

CAMBRIDGE
CRITICAL
GUIDES

KANT'S

Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim

A Critical Guide

Edited by
Amélie Oksenberg Rorty
and James Schmidt

CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE

www.cambridge.org/9780521874632

This page intentionally left blank

KANT'S *IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH A COSMOPOLITAN AIM*

Lively current debates about narratives of historical progress, the conditions for international justice, and the implications of globalization have prompted a renewed interest in Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*. The essays in this volume, written by distinguished contributors, discuss the questions that are at the core of Kant's investigations. Does the study of history convey any philosophical insight? Can it provide political guidance? How are we to understand the destructive and bloody upheavals that constitute so much of human experience? What connections, if any, can be traced between politics, economics, and morality? What is the relation between the rule of law in the nation state and the advancement of a cosmopolitan political order? These questions and others are examined and discussed in a book that will be of interest to philosophers, social and political theorists, and intellectual and cultural historians.

AMÉLIE OKSENBERG RORTY is Lecturer in Social Medicine, Harvard University and Visiting Professor in Philosophy, Boston University.

JAMES SCHMIDT is Professor of History and Political Science at Boston University.

CAMBRIDGE CRITICAL GUIDES

Volumes published in the series thus far:

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

EDITED BY DEAN MOYAR AND MICHAEL QUANTE

Mill's *On Liberty*: A Critical Guide

EDITED BY C. L. TEN

Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*

EDITED BY AMÉLIE OKSENBERG RORTY AND JAMES SCHMIDT

KANT'S
*Idea for a Universal History
with a Cosmopolitan Aim*
A Critical Guide

EDITED BY
AMÉLIE OKSENBERG RORTY
AND
JAMES SCHMIDT



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521874632

© Cambridge University Press 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provision of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published in print format 2009

ISBN-13 978-0-511-53697-7 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-87463-2 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction: history as philosophy	
AMÉLIE OKSENBERG RORTY AND JAMES SCHMIDT	I
Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim	
IMMANUEL KANT (TRANSLATED BY ALLEN WOOD)	9
1 Teleology and history in Kant: the critical foundations of Kant's philosophy of history	
HENRY E. ALLISON	24
2 The purposive development of human capacities	
KARL AMERIKS	46
3 Reason as a species characteristic	
MANFRED KUEHN	68
4 Good out of evil: Kant and the idea of unsocial sociability	
J. B. SCHNEEWIND	94
5 Kant's Fourth Proposition: the unsociable sociability of human nature	
ALLEN WOOD	112
6 The crooked timber of mankind	
PAUL GUYER	129
7 A habitat for humanity	
BARBARA HERMAN	150
8 Kant's changing cosmopolitanism	
PAULINE KLEINGELD	171

9	The hidden plan of nature ECKART FÖRSTER	187
10	Providence as progress: Kant's variations on a tale of origins GENEVIEVE LLOYD	200
11	Norms, facts, and the philosophy of history TERRY PINKARD	216
12	Philosophy helps history RÜDIGER BITTNER	231
	<i>Bibliography</i>	250
	<i>Index of names and works</i>	256

Contributors

HENRY ALLISON is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Davis. His books include *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (1983), *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (1990), *Idealism and Freedom: Essays in Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy* (1996), and *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (2001).

KARL AMERIKS is the McMahon-Hank Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. His publications include *Kant's Theory of Mind* (1982; 2nd edn., 2000), *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (2000), *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (2003) and *Kant and the Historical Turn* (2006). He is co-editor of *The Modern Subject* (1995) and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (2000).

RÜDIGER BITTNER is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bielefeld. He is the author of *What Reason Demands* (1989) and *Doing Things for Reasons* (2001). He is the editor of Nietzsche's *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (2003).

ECKART FÖRSTER is Professor of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University and Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the Humboldt University in Berlin. He is the author of *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three 'Critiques' and the 'Opus Postumum'* (1989) and *Final Synthesis* (2000).

PAUL GUYER is Murray Professor in the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (1979), *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (1987), *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (1993), *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (2000), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom* (2005), and *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (2005). Along with Allen Wood, he serves as General Editor of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.

BARBARA HERMAN is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (1993) and *Moral Literacy* (2007), and the editor of John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (2000).

PAULINE KLEINGELD is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leiden. She is the author of *Fortschritt und Vernunft: Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants* (1995) and the editor of Immanuel Kant, *'Toward Perpetual Peace' and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* (2006).

MANFRED KUEHN is Professor of Philosophy at Boston University and is the author of *Scottish Common Sense in Germany* (1988) and *Immanuel Kant: A Biography* (2001).

GENEVIEVE LLOYD is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales and is the author of *The Man of Reason* (1984), *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators* (1993), *Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics* (1994), and *Spinoza and The Ethics* (1996), and the editor of *Feminism and the History of Philosophy* (2002).

TERRY PINKARD is Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University. He is the author of *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (1994), *Hegel: A Biography* (2000), and *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (2002).

AMÉLIE OKSENBERG RORTY is the author of *Mind in Action* (1991) and numerous essays on Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, and Hume. She has also edited *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (1980), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (1986), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (1992), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (1966), *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives* (2000), and *The Many Faces of Philosophy* (2003).

J. B. SCHNEEWIND is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (1977), *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant* (1990), and *The Invention of Autonomy* (1998).

JAMES SCHMIDT is Professor of History and Political Science at Boston University. He is the author of *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Between Phenomenology and Structuralism* (1985), and the editor of *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (1996) and *Theodor Adorno* (2007).

ALLEN WOOD is Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University. He is the author of *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (1990), *Kant's Ethical Thought* (1999), *Kant* (2004), and *Unsettling Obligations: Essays on Reason, Reality and the Ethics of Belief* (2002). Along with Paul Guyer, he serves as General Editor of the Cambridge University Press edition of the works of Immanuel Kant.

Abbreviations

Kant's works will be cited in the body of the text according to the volume and page number in *Immanuel Kants Schriften*, Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1902–), abbreviated in the list below as “Ak”.

The following abbreviations are used to refer to specific works by Kant.

EF	<i>Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf</i> (1795), Ak 8 <i>Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project</i>
G	<i>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</i> (1785), Ak 4 <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>Idea</i>	<i>Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht</i> (1784), Ak 8 <i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim</i>
KpV	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</i> (1788), Ak 5 <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
KrV	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (1781, 1787). <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> References to this work follow the convention of citing the pages of the first (“A”) and second (“B”) editions.
KU	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft</i> (1790), Ak 5 <i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>
Lec Eth	<i>Lectures on Ethics</i>
MA	<i>Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte</i> (1786), Ak 8 <i>Conjectural Beginning of Human History</i>
MS	<i>Metaphysik der Sitten</i> (1797–8), Ak 6 <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>
R	<i>Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft</i> (1793–4), Ak 6 <i>Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>

- Ref *Reflexionen*, Ak 14–23. References here are to the number of the Reflection and then to the volume and page in the Akademie edition.
- RH *Recensionen von J. G. Herders Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Teil 1–2, Ak 8
 Reviews of J. G. Herder's Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity, Parts 1–2
- T&P *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein
 taught aber nicht für die Praxis*, Ak 8
 *On the Common Saying: That May be True in Theory, But it is of
 No Use in Practice*
- VA *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), Ak 7
 Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint

Introduction: history as philosophy

Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt

Lively current debates about narratives of historical progress, the conditions for international justice, and the implications of globalization have prompted a renewed interest in Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*. The nine Propositions that make up this brief essay raise a set of questions that continue to preoccupy philosophers, historians, and social theorists. Does history, whether construed as a chronicle or as a set of explanatory narratives, indicate anything that can be characterized as meaningful? If so, what is its structure, its rationale and direction? How are we to understand the destructive and bloody upheavals that constitute so much of human experience? What connections, if any, can be traced between politics, economics, and morality? What is the relation between the rule of law in the nation state and the advancement of a cosmopolitan political order? Can the development of individual rationality be compatible with the need for the constraints of political order? Does the study of history convey any philosophical insight? Can it provide political guidance?

Kant's nine propositions subtly and implicitly express – and recast – some of the philosophical sources of his views: the voices of the Stoics and Augustine are heard clearly; and although Kant had reservations about Grotius, Hobbes, Leibniz, and Rousseau, their contributions, along with those of Mandeville and Adam Smith, are manifest in the *Idea for a Universal History*. It is as if this essay were a crucible in which Kant sought to synthesize the purified and transformed views of his predecessors, condensing them into a comprehensive political and cultural history with a philosophical moral. It is itself an instance of the integration of history and philosophical reflection that it heralds.

From the Stoics, Kant took the view that nature does nothing in vain, that its regularities are not accidental, but rather reveal a functional organization in which each part plays a necessary role, and that the exercise of rationality constitutes human freedom and finds its highest achievement in political cosmopolitanism. Kant followed Augustine in seeing a providential significance

in history; but Augustine distinguished the divine ordinance of the City of God from the temporal human city, while Kant focused on the way that human strivings – often antagonistically and inadvertently – bring about a realization of chiliastic hopes within human history. Like Grotius, he held that there are universal natural laws that, in conformity with human rationality, govern political and moral right among nations. While he agreed with Grotius that these laws are discovered rationally rather than empirically, Kant did not follow Grotius in resting the necessity and legitimacy of rational laws on divine authority. Nor did he share Grotius' assumption that human beings were naturally sociable; indeed, the species' fundamental unsociability looms large in his argument. Like Hobbes, Kant thought that peace and political organization arise from the rational recognition that competition and conflicts endanger the natural human inclination to self-protection. But Hobbes posited rationality as a precondition for the possibility of political organization, while Kant thought that rational civic organization emerged gradually from the recognition that antagonism threatens the natural instinct of self-preservation.

Along with Mandeville, Leibniz and Adam Smith, Kant maintained that there is a hidden pattern, a law that underlies – and harmonizes – the apparently destructive narrowly self-interested activities of mankind; the hidden hand of nature is manifest to those who know how to read history and economics aright. Yet in contrast to Mandeville, he did not believe that public virtue emerges from private vices: it is the product of rationally constructed political institutions. Like Smith, Kant thought that morality requires self-legislating reflective activity; but where Smith saw the origins of such activity in the development of moral sentiments, Kant located it in the activity of the rational will.

Kant shared Rousseau's distrust in the ability of social affections to provide a reliable source of rational morality. And, like Rousseau, he followed the Stoics in constructing a mythical story – a kind of natural history – of stages in the emergence of rational self-legislation. He shared Rousseau's conviction that the achievement of constitutional political organization is key to a just civil society and that genuine individual and political freedom consists in autonomy rather than in unrestricted inclination. But while Rousseau assumed that such harmony is possible only in small, isolated polities, Kant argued that only a cosmopolitan political organization can ensure the peace required to achieve such autonomy. Although he agreed with Leibniz that a providential order underlies the apparent random chaos of nature, he dissented from Leibniz's view that cosmic harmony expresses divine will. Moreover, while Leibniz's divinely ordained harmony is atemporal, Kant thought that cosmopolitan harmony could be attained by free human activity

through a long and antagonistic struggle: what Leibniz argued was an implication of metaphysics becomes, for Kant, the product of history.

Kant's successors echoed many of his essay's central insights, but – once detached from broader argument in which he had situated them – their significance was radically modified. Hegel also saw history as a narrative of the antagonistic but providentially progressive emergence of a rational and self-legislative world order, but he had reservations about what he saw as Kant's utopian hopes for a cosmopolitan world order. Marx shared Kant's conviction that history is driven forward by paradoxes and contradictions, but the concern with rights that lay at the heart of Kant's account of civil society played no role in his theory of society. Darwin and his followers would, like Kant, insist that the evolution of species is not the work of individuals (and, indeed, does not necessarily redound to their benefit), but they rejected his attempt to find signs of providence in the workings of nature. In the end, the precipitate from Kant's synthesized compound would prove as diverse as the elements that composed it.

If we take Kant at his word, the immediate impetus for his audacious synthesis was modest enough. A note by his colleague Johann Schultz in the *Gothaische Gelehrte Zeitung* had reported that Kant's "favorite idea" was the notion that "the final end of humankind is the attainment of the most perfect political constitution" and that Kant hoped a "philosophical historiographer" might undertake a history that would show "how far humanity has approached this final end in different ages, or how far removed it has been from it, and what is still to be done for its attainment." As Kant explained in the prefatory footnote, he wrote the article out of a concern that, in the absence of the "elucidation" that he now sought to provide, Schultz's summary "would have no meaning" (8:15).

Readers today typically encounter *Idea for a Universal History* in anthologies of Kant's writings on history or political thought. However, when it debuted in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* of November 1784 it appeared in markedly different company. Edited by Johann Erich Biester (librarian of the Royal Library in Berlin and secretary to Baron Karl Abraham von Zedlitz, a champion of Kant's work who served as Frederick II's minister for ecclesiastical and educational affairs) and Friedrich Gedike (a prominent educational reformer and Gymnasium director), the journal had been launched the previous December with the hope that it might attract writers who shared a "zeal for truth, love for the dissemination of useful enlightenment and for the banishment of pernicious error."¹ *Idea for a Universal*

¹ Editors' foreword to *Berlinische Monatsschrift* I (1783), pp. vii–viii.

History was the lead article – a testimony, perhaps, both to Kant's growing reputation and to Biester and Gedike's sense of the importance of his contribution for the broader aim of their fledgling journal – in an issue that included a series of reports (assembled by Biester) documenting the religious fanaticism, medical quackery, and popular prejudices that still held sway over the citizenry of Berlin, and the latest installment of an account of the social and cultural life of Berlin and its environs, allegedly written by an anonymous foreigner (who was not shy in pointing out the ways in which Berliners remained less than enlightened) but, in fact, the work of Biester's co-editor Gedike.² While the contributions from Gedike and Biester reflected the journal's interest in exposing – and, through this exposure, attempting to overcome – impediments to the enlightenment of the citizenry, a third item in the issue demonstrated how much had already been accomplished. The article in question was a reprint of a sermon from the previous century in which an earnest, but obviously unenlightened, clergyman sought to find theological significance in the recent birth of a pair of monstrously deformed piglets. As J. G. Selden observed in his prefatory note, however much the population of Berlin was still at the mercy of quacks and religious enthusiasts, one could take some consolation that its clergy had become somewhat more enlightened.³

Idea for a Universal History was the first of sixteen articles – addressing topics which ranged across the fields of ethics, history, anthropology, natural philosophy, and politics – that Kant contributed to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* over the next decade and a half.⁴ It was here that he published such well-known works as his answer to the question “What is Enlightenment?” (December 1784), “What is Orientation in Thinking?” (October 1786) – his intervention in the so-called “Pantheism Controversy,” the first chapter of *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1792), and his extended account of the relationship between theory and practice (September 1793), along with less familiar contributions to the fields of natural history (essays on lunar volcanoes and the alleged influence of the moon on the weather), theology (among them, his critique of Leibniz's *Theodicy*), anthropology (an essay on the concept of race), and law (a discussion of book piracy). In the pages of the *Berlinische*

² [Biester], “Anekdoten,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* II (1784), pp. 428–46, and [Gedike], “Ueber Berlin. Von einem Fremden,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* II (1784), pp. 447–70.

³ J. G. Selden, “Auszug aus einer märkischen Bußpredigt wegen zwei monströser Ferkel,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* II (1784), pp. 471–9.

⁴ For Kant's relationship with the journal, see Peter Weber, “Kant und die *Berlinische Monatsschrift*,” in Dina Edmunds, ed., *Immanuel Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Riechert Verlag, 2000), pp. 60–79.

Monatsschrift, Kant cut a rather different figure from that of the author of the three critiques: his general stance is more casual, the positions he takes up more frankly experimental, and his style considerably more accessible. He appears in a role that today would be described as that of “public intellectual”; in the terminology of his own day, it was here that he played his part as a member of the cosmopolitan community of readers and writers who made up the “Republic of Letters.”

In these essays, Kant made the cause of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* his own. Toward the close of his response to an article in the journal that, in passing, requested that those who had argued for the “enlightenment” of the citizenry first answer the question “What is enlightenment?,” Kant pondered the question of whether his was an “enlightened age.” He offered the cautious, but hopeful, response, “No, but it is an age of enlightenment” (8:40). *Idea for a Universal History* shared the same hope that the barriers that prevented the spread of enlightenment were in the process of being dismantled. Its eighth proposition held out the prospect that the removal of restrictions on the freedom of citizens, when coupled with a “general freedom of religion,” would result in an “enlightenment” that would “raise humankind even out of the selfish aims of aggrandizement on the part of its rulers ...” and “ascend bit by bit up to the thrones and have its influence even on their principles of government” (8:27).

In May 1793, the Berlin book merchant Carl Spener suggested to Kant that he produce an expanded version of the essay, applying its principles to the tumultuous events that had taken place in France. Kant declined, commenting that when “the powerful of this world are in a drunken fit” it would be advisable for “a pygmy who values his skin to stay out of their fight” (11:417). He did, however, return to the concerns of the essay four months later in his contribution to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* “On the Common Saying: That May be True in Theory, But it is of No Use in Practice,” an article whose final section considered the relationship of theory and practice “from a universally philanthropic, that is, cosmopolitan point of view” (8:307–9). The arguments first broached in *Idea for a Universal History* were given a more thorough reconsideration in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795) and in the sections of the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) devoted to “the right of nations” and to “cosmopolitan right” (6:343–55).

Kant’s essay has never lacked admirers. A chance encounter with it was enough to convince the poet Friedrich Schiller that he needed to engage in a more extensive reading of Kant’s work. In its pages Ernst Cassirer found the foundation for “the new conception of the essence of the state and of history that Kant had developed” and Jürgen Habermas was struck by the

"system-exploding" implications of an intertwining of philosophy and history in which "the philosophy of history itself was to become a part of the enlightenment diagnosed as history's course."⁵ But *Idea for a Universal History* has tended to be overshadowed by *Towards Perpetual Peace*, a work that was both more circumscribed in its theoretical apparatus and more focused in its political proposals. Friedrich Meinecke, for instance, paid little attention to the *Idea for a Universal History* in his classic study *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* and discussions of Kant's work by international relations theorists have tended to focus chiefly on *Towards Perpetual Peace*.⁶

The *Idea* has also long been available to English readers. It was among the first of Kant's works to be translated, appearing alongside Kant's response to the question "What is enlightenment?," his discussion of the relation between theory and practice, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and a number of his other contributions to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in John Richardson's two-volume collection of Kant's *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, and Various Philosophical Subjects* (1798–9).⁷ A second translation, by Thomas De Quincy, appeared in the *London Magazine* of October 1824 and, five years later, the Lake Poet Robert Southey interpolated De Quincy's translation of the propositions (but not Kant's comments on them) into *Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*.⁸ It was rendered into English once again at the close of the nineteenth century in William Hastie's collection *Kant's Principles of Politics* (1891).⁹ The emigré political scientist Carl Friedrich provided a partial translation of the essay in his 1949 compendium of Kant's philosophical and political writings.¹⁰ But Friedrich was chiefly interested in

⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 223. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. 116.

⁶ Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970). The focus of *Towards Perpetual Peace* among theorists of international relations stems, in large part, from its framing of what has come to be known as the law of the "liberal peace" – the thesis that republics will be less inclined to make war on one another. For a recent discussion of the literature, see Huntley, "Kant's Third Image: Systematic Sources of the Liberal Peace," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, 1 (1996).

⁷ Emanuel Kant, *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, and Various Philosophical Subjects* (London: William Richardson, 1798).

⁸ Kant, "Ideal for a Universal History on a Cosmo-Political Plan," *London Magazine* 10 (October 1824), pp. 385–93 (reprinted in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. Frederick Burwick [London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000], 4:204–16); Robert Southey, *Sir Thomas More, Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (London: John Murray, 1829), p. 408. Montesinos, More's partner in dialogue, praises Kant's work as an exception to "the trash and tinsel and insolent flippancy" that typically appears in literary magazines.

⁹ William Hastie, ed., *Kant's Principles of Politics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891), pp. 1–29.

¹⁰ Carl Joachim Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Kant* (New York: Random House, 1949), pp. 116–31.

Towards Perpetual Peace, in part because of the chronological accident of the sesquicentennial of its publication's falling in the same year as the founding of the United Nations.¹¹ A more serious engagement with *Idea for a Universal History* had to await Emil Fackenheim's discussion of Kant's writings on history in *Kant-Studien* and Lewis White Beck's influential collection of Kant's writings on history.¹²

The motifs of Kant's "Idea" continue to echo in the problems and issues central to contemporary philosophy and the philosophy of history. Historians and philosophers alike remain concerned about whether it is appropriate to speak of grand narratives of historical 'progress' or 'development.' Political and economic theorists argue about the relation between nationalism, global economics and cosmopolitanism. Social psychologists attempt to understand the sources of – and the constraints on – human aggression, the "unsocial sociability" of mankind. Public intellectuals wonder whether philosophical history – as it goes beyond local or national narratives – can play a role in ensuring civil justice.

Our authors have contributed to the further interpretation and understanding of the complexity and the audacity of Kant's synthesis. Allison explores the role that assumptions about teleology play in the essay, while Ameriks examines the way in which Kant applied the concept of purposiveness to his discussion of the development of human capacities. Kuehn focuses on the differing assumptions about human progress that distinguish Kant's arguments from those of his contemporaries. Schneewind and Wood shed new light on what was perhaps the most novel concept in Kant's arsenal: the notion that the progress of the human species is the product of its "unsociable sociability." Taking his point of departure from Kant's famous image of the human race as a "crooked timber" that could never be made "entirely straight," Guyer traces the evolution of Kant's reflections on justice. Herman analyzes the emergence and aims of civil society while Kleingeld explores the transformation of Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism. Förster analyzes the way in which *Idea for a Universal History* bound together the concepts of history, nature, and the development of the species, while Lloyd explores his debts to – and departures from – earlier accounts of

¹¹ This coincidence was the point of departure for Carl J. Friedrich, "The Ideology of the United Nations Charter and the Philosophy of Peace of Immanuel Kant 1795–1945," *Journal of Politics* 9, 1 (1947).

¹² Emil Fackenheim, "Kant's Concept of History," *Kant-Studien* 48 (1956–7). Lewis White Beck, ed., *Kant on History* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), pp. 11–26. Beck's collection was quickly followed by Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), and Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, translated by Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983).

the role of providence in history. Pinkard reflects on Kant's treatment (crucial for later German idealists) of the relationship between philosophical norms and historical facts and Bittner offers some reservations about the role that Kant assigned to philosophy in the history that he constructed. These essays, we hope, will serve to remind readers of the richness and subtlety of Kant's essay and to serve as a provocation for further engagement with its far-reaching implications.

The editors want to thank Allen Wood for permission to reprint his translation of *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, from the Cambridge Edition of *Kant's Writings on Anthropology, History and Education*, ed. Guenther Zoeller and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Karen Carroll for her generous editorial help. Amélie Rorty is also grateful to the *gemütlich* hospitality of the National Humanities Center and its grant of the William C. and Ida Friday Fellowship. James Schmidt thanks the Boston University Humanities Foundation for its support.

Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

This essay appears to have been occasioned by a passing remark made by Kant's colleague and follower Johann Schultz in a 1784 article in the *Gotha Learned Papers*.¹ In order to make good on Schultz's remark, Kant wrote this article, which appeared in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* late in the same year.

This is the first, and despite its brevity the most fully worked out, statement of his philosophy of history. The "idea" referred to in the title is a *theoretical* idea, that is, an a priori conception of a theoretical program to maximize the comprehensibility of human history. It anticipates much of the theory of the use of natural teleology in the theoretical understanding of nature that Kant was to develop over five years later in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. But this theoretical idea also stands in a close and complex relationship to Kant's moral and political philosophy, and to his conception of practical faith in divine providence. Especially prominent in it is the first statement of Kant's famous conception of a federation of states united to secure perpetual peace between nations.

The *Idea for a Universal History* also contained several propositions that were soon to be disputed by J. G. Herder in his *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*, leading to Kant's reply in his reviews of that work (1785) and in the *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786).

Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht was first published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* IV (November 11, 1784). The translation is based on the presentation of the work in AA 2:15–31 and was undertaken by Allen W. Wood.

¹ The passage referred to is the following: "A favorite idea of Professor Kant is that the final end of humankind is the attainment of the most perfect political constitution, and he wishes that a philosophical historiographer would undertake to provide us in this respect with a history of humanity, and to show how far humanity has approached this final end in different ages, or how far removed it has been from it, and what is still to be done for its attainment" (AA 8:468).

IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH
A COSMOPOLITAN AIM*

[8:17] Whatever concept one may form of the *freedom of the will* with a metaphysical aim, its *appearances*, the human actions, are determined just as much as every other natural occurrence in accordance with universal laws of nature. History, which concerns itself with the narration of these appearances, however deeply concealed their causes may be, nevertheless allows us to hope from it that if it considers the play of the freedom of the human will *in the large*, it can discover within it a regular course; and that in this way what meets the eye in individual subjects as confused and irregular yet in the whole species can be recognized as a steadily progressing though slow development of its original predispositions. Thus marriages, the births that come from them and deaths, since the free will of human beings has so great an influence on them, seem to be subject to no rule in accordance with which their number could be determined in advance through calculation; and yet the annual tables of them in large countries prove that they happen just as much in accordance with constant laws of nature, as weather conditions which are so inconstant, whose individual occurrence one cannot previously determine, but which on the whole do not fail to sustain the growth of plants, the course of streams, and other natural arrangements in a uniform uninterrupted course. Individual human beings and even whole nations² think little about the fact, since while each pursues its own aim in its own way³ and one often contrary to another, they are proceeding unnoticed, as by a guiding thread, according to an aim of nature, which is unknown to them, and are laboring at its promotion, although even if it were to become known to them it would matter little to them.

Since human beings in their endeavors do not behave merely instinctively, like animals, and yet also not on the whole like rational citizens of the world in accordance with an agreed upon plan, no history of them in conformity to a plan (as e.g. of bees or of beavers) appears to be possible. One cannot resist feeling a certain indignation when one sees their doings and refrainings on the great stage of the world and finds that [8:18] despite the wisdom appearing now and then in individual cases, everything in the large is woven together out of folly, childish vanity, often also out of childish

* A passage among the short notices in the twelfth issue of the *Gotha Learned Papers* this year, no doubt taken from my conversation with a passing scholar, elicits from me this elucidation, without which that passage would have no comprehensible meaning.

² *Völker* ³ *nach seinem Sinne*

malice and the rage to destruction; so that in the end one does not know what concept to make of our species, with its smug imaginings about its excellences. Here there is no other way out for the philosopher – who, regarding human beings and their play in the large, cannot at all presuppose any rational *aim of theirs* – than to try whether he can discover an *aim of nature* in this nonsensical course of things human; from which aim a history in accordance with a determinate plan of nature might nevertheless be possible even of creatures who do not behave in accordance with their own plan. – We want to see if we will succeed in finding a guideline for such a history, and want then to leave it to nature to produce the man who is in a position to compose that history accordingly. Thus it did produce a *Kepler*, who subjected the eccentric paths of the planets in an unexpected way to determinate laws, and a *Newton*, who explained these laws from a universal natural cause.

FIRST PROPOSITION

*All natural predispositions of a creature are determined sometime to develop themselves completely and purposively.*⁴ With all animals, external as well as internal or analytical observation confirms this. An organ that is not to be used, an arrangement that does not attain to its end, is a contradiction in the teleological doctrine of nature. For if we depart from that principle, then we no longer have a lawful nature but a purposelessly playing nature; and desolate chance⁵ takes the place of the guideline of reason.

SECOND PROPOSITION

In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth), *those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual.* Reason in a creature is a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows [8:19] no boundaries to its projects. But reason itself does not operate instinctively, but rather needs attempts, practice and instruction in order gradually to progress from one stage of insight to another. Hence every human being would have to live exceedingly long in order to learn how he is to make a complete use of all his natural predispositions; or if nature has only set the term of his life as short (as has actually happened), then nature perhaps needs an immense series of generations, each of which

⁴ *zweckmäßig*, which could also be translated 'suitably' ⁵ *das trostlose Ungefähr*

transmits its enlightenment to the next, in order finally to propel its germs in our species to that stage of development which is completely suited to its aim. And this point in time must be, at least in the idea of the human being, the goal of his endeavors, because otherwise the natural predispositions would have to be regarded for the most part as in vain and purposeless; which would remove all practical principles and thereby bring nature, whose wisdom in the judgment of all remaining arrangements must otherwise serve as a principle, under the suspicion that in the case of the human being alone it is a childish play.

THIRD PROPOSITION

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. For nature does nothing superfluous and is not wasteful in the use of means to its ends. Since it gave the human being reason, and the freedom of the will grounded on it, that was already a clear indication of its aim in regard to that endowment. For he should now not be guided by instinct or cared for and instructed by innate knowledge; rather he should produce everything out of himself. The invention of his means of nourishment, his clothing, his external safety and defense (for which nature gave him neither the horns of the steer, nor the claws of the lion, nor the teeth of the dog, but merely his hands), all gratification that can make life agreeable, all his insight and prudence and even the generosity of his will, should be entirely his own work. In this it seems to have pleased nature to exercise its greatest frugality, and to have measured out its animal [8:20] endowment so tightly, so precisely to the highest need of an initial existence, as though it willed that the human being, if he were someday to have labored himself from the greatest crudity to the height of the greatest skillfulness, the inner perfection of his mode of thought, and (as far as is possible on earth) thereby to happiness, may have only his own merit alone to thank for it; just as if it had been more concerned about his rational *self-esteem* than about his well-being. For in this course of human affairs there is a whole host of hardships that await the human being. But it appears to have been no aim at all of nature that he should live well; but only that he should labor and work himself up so far that he might make himself worthy of well-being through his conduct of life. 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. But as puzzling as this may be, it is yet necessary once one assumes that a species of animals should have reason, and, as a class of rational beings who all die, while the species is immortal, should nevertheless attain to completeness in the development of their predispositions.

FOURTH PROPOSITION

The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all their predispositions is their antagonism in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order. Here I understand by 'antagonism' the *unsociable sociability* of human beings,^a i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society. The predisposition for this obviously lies in human nature. The human being has an inclination to become *socialized*, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e. [8:21] feels the development of his natural predispositions. But he also has a great propensity to *individualize* (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way,⁶ and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others. Now it is this resistance that awakens all the powers of the human being, brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and, driven by ambition, tyranny and greed, to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot *stand*, but also cannot *leave alone*. Thus happen the first true steps from crudity toward culture, which really consists in the social worth of the human being; thus all talents come bit by bit to be developed, taste is formed,⁷ and even, through progress in enlightenment, a beginning is made toward the foundation of a mode of thought which can with time transform the rude natural

^a "Il n'est rien si dissociable et sociable que l'homme: l'un par son vice, l'autre par sa nature." Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, "De la solitude," *Essais*, edited by André Tournon. Paris: Imprimerie nationale Éditions, 1998, 1:388. "There is nothing more unsociable than Man, and nothing more sociable: unsociable by his vice, sociable by his nature," "Of Solitude," *The Complete Essays*, translated by M. A. Screech. London: Penguin Books, 1991, p. 267.

⁶ *nach seinem Sinne* ⁷ *gebildet*

predisposition to make moral distinctions into determinate practical principles and hence transform a *pathologically* compelled agreement to form a society finally into a *moral* whole. Without these qualities of unsociability from which the resistance arises, which are not at all amiable in themselves, qualities that each of us must necessarily encounter in his selfish pretensions, all talents would, in an arcadian pastoral life of perfect concord, contentment and mutual love, remain eternally hidden in their germs; human beings, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would give their existence hardly any greater worth than that of their domesticated beasts; they would not fill the void in creation in regard to their end as rational nature. Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! For without them all the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped. The human being wills concord; but nature knows better what is good for his species: it wills discord. He wills to live comfortably and contentedly; but nature wills that out of sloth and inactive contentment he should throw himself into labor and toils, so as, on the contrary, prudently to find out the means to pull himself again out of the latter. 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 [8:22] 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.

FIFTH PROPOSITION

The greatest problem for the human species, to which nature compels him, is the achievement of a civil society universally administering right. Since only in society, and indeed in that society which has the greatest freedom, hence one in which there is a thoroughgoing antagonism of its members and yet the most precise determination and security of the boundaries of this freedom so that the latter can coexist with the freedom of others – since only in it can the highest aim of nature be attained, namely, the development of all the predispositions in humanity, and since nature also wills that humanity by itself should procure this along with all the ends of its vocation: therefore a society in which *freedom under external laws* can be encountered combined in the greatest possible degree, with irresistible power,⁸ i.e. a perfectly *just civil*

⁸ *Gewalt*