepresentative in the sense that it overcomes even the symbolic and regulative capacity of reason. In other words, besides the postulates it is not possible to think any other symbolic content regarding

¹³ Kleingeld, P.: *Fortschritt und Vernunft: Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants*, 1995, p. 153f. also defends an interpretation that follows this reasoning.

what this condition would be.¹⁴ Therefore, in the book *RGV*, the rational discourse ends up restricting itself to a moral criticism to the institutions and to Bible's representations.

In the second case, the answer focuses on the individual as member of a species and the progress that needs to occur in *this world*. When the duty is fulfilled, then reason focuses on the issue regarding what consequences it can hope for other human beings in the world. Therefore, the second perspective of the question focuses on the future history of the humankind. But to answer this question there must be an extensive theory regarding the relation between human history and nature, because the representation of an "intention of the Nature" and a teleological theory is the only rational way to establishing a rational link between the two forms of legislation, namely the moral law and the laws of nature. This happens due the rational need involved in the idea of nature itself, as a system of laws that cannot be broken, since they are in movement. Even a teleological nature must respect this criterion, that is, if there is a teleology, it must be present in all nature (present, past and future) and in all fields (from the micro-organisms to the humankind, understood as species, that is, not restricted to a cultural field). Therefore, the representation of a teleological nature in Kant's perspective is extremely formal, restricting itself only to aspects that are very general regarding the way in which is possible to think that moral actions have positive effects on the progress of humankind.

The perspective of teleological nature does not claim more than the existence of a moral disposition that can be empirically actualized from the individual and collective intentional efforts in the creation of institutions that maintain and promote freedom. To be able to think of an *indefinite* and *constant progress* towards the development of freedom it is necessary to assume *mutatis mutandis* in the philosophy of history two "postulates", which will form the basis to think on a moral teleology, that is, first, the postulate of the existence of a Nature wisely organized according to the intention of a wise and moral Creator; and second, the

¹⁴ Trying to theorize about the immortality of the soul, for example, leads to the puzzles which one can hardly believe that Kant worried (Cf. Beck, L. W.: *A commentary on Kant's Critique of practical reason*. London/Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, 270f.). In *RGV* Kant explicitly suggests that the objects of the religious belief must be interpreted as regulative principles and not as constitutive and dogmatic principles: "In general, if, instead of [extending it to] the *constitutive* principles of the cognition of supersensible objects into which we cannot in fact have any insight, we restricted our judgment to the *regulative* principles, which content themselves with only their practical use, human wisdom would be better off in a great many respects, and there would be no breeding of would-be knowledge of something of which we fundamentally know nothing - groundless though indeed for a while glittering sophistry that it is, at the end unmasked as a detriment to morality." (*RGV*, AA 06: 71n.)

postulate of the immortality of the species.¹⁵

In this sense, the concept of happiness that can be represented in the field of philosophy of history is neither a concept valid for the moral agent as individuum, nor a concept regarding merely the satisfaction of empirical wishes. It is a sort of *rational contentment regarding the natural condition of humankind in the world and not a sensitive satisfaction with its current historical and empirical state*. The following excerpts should be understood in this sense:

Nature has willed that the human being should produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical arrangement of his animal existence entirely out of himself, and participate in no other happiness or perfection than that which he has procured for himself free from instinct through his own reason. (IaG, AA 08: 19. 18-22)

The natural incentives to this, the sources of unsociability and thoroughgoing resistance, from which so many ills arise, which, however, impel human beings to new exertion of their powers and hence to further development of their natural predispositions, thus betray the ordering of a wise creator; and not the hand of an evil spirit who might have bungled his splendid undertaking or ruined it in an envious manner. (*IaG*, AA 08: 21f. 35-04)

The role of the human being is thus very artificial. How it is with the inhabitants of other planets and their nature, we do not know; if, however, we discharge well this commission of nature, then we can well flatter ourselves that among our neighbors in the cosmic edifice we may assert no mean rank. Perhaps among them every individual might fully attain his vocation in his lifetime. With us it is otherwise; only the species can **hope** for this. (*IaG*, AA 08: 23n.)

And thus the result of an oldest history of humanity attempted by philosophy is contentment with providence and with the course of things human on the whole - which does not start from good and progress toward evil, but develops gradually from the worse toward the better; and each of us, for his part, is called upon by nature itself to contribute as much as lies in his power to this progress. (*MAM*, AA 08: 123. 23-27)

¹⁵ About the possibility of thinking universal history, I agree in some aspects with Lindstedt D.: Kant: progress in Universal History as a postulate of practical reason. In: *Kant-Studien*, 1999, n. 90, pp. 129-147. In order to avoid mistakes, what is said about the immortality of the humankind is not that it is immortal, because it is known that it is mortal. What one does not know is if it will necessarily perish. Because of the theoretical uncertainty of its future, it is assumed that for the purposes of representation of an infinite progress, that the species is immortal. Therefore, the postulates of the immortality and the immortality of the species have differences.

Therefore, it must be clear that Kant's philosophy of history seeks to dispel a possible dissatisfaction of the moral man with the world and with the providence, but not the dissatisfaction in relation to what he made of himself. Besides, the contentment with the providence can only be the result of a deserving to be happy, that is, a contentment that rational moral being can feel as far as he gains the right to believe that his actions are contributing to the moral progress of humankind.

The difference between the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of history is a consequence of addressing separately the question of the highest good. Both can be seen as distinct answers, but complementary to the question of hope. While the first answer points towards the individual perspective and an *after-world*, the second answer points towards the relation of the individual and its species, which needs to be restricted to the field of *this world*. In this sense, all the literature regarding Kant's problematic of the highest good can be placed on a new field. It is not necessary to deny the legitimacy of one approach over another, because both readings are not mutually exclusive.¹⁶

As far as the answer to the question (3.2) 'When I do what I should, what may I expect for *humankind*?' necessarily presupposes a bond between the Nature and freedom in *this world*, it is not enough to simply state that this bond is possible (logical possibility), it is necessary to show *how* indeed it is possible (real possibility). It is about presenting a theory that is capable to ensure the possibility of thinking the actualization of the highest good. In this sense, the answer to the question of hope related to the humankind is necessarily bond to a teleology, which is developed in a definitive form in the *KU* as a form of teleological judgement. This will remain as an important difference between the philosophy of history and the philosophy of religion, namely the universal history is essentially teleological, while the religion, in a strict sense, cannot be more than a "opaque place" recognized as possible and that can be occupied by the criticism of the historical religions from the point of view of the true religion.

Anyway, a moral teleology can lead to a moral theology, because both aspects of the question "what may I hope?" can be seen as coordinated. This is exactly what happens at the final paragraphs of the third *Critique*. In this sense, it may be said from a thinker with a strong systematic concern as was Kant that if he answered the first question "what can I know?" in the first *Critique* and the

¹⁶ In this case, against Förster, E.: "Was darf ich hoffen?" Zum Problem der Vereinbarkeit von theoretischer und praktischer Vernunft bei Immanuel Kant. In: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 1992, n. 46, pp. 168–185, p. 184f., it is possible to say that in the *RGV* it is not a text that seeks to defend a God that will ensure the concordance between happiness and worthiness to be happy in this world. Besides, the thesis of Förster that the question about the fact that the hope disappears completely in the *Opus postumum* does not seem to be an argument sufficient to sustain that this question is not important for Kant.

second question “what should I do?” in the second *Critique*, then would be no wonder that he had tried to offer a satisfactory answer to the third question “what may I hope?” in the third *Critique*.¹⁷

Abstract

Kant's Idea of a Universal History as an Answer to the Question of Hope

In this paper I defend the thesis that Kant's philosophy of history is systematically integrated into transcendental philosophy as it represents the project of a narrative that answers the question of the legitimate hope of pure reason.

Key words: Kant, universal history; hope; disinterestedness

Zhrnutie

Kantova idea všeobecných dejín ako odpoveď na otázku nádeje

Predkladaný príspevok zastáva tézu, že Kantova filozofia dejín je systematicky integrovaná do transcendentálnej filozofie vzhľadom na to, že reprezentuje taký projekt narácie, ktorý odpovedá na otázku legitímnej nádeje čistého rozumu.

Kľúčové slová: Kant, všeobecné dejiny, nádej, nezaujatost

Prof. Dr. Joel Thiago Klein

Departamento de Filosofia, Centro de Ciências Humanas Letras e Artes

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte

Natal – RN, Brazil

jthklein@yahoo.com.br

¹⁷ In this sense, paraphrasing the suggestion of Thies, Ch.: Was darf ich hoffen? Kants „dritte Frage“ in seiner dritten Kritik. In: Kern, U. (Hrsg). *Was ist und was sein soll*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007, pp. 301–318, p. 318. However, stating this does not mean saying that when Kant wrote this text in the first *Critique*, he wanted to answer it only in the third, because it is well known that, in that moment, Kant believed that the *Critique of the pure reason* would be the only critical work, which would be sufficient to handle both theoretical and practical philosophy.