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REPUBLICANIZING LEVIATHAN:
KANT'S COSMOPOLITAN SYNTHESIS
OF HOBBS AND ROUSSEAU

ABSTRACT: Kant's thought from the 1750s onward can usefully be understood as a series of efforts to overcome the challenge posed in Machiavelli's Prince: namely, to reconcile our idea of justice with what is actually possible given human nature as it is, rather than as reason tells us that it "should" be. Especially following his reading of Rousseau, this effort took the form of successive translations of the metaphysical concept of a world into the juridical language of world-citizenship, which transformed a rational and physical cosmology into moral and historical cosmopolitanism. The thought of both Hobbes and Rousseau proved instrumental to those efforts. Initially, Kant thought human history oscillated between Hobbesian and Rousseauian conceptions of civil order—i.e., between orders that guarantee, respectively, security and freedom. In his later works, Kant suggested that history progressed from Hobbes to Rousseau, but he hesitated to declare that a transformation from prudence-based security to virtue-based civil independence was completable even in principle. Speaking generally, Kant sought to reconcile a kind of historical providentialism with the sovereign authority of reason. This reconciliation blurs the distinction between, on the one hand, the metaphysical and/or religious and, on the other hand, the secular—a distinction on which Michael Rosen's perspicuous intellectual history tends to focus. That this earliest version of Kant's rational

providentialism makes reward of effort morally central also suggests that it is ultimately even more important to Kant than the punitive theme on which Rosen himself focusses.

Keywords: Hobbes; Kant; Michael Rosen; Rousseau; cosmological idea; equality; freedom; justice; philosophy of history; political theory.

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It is an honor and a pleasure to contribute to this issue devoted to Michael Rosen's luminous *The Shadow of God: Kant, Hegel, and the Passage from Heaven to History* (Harvard, 2022), with whose general approach to Kant I largely agree. Rosen's work points to two directions one can take in understanding Kant: theological and secular-historical. Rosen is surely right that the current overwhelming scholarly emphasis on the secular Kant distorts both Kant's own intentions and the intellectual and moral resources that his work offers. More, however, could be said about the relation between these theological and secular-historical elements, relations that are presaged in Kant's early, pre-Rousseauian writings. Those writings display an underlying cosmological orientation that is simultaneously theological and historical. This suggests that there may be a deeper

structural connection between the theological and the historical than Rosen, who tends to pair the historical with the secular, seems to allow. At the same time, Rosen's emphasis falls mainly on the relative absence, as he sees it, in Kant of a personal God. And while Rosen is most interested in showing the way the theological and the historical came to be separated in the work of the later Idealists, he might be willing to agree with me in allowing that Kant would not have conceded that separation.

The Nature of Reason and Its Cosmological Idea

Kant's mature political philosophy in many ways reflects the ideas of his predecessors. Importantly, his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) claims that the political state contains three necessary authorities [*Gewalten*]: a law-giving power that is irreproachable (as with Rousseau's general will); an executive power that is irresistible (as with Hobbes's sovereign ruler); and a judicial power that is non-appealable (as with both combined) (Kant 1797a, 6:316).¹ That formulation takes advantage of the three basic premises on which his predecessors had likewise relied. At the same time, a crucial preparation for Kant's receptive appropriation of Hobbes's and Rousseau's thought was his prior understanding of the character of human reason itself.

Reason, on that account, gives rise to "ideas," that is, to concepts that, in contrast to the "concepts of the understanding," do not make sensory experience possible, but rather serve as models for our thinking. One such concept of reason is the "cosmological

¹ This relatively late addition also owes something to the influence of Montesquieu. In citing Kant, I cite, first, the year of publication and, after the comma, the volume number and, after the colon, the page number, to the Academy Edition of Kant's work. When a year is unavailable or unknown (such as in Kant's *Remarks*), I direct the reader to the *Akademieausgabe* ("Kant 1968").

idea” of a world as a totality that is united in two ways: (1) by the *lawful interaction* of its members in accordance with a universal principle (i.e., for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction); and (2) by the *end* (or harmony of ends) toward which that interaction is directed. Without lawful interaction, the relation among finite substances (e.g., human beings as embodied creatures) would merely be ideal (i.e., conceptual) as with Leibniz’s monads, rather than “real.” Likewise, without an end, the community of substances could not be thought as a world-whole or totality, i.e., as a “complete” community to which nothing can in principle be added. This cosmological idea contains some of the basic elements of Kant’s political philosophy that sees a perfect republic as one where members who interact lawfully and whose respective ends are mutually compatible at least externally. (You and I cannot both win the prize but we can both lawfully compete for it.)

But it is important to understand the extent to which Kant’s pre-critical philosophical views continue to inflect his mature thought. In the case of the cosmological idea, Kant made important philosophic use of it as early as the 1750s. That idea, in turn, was itself the partial fruit of earlier philosophic speculation by Leibniz, Crusius, and others.² Their formulations of the cosmological idea, as well as Kant’s early use of it, inform his successive efforts, beginning in the 1760’s, to meet the Machiavellian challenge.³ That challenge is perhaps best summarized in a famous passage from chapter 15 of Machiavelli’s *Prince*, which juxtaposes, in the former’s favor,

² For a fuller discussion of this dimension of Kant’s practical thought, see Shell 2012. On Kant’s concept of a world, see Watkins 2019.

³ For an acknowledgment on Kant’s part of that challenge, see, for example, Kant 1781, A316/B372.

what he calls “the effectual reality” with the “imagined” republics by which earlier thinkers set their sights:

Because I propose to write things that are useful for those who understand them, it seems to me more profitable [*conveniente*] to go directly in discussion to the effectual truth [*verità effettuale*] than to what some have imagined to exist. And many have imagined republics and principalities that no one has ever seen or recognized as existing in reality. And such is the difference between how one lives and how one ought to live, that he who leaves what is done for what ought to be done will learn how to ruin himself rather than how to preserve himself.

The challenge that Kant assumes is to reconcile the rationally optimal with what can be effected in reality, absent which the ideal world would merely be a “thought entity” or dream beyond our power to work to bring about, and, indeed, to do so more adequately than either Hobbes or Rousseau had done—the former by emphasizing the effectual reality, the latter by emphasizing the ideal. (In addition to meeting the Machiavellian challenge, the cosmological idea also helps explain Kant’s commanding influence on later German thinkers such as Fichte and Hegel, who also drew, albeit in different ways, on that earlier metaphysical tradition.)

As Rosen (2022, 54ff.) notes, Kant’s early cosmological writings appeared both around the time of, and in response to, the Lisbon Earthquake, which occurred on November 1, 1755, which was All Saints Day. The earthquake, followed within the hour by a tsunami, had shattering implications for conventional beliefs regarding a

providential world order. That the majority of victims died while attending church challenged not only such providentialist beliefs, but also the metaphysical optimism of thinkers such as Leibniz, who had sought to reconcile modern physics with the core tenets of Christianity. Kant's own view of the matter might be categorized as having two components: a metaphysical component; and a physical/historical one. These responses can be seen in two texts, which, while published in 1755 prior to the Lisbon earthquake, nevertheless contain elements of a response to the kind of natural disaster exemplified in the Lisbon earthquake. First, in September 1755, Kant defended a (second) dissertation entitled *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysics* (1755a), which provided a *metaphysical* account for the harmonization of the natural physical laws with Christian theology: according to Kant, the fact that, according to Newtonian physics, every event has a cause does not rule out the possibility of spontaneous freedom. Second, in March of 1755, Kant began the process of publishing *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755b), which provided a *physical history* of the universe that similarly sought to reconcile the mechanical laws of nature with both divine creation and human freedom. In each work, moreover, that reconciliation rested on the possibility of divine reward for human effort – a theme that continued to mark his later critical forays into providential history. I emphasize this point especially in contradistinction to the insistence, in *The Shadow of God* that Kant's guiding moral premise is the punishment of the vicious, rather than the rewarding of the virtuous (Rosen 2022, esp. ch. 2). To be sure, there is some textual evidence for Rosen's position, especially in Kant's little essay *On the Failure of all Philosophic Attempts at Theodicy*. Yet, given both the rhetorically complex, not to say ironic, character of that work, and Kant's early and consistent

preoccupation with notion of earned reward, it seems likely that it was this, rather than punishment of the vicious, that mattered most to him. In short, I would suggest that Kant's God is less the old school Jehovah Rosen portrays than a cosmic underwriter of what is sometimes called the "bourgeois ethic." What is at stake is how Kant conceived of the *ideal* end of history, and I would suggest that he envisioned it in less Augustinian terms than Rosen implies, and instead in a way more friendly to enlightenment ideals of self-creation and the mastery of nature.

If Kant's early cosmological idea was challenged by the Lisbon earthquake, it was also complicated by its own conflicting conceptual demands: worldly knowledge must be "real," hence subject to conditions of space and time that give rise to infinite series; and, at the same time, worldly knowledge must be directed toward the apprehension of the world whole as a complete (or completable) totality. Kant will later critically theoretically resolve this, as well as related issues, by demoting the cosmological idea to the status of a merely "regulative" idea for reason's use in advancing our empirical knowledge of nature. But we shall see that those early issues haunt Kant's later critical attempts to formulate a cosmopolitan idea of history that is fully adequate to reason's demand to know both the whither and the how.

The 1760's: Actualizing Rousseau's "Romance"

Kant's earliest appropriations of Hobbes's and Rousseau's respective civic models predate his critical philosophy proper, predating, as well, his breakthrough in 1770 of transcendental idealism (the view that we can only know the sensible world in part by constructing it), which helped make critical philosophy possible. Freedom, in these early

writings, does not yet imply noumenal independence from the physical laws of nature, as in his later thought. At the same time, the laws of nature, for Kant, are not merely the quasi-mechanical principles of Hobbes and Newton, but are also informed by a normative trajectory. This view was partly inspired by his reading of Rousseau, but it also reflects the theoretical aspirations and commitments of his earlier *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755b), where he allows for a “purposiveness” that directs us toward the human good if we would only heed it.

The early Kant appears to have had a republican conception of freedom and its relation to the good. As he thought of it then, the human good consists, preeminently, in a consciousness of one’s own existence accompanied by active satisfaction—but this good is impaired by dependence on the arbitrary will of others. Indeed, Kant deemed this dependence so corrupting that, in his handwritten notes to his early essay on “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime” (1764), he remarked that to a human being not yet corrupted by such dependence, slavery is a greater evil than death itself (Kant 1968, 20:92). This appears to be a Rousseauian insight that prioritizes freedom from the arbitrary will of others over mere existence. Kant was to retain this insight throughout his career. It is present even in his most “Hobbesian” moments, such as when he insists on the duty of civil obedience and on the need to leave the state of nature, which Kant grounds not in our natural desire for self-preservation, but in the formal requirements of lawful freedom. At the same time, Kant’s understanding of civic freedom is itself guided, even in the 1760’s, by a rational principle of reciprocity that has more in common with Hobbes’s laws of nature (and Kant’s own earlier cosmological commitments) than with the rhetorically induced attachments of Rousseau’s patriotic

citizen For whereas Rousseau's virtuous citizen is characterized by a passionate identification, itself irrational, with his own community, Kant's perfect citizen is fundamentally rational, either in a lower Hobbesian sense, or a higher strictly moral sense, but in either case consistent with a concept of justice that is constructable in accordance with the formula: "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."⁴

Kant's early incorporations of Hobbes and Rousseau also predate the doctrine of regulative ideas—which appear in Kant's work only in his 1770 Dissertation—that shapes Kant's later essays on history. In the 1760s, Kant saw the course of history as cyclical rather than progressive, oscillating between civil flourishing and civil corruption. Thus, in one of his early handwritten remarks, he wrote that the former, "republican" civic condition is characterized by a "rational" rule of interaction (Kant 1968, 20:111-12, 157, and 160). It is rational in a theoretical sense because the rule of interaction is a condition of the possibility of "community," understood as a "real" relation among substances. And it is rational in a practical sense because the rule of interaction that govern republican rule is consistent with each citizen being independent from the arbitrary will of others: hence independence lawfully consistent with the independence of others is a condition of the possibility of the rational consent that can alone give rise to civil obligation. To be validly subject to the laws of such a community is to participate in a "general will" of mutual law giving. There is a religious component to this account of republican governance: since such laws are necessarily just, they are also consonant with the "general will" of God—in contrast to the "particular" or "arbitrary" will of God (exemplified, e.g., in miracles) (see, e.g., Kant's remarks in Kant 1968, 20:137, 146, and

⁴ For a late statement, see Kant 1797a, 6:232.

165-66). Thus, these laws, for the early Kant, possess a certain independent moral force even in the absence of an historical civil contract, either actual or tacit.

Such a “Rousseauian” civil community is only possible, however, under conditions of civic virtue and female modesty that keep the unnatural expansion of desire in check. Conditions of vanity and luxury, by way of contrast, call for and give rise to an “Hobbesian” civic order, aimed at securing life and property, while also making possible the private cultivation of virtue, as portrayed in Rousseau’s novels (see, for example, Kant’s Remarks in Kant 1968, 20:29 and 120).

Finally, and crucially, in his handwritten remarks, Kant states that “thanks to Rousseau” the blinding illusion as to the preeminent value of scientific inquiry has “vanished”: Rousseau had led Kant to believe that the “honor” of mankind does not consist in advancing one’s theoretical knowledge (as Kant had thought before reading Rousseau), but in working to establish the “rights of humanity” (Kant 1968, 20:45). What is more, Rousseau’s discovery of the “hidden law” by which providence is justified (ibid., 20:58-59) raises the possibility of corrective philosophic intervention, a consciously directed moment of “return” from corruption to flourishing, that Kant likens to wielding Archimedes’ lever (ibid., 20:56).⁵ In short, history’s oscillating pattern can be helped along by those who grasp its underlying principles.

Kant later incorporated these respectively “Hobbesian” and “Rousseauian” civic models into a *progressive* scheme of history. He also incorporated into this scheme the main justificatory principles of those civic models: (1) that to which one consents cannot

⁵ Although Kant does not directly say what this “hidden law” is, it presumably has something to do with the rule of equality. As the *Remarks* elsewhere states: “the idea of equality *regulates* everything” (Kant 1968, 20:54).

constitute an injury; (2) the consent in question must be rational; and (3) that the defense of one's primary rational interest is never blameworthy. But in his mature work he departed from Hobbes and Rousseau in stipulating that one's primary rational interest is neither life (as with Hobbes) nor independence alone (as with Rousseau), but *lawful* independence in reciprocal community with other rational beings (Kant 1797a, 6:230).

The Mid-1780's: Idea for a Cosmopolitan World History

Kant's first published efforts at sketching a progressive idea of history remain outside the critical system itself; instead they take the form of "conjecture" (Kant 1786, 8:107) and speculation: the "thought" of what *might* be accomplished by a philosophic mind that was also well informed empirically (Kant 1784a, 8:30). Of these attempts the most familiar is his "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Intention" (1784)—a "cosmopolitan" translation, as it were, of Kant's early cosmological forays, as in the *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755b). In 1784, Kant replaced his earlier theoretical appeal to a divine "idea of creation" with a cosmopolitan idea that is accessible to human reason. Like that earlier, divine idea, the idea of history that Kant now seeks would reconcile the natural laws of action and reaction with a principle of purposive causation: namely, achievement of a cosmopolitan community that combines Kant's earlier Rousseauian and Hobbesian models into a single formula of civic (and ultimately, moral) perfection.

The ideal republic, as Kant conceived it in the 1780's, consists in "a constitution consisting of *the greatest human freedom according to laws through which the freedom of each can coexist with that of others*" (Kant 1781, A316/B373). Such a constitution

secures, if necessary by force, independence from the arbitrary will of others and without necessarily involving either civic freedom of a sort requiring actual participation in the making of law, or the civic virtue that for Rousseau makes the latter possible. All that is required is that the laws be such that a rational people *could* consent to them. Thanks to human beings' (Hobbesian) a-social sociability, such a constitution is both universally achievable (or nearly so), and internally stable. Moreover, by thus providing the conditions necessary for the full development of all human predispositions, it also would enable humanity's advance toward a "moralization" without which civilization is no more than "splendid misery" (Kant 1784a, 8:26).

In sum, Kant's juridical ideal, circa 1784, incorporates Hobbes's and Rousseau's respective civic models in part by modifying each. On the one hand, it replaces (Hobbes's) coexistent freedom from violent death with (Rousseau's) coexistent freedom from the arbitrary will of others.⁶ On the other, it also replaces (Rousseau's) actual consent as a necessary condition of legitimacy with the merely possible rational consent that had sufficed for Hobbes. Actual consent is neither necessary, for Kant, nor desirable *unless* it serves as a reliable sign that the laws are indeed those to which a rational people *could* consent, i.e., in their capacity as morally enlightened actors. Accordingly, civil freedom (involving actual consent to civil law) is neither necessary for laws to be juridically binding, nor desirable without the presence of people able to "act freely" thanks to a prior transformation in their "way of thinking" (Kant 1784b, 8:41).

⁶ I place (Rousseau) in parentheses here, owing to his suggestion that *natural* freedom (or independence alone, be it that of a "savage" or of a "solitary walker") may ultimately be preferable to *civil* freedom (or independence through participation in a legislative general will).

Even in the absence of such a general moral transformation, the achievement of a civil condition consisting in the “general/universal administration of right,” is at best a long way off, requiring as it would the (unlikely) conjunction in a single ruler of “correct concepts,” long “experience,” and the “good will” to make proper use of it (Kant 1784a, 8:23). The problem of establishing a perfect republic (as the first Critique defines it) is therefore both that “most difficult” for humanity to solve, and incapable, indeed, of complete solution, due the “crooked timber” of humanity (ibid., 8:22).

In the meantime, intellectual freedom as permitted by “enlightened” rulers such as Frederick the Great is consistent with both the laws and purposes of nature: The former, insofar as it serves the self-interest of [narrowly] enlightened rulers (such as Frederick); the latter, insofar as it encourages an “unwrapping” of the predisposition to “think freely” (Kant 1784b, 8:41).

Finally, and not least, the very “attempt” to work out such a rational plan of nature “can be regarded” (Kant 1784a, 8:29) as itself contributing to such a plan. First, that attempt imparts rulers (and others) with “correct concepts.” And, second, it enlightens rulers as to their own self-interest, narrowly conceived, thereby promoting (even without their “good will”) progress toward a solution of humanity’s last and hardest problem: the establishment of a civil constitution “universally administering right” (ibid., 8:22).

In short, although culture and civilization may have advanced thanks to the a-social sociability with which nature has equipped us, with regards to our “moralization much is lacking” (ibid., 8:26). In response, Kant offers only the tantalizing suggestion (ibid., 8:29) that the idea of history might *itself* make help us transition from a civil order

that is secured by our natural drives and inclinations (including those of prudentially enlightened rulers) to a moral kingdom of ends under laws of freedom. This is, in effect, the transition from Hobbes's sovereign state (under the rule of someone like Frederick the Great) to Rousseau's republic of virtue. But Kant includes two telling qualifications. First, even in the Hobbesian state, we must be granted permission to speak and publish freely. This freedom should, in principle, slowly transform a people's way of thinking so that, which, in turn, becomes the condition for Rousseauian civil freedom understood as obedience only to the civil laws of one's own making. Second, prior to that transformative moment, actual participation of citizens is likely to be counterproductive.

This is to say that as Kant saw matters circa 1784, the realization of a rational historical plan turns on a "moralization" that seemingly depends on the prior existence of a civil constitution ordered by laws to which a rational people *could* consent, i.e., without relinquishing their claim to lawful freedom, or maximum freedom consistent with the freedom of others. *Prior* to a people learning to "act freely," *actual* participation in the ongoing framing of its laws is neither necessary nor desirable. In the meantime, the critically enlightened can intervene constructively—by attempting to discover such an historical plan; and, more generally, through the public use of their own reason (as per Kant's own writings of this period intended for the general reading public).

For all its expressive power, Kant's initial critical attempt at a progressive history suffers from four signal weaknesses, as he would have seen them, which may help explain its exclusion from the critical system proper: First, the "attempt" at an "idea of history" for which Kant calls is not the same as succeeding at it. Second, the transition from civilization to moralization remains obscure at best. Third, the "correct concepts" on

which progress, on his present account, depends are not yet at hand, pending the appearance of his long-promised *Metaphysics of Morals*. Fourth, Frederick the Great's long reign is nearing its end, with no guarantees in place as to the civic disposition of his heir.

Post-1790: Towards an "Organic" Synthesis

Kant's adaptive synthesis of the respective civic models of Hobbes and Rousseau underwent a series of significant changes, following upon two sets of signal events. The first set was political: the death of Frederick the Great in 1786 and ascension of a new king decidedly less friendly to Kant's purposes; and the Storming of the Bastille in 1789. The second set was philosophical: Kant's discovery of an a priori principle of reflective judgment that makes possible the integration of history within the critical system proper, as witnessed in both Parts One and Two of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790). The resulting complex developments in Kant's thinking over the course of the 1790s, partly in response to a continually shifting political and legal landscape, can be briefly sketched. Succinctly put, these changes, as reflected in Kant's important political and historical writings of the period, include:

1. A more theoretically and practically satisfying account of the transition from the civilizational to the moral, as exemplified in both Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and *Religion within the Boundaries of Bare Reason* (1792-3) (see Shell 2022).

2. Publication of Part One ("The Doctrine of Right") of the (long-awaited) *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797a)

3. A final grappling with the Machiavellian problem, executed from within the confines of the university as a “commonwealth of the learned” (Kant 1798, 7:19). (This can be seen in Kant 1797b, which replaces earlier attempts at a “philosophic theodicy,” including, arguably, his own; see Shell 2021 and Forthcoming).

Concentrating, for present purposes, on Kant’s “Doctrine of Right,” let me consider how an “organic” model of the state, first suggested, in the *Critique of Judgment*, with respect to a “recent transformation of a great people” (namely, the French) (Kant 1790, 5:375n.), advances beyond Kant’s earlier “mechanical” conception. First, the organic model requires actual consent in the form of active participation in the making of positive law, as in the new constitutional theories of the Abbé Sieyès. According to Kant’s new formulation, the concept of the state necessarily includes the presence of *active* citizens, i.e., those whose ability and willingness to maintain themselves without depending on the arbitrary will of others makes them “fit” to vote and thereby participate in the framing of positive laws (Kant 1797a, 6:314). Without active citizens, subjects who make up the state are merely “parts,” rather than “members” whose self-subsistence in the civically relevant sense makes them juridical substances (ibid.). Passive citizens (e.g., women, minors, and day laborers), on the other hand, are, from a juridical perspective, exist as mere “inherences” dependent on others for their maintenance, rather than themselves constitutive of a juridical community proper. At the same time, as members of “society,” they retain their rights as human beings against which the civil laws may not justly encroach (ibid., 6:315).

The most striking change in Kant’s mature conception of the state, especially measured against Kant’s earlier critical analysis, lies with the conditions that determine

one “fit to vote.” Circa 1784, Kant had treated those conditions as requiring a prior moral transformation in one’s way of thinking. In 1797, however, Kant allowed that it suffices that one be in control of one’s own means of production, as it were. Kant (1797a, 6:314-15) characterizes this condition as a sort of civic apprenticeship that renders one capable, in turn, of cooperating in civil legislation. Civic “fitness” to vote, in other words, is no longer conditional, in his mind, on one’s prior “fitness to be a member of the kingdom of ends” (Kant 1785, 4:433), i.e., on moral “autocracy” proper (Kant 1797a, 6:383).

Accordingly, by 1797, Kant’s strictly juridical ideal also underwent an important shift: from the quasi-Hobbesian state “universally administering right” he had proposed in 1784 to a quasi-Rousseauian community of self-subsistent citizens who mutually cooperate in positive lawmaking. A civic commonwealth, so conceived, is neither the mechanical shell (Kant 1784b, 8:41) that Kant had touted under Frederick the Great nor a moral kingdom of ends (or *ethical* commonwealth), governed by a ruler (i.e. God) who is “sovereign but not subject” (Kant 1793, 6:98), but a republic with no member of the sovereign who is not also, at the same time, subject to its laws (Kant 1797a, 6:313-14). In short it is much like the self-organizing civic body into which the French people appeared to have transformed itself (Kant 1790, 5:375n), circa 1790.

Moreover, however halting and uncertain that French success may subsequently have proved, the “event” of its reception, as Kant now insists, is itself a “sign,” sufficient for the “most rigorous theory,” that mankind is “in constant progression toward the better” (Kant 1798, 7:88). Resigned, as his own public “invalidity” looms, to the necessary failure of all philosophic attempts (Kant 1791, 8:253) at an “idea” of history fully capable of meeting Machiavelli’s challenge, Kant takes up in its stead what he calls

“natural divination [*Wahrsagen*]” (Kant 1798, 7:79): a “eudaimonistic” prophecy (ibid., 7:82) of a sort that is, or at least might become, “self-fulfilling” (ibid., 7:80) without recourse to miracles.

To summarize, then, my slight differences with Michael Rosen’s rich and illuminating account. First, I would place somewhat greater emphasis on the continuities uniting Kant’s earlier and later thought, including his ongoing concern with a providential history consistent with the sovereign authority of human reason. Second, I would also place less emphasis on the “punitive” side of Kant, i.e., his concern with punishing the vicious, and greater stress on his location of the ultimate seat of moral credit in human effort.

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If Hobbes lays out principles of civil science whose universal adoption would bring about a peaceful civic order, and Rousseau the further conditions under which civil order is legitimate, Kant offers grounds of hope in the progressive reconciliation of justice and, as it were, the effectual truth. This reconciliation is necessarily imperfect for it awaits the moral transformation of the human race. In offering grounds of *hope* rather than of knowledge, Kant sets limits to his claims—limits that successors like Fichte and Hegel would boldly overstep. Living, as we now do, in the pessimistic wake of the latter’s wisdom or temerity, we might profitably recall Kant’s moderating reservations.

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