

## ARTICLE

# From Rationality to Morality: The Collective Development of Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Anthropology

Olga Lenczewska

University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington NC, USA  
Email: [lenczewskao@uncw.edu](mailto:lenczewskao@uncw.edu)

### Abstract

While Kant's account of humankind's rational progress has been widely discussed, his speculative views about the way in which this progress might have *begun* and the circumstances surrounding this beginning have been largely neglected. Implicit in such an omission is the assumption that Kant does not say much about the very beginning of human history or that whatever he says is of little philosophical value. This article challenges these assumptions. I reconstruct Kant's account of the emergence of reason by looking at his various conjectural and more literal remarks about our species' transition from mere irrational animals into primitive human beings possessing a rudimentary form of rationality. Next, I show how this account fits with Kant's broader view of humankind's rational progress and its subsequent stages. By doing so, I elucidate Kant's guidelines for achieving this progress in the future by unifying them with his regulative view of reason's past.

**Keywords:** Kant; conjectural history; philosophy of history; human history; origins of humanity; rational progress; moral progress; moral development

### 1. Introduction

The focus of this article is Kant's account of the history of human reason: his teleological vision of the past development of our rational capacities from their very emergence until reason's maturing or the 'age of Enlightenment' (WE, 8: 40).<sup>1</sup> One of my goals is to connect Kant's speculative account of the very beginning of rationality<sup>2</sup> – a topic under-studied in Kantian scholarship – to his well-known theory of humankind's progress. By doing so, I hope to elucidate Kant's hopes for reason's progress and his guidelines for achieving this progress by unifying them with his vision of reason's past. Another goal is to bring more attention to Kant's essay 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History' (1786), where a large part of this account is presented, and to show that this 'somewhat unusual' (Yovel 1989: 190) text does not stand in conflict with Kant's critical philosophy and is not merely tangentially related to it, but illuminates and complements certain aspects Kant's critical philosophy.

Kant's teleological account of humankind's rational progress, which he divides into three phases – cultivation, civilization and moralization<sup>3</sup> – has been widely studied in

connection with his historical, anthropological, pedagogical and religious writings.<sup>4</sup> A typical point of departure from which Kant's view of human history is analysed are the differences between us and other animals. But Kant's commentators rarely discuss his speculations about the *beginning* of humankind's rational progress or the circumstances surrounding this beginning. Implicit in such an omission is the assumption that Kant does not say much about the very beginning of human history, or that whatever he does say is of little philosophical value

I seek to challenge these assumptions. I begin by reconstructing Kant's various conjectural and more literal remarks about the transition our species underwent from mere irrational animals into primitive humans possessing a rudimentary form of rationality (section 2). Once I have reconstructed Kant's account of the prehistory of reason, I proceed to show how it fits with his broader view of humankind's rational progress (learning how to make a mature or enlightened use of reason) and its subsequent stages (section 3).

## 2. The 'discovery' and first use of reason

For Kant, the history of human reason is a history of our species' gradual emancipation from nature and, subsequently, from unjust political arrangements. Far from being a merely empirical description of various past events, history involves teleological reflection and constitutes a part of Kant's critical philosophy. History is created when reason looks back on the chaotic sequence of human affairs and imposes reflective judgement on it, unravelling in this way a unified and teleological pattern of humankind's progress (UH, 8: 17; CPJ, 5: 425-34; AB, 25: 1436). The ability to create history is unique to our species because it requires both existing within nature (a characteristic we share with other animals) and possessing the faculty of reason (of which other animals are devoid).

Part of Kant's account of the history of human reason is an account of the circumstances in which humankind's rational progress began. It is presented in most detail in the 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History', but it can also be found in the notes from his lectures on anthropology (1772-89), in the published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), and in the *Lectures on Pedagogy* (1802).

The seriousness of Kant's account of humankind's beginning presented in 'Conjectural Beginning' is likely to be questioned – especially in light of his own admission that the story presented in this essay has been written by 'venturing on a mere pleasure trip' (CB, 8: 109). However, a careful reconstruction of this story and a better grasp on its epistemic status will show that it fits very well with Kant's understanding of human history (and, consequently, that it should be regarded with a similar degree of seriousness): as a *post facto* reflection that imposes *a priori* conditions for our comprehension of certain phenomena in order to help us make them intelligible, while *not* making claims as to their ontological status and empirical accuracy.

My reconstruction of Kant's account of humankind's beginning in this section will proceed as follows. In section 2.1 I will present his speculative anthropological description of the soon-to-be-human animals in the state of nature and their lives *before* the beginning of human history, relying on several texts mentioned above. While doing so, I will draw attention, on the one hand, to the ways in which the soon-to-be humans resembled other animals and, on the other hand, to the ways

in which they were unique even before becoming humans proper. Next, in sections 2.2 and 2.3 I will discuss Kant's account of our *transition* from mere animals to human beings, which marks the very beginning of rationality and human history, in 'Conjectural Beginning'. I will also provide a framework for a proper understanding of this essay and the literary tradition in which it was written. Finally, drawing on Kant's historical writings and transcriptions of his anthropology lectures, in section 2.4 I will discuss the ways in which the newly emerged human being after the awakening of reason differs from other animals.

### 2.1 Human animals in the state of nature

Kant's lectures on anthropology display a strong historical and teleological concern. Part of anthropology's task, he believes, is to articulate the steps of humanity's progress and to show how this progress can be gradually achieved. Anthropology is thus not simply an empirical discipline, but a value-embedded enterprise (Louden 2016). More specifically, its aim is to promote 'enlightenment for common life' (Me, 25: 853) and to provide knowledge of human nature which can be used for moral or prudential purposes. *Moral* anthropology, in particular, is supposed to tell us how to apply pure ethics to human beings (G, 4: 412) by informing us of the features of human nature which make it difficult for us to act morally and proposing ways of overcoming these difficulties.

With this in mind, I turn to Kant's anthropological characterization of the nature of the prehistorical human being. Several versions of the notes from Kant's anthropology lectures include a section about the character of the human species, where we can find his speculations about the kind of animal the human being is qua a part of nature. This is an appropriate question to ask, Kant assures us, since 'in the system of nature, the human being belongs to the animal kingdom' (AMr, 25: 1415). At times, this question is approached from a historical perspective and focuses not only on the animalistic aspects of our nature, but also on the way we would have supposedly existed in the distant past, prior to the exit from the state of nature (Me, 25: 1197).

Kant draws on the scientific findings available to him and claims that it is likely that the human being as an animal would have been determined by nature to walk on four feet, would have been carnivorous, and would have achieved general independence around the age of 13 (AF, 25: 675–6; AMr, 25: 1415–16; Me, 25: 1194–5; *Anth*, 7: 322–3). In the Mrongovius transcription of his lectures (1784–5) he also mentions the possibility that the prehistorical 'human' would not have had to work due to only having needs and desires which can be easily satisfied by nature itself – something that shows a significant influence of Rousseau's second *Discourse* on him. Kant writes: 'The crude state of nature was good in some respects, since human beings inclined toward noble simplicity and did not know any needs or desires (though only out of ignorance) ... [H]uman beings nourished themselves from trees like apes and did not need to work due to a lack of needs' (AMr, 25: 1418). Next, in his lectures Kant frequently turns to the question whether the prehistorical 'human' would have been social or solitary. He admits that neither alternative seems quite right, at which point it becomes clear that the human being is a *unique* type of animal (AMr, 25: 1416).

The Mrongovius transcription of Kant's anthropology lectures dates from about the same time as the 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History' (1786). In the latter,

Kant similarly speculates about the nature of prehistorical ‘humans’ before they became humans proper. (I will take up shortly discussion of the epistemic status of the claims in this self-confessedly ‘conjectural’ essay.) These prehistorical ‘humans’, who belonged only to the animal kingdom, would not have had free will and the capacity to act rationally. They would have been fully guided – causally determined – by their natural instincts with regards to both actions and desires (CB, 8: 111). Kant also speculates here that the prehistorical ‘human’ would have been satisfied with his existence and would have not been worried about his future (ibid.). He would have also perceived himself as equal to others of his kind and to non-human animals.

Perhaps the most intriguing question when considering Kant’s speculative account of our animal nature before we became humans proper is: what allowed *our* species in particular to become humans? Kant speculatively provides several characteristics that might have allowed for such a transition – upright posture, walking on two feet, the position of our digits and complex vocal communication (CB, 8: 110–11; Me, 25: 1196–7; *Anth*, 7: 323). He does not explain how these characteristics might have come about, but only considers that they had to come about in order for this transition to take place. These features would have allowed us to learn several primitive technical skills that we could not do instinctively and to teach them to our offspring (CB, 8: 111; *Anth*, 7: 322–3).

## 2.2 A conjectural history of reason’s awakening

While Kant speculates about our prerational nature in a number of texts, he only speculates about the actual *transition* that our species made from mere animals to humans proper (to rational animals) in one place: in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ essay. Before reconstructing this account, I will set the stage for a holistic understanding of this unusual text.

‘Conjectural Beginning’ is written within the Enlightenment literary tradition of ‘conjectural histories’ – a term coined by the first theorist of this genre, Dugald Stewart, in the early nineteenth century (Stewart 1858 [2010]). This genre was very popular between 1750 and 1800, and all of the major Enlightenment thinkers from Prussia, France and Scotland – such as Hume, Rousseau or Herder – wrote at least one, and often more, conjectural histories.

The aim of conjectural histories was to provide a speculative account of the prehistoric origins of human society and of the origins and developments of various cultural phenomena: language, social norms or legal practices. Inspired by new reports from travellers to societies hitherto unfamiliar to Europeans, the Enlightenment thinkers attempted to work out the stages that humankind must have gone through in order to form the first societies and to gradually shape them into ones with recognizable political, religious and economic institutions. This genre assumes that there is a series of identifiable transitional steps between primitive human existence and fully fledged society, and that human nature is universal (Smalligan Marušić 2017). For instance, Adam Smith’s *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, which Dugald Stewart recognizes as a prototypical conjectural history, present a four-stage history of social life: hunting, herding, farming and commerce. Each of these stages is characterized by its own distinct institutions and modes of subsistence, developed based on the distinct needs of people living during a given stage.

Conjectural histories constitute a paradigm for understanding human nature by attempting to explain, in broad strokes, how our species must have developed in order for the current political and cultural structures to have emerged. In the words of Smalligan Marušić: ‘Conjectural histories reveal the extent to which our present is “counterfactually robust” . . . in the . . . sense that any sufficiently large community of people would have acted in roughly the same ways in roughly the same circumstances’ (Smalligan Marušić 2017: 271). The unique epistemic status of the speculations present in conjectural histories and their distinctive temporality is evident from the use their authors make of a particular verb tense – the conjectural necessary form of the past. This tense is used to denote events that must have taken place in the past given what we know about this past. It differs from other past tenses because it does not denote what did take place, but what could have reasonably taken place. It also differs from conditional claims about the past that describe counterfactuals because it does not describe a past that is contrary to fact (Palmieri 2016: 16).

Conjectural histories do not purport to describe exactly what happened in the past and how life in society has evolved to take on its current form. Nonetheless, they have a unique epistemic value and way of contributing to the body of knowledge regarding human nature: they fill in the space that is unoccupied by archaeological and scientific findings because of the shortcomings of these empirical fields. They thus present hypotheses drawn from inferences that can be formulated on the basis of sparse and inconclusive empirical data. And they are not the only genre that does so. As Palmieri argues at length, conjectural histories function largely in a similar way as contemporary academic fields of cultural or social anthropology and archaeology. Thus, he claims: ‘to charge conjectural history with being limited and insufficiently grounded in factual evidence neglects the fact that some of what is most productive in current thought, and potentially paradigm changing, necessarily takes the form of speculation and conjecture’ (Palmieri 2016: 17). Through their unique epistemology, conjectural histories were a template for thinking about phenomena that were empirically under-determined. By positing stages of our species’ social development, moreover, they provided a way of organizing human history into a coherent whole.

As I have said, while Kant presents his teleological view of human history in a number of texts, he only speculates about its very beginning in one place, and he chooses to frame these speculations as a conjectural history. In the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ Kant does not want to reconstruct the distant past, which would be empirically impossible given the limitations of our knowledge of the history of primitive human beings. Nor does he want to provide us with an entirely imagined and implausible story – an exercise he regards as useless for his purposes (CB, 8: 109; see also UH, 8: 29). Rather, he wants to sketch a way in which our species’ rational capacities might have emerged and initially progressed – a way of presenting past events for which a conjectural history is perfectly suitable.

By sketching such an account, Kant wants to complement his teleological view of the progression of human history. His purpose in this text is not to claim that our rational capacities could have only emerged under the exact historical conditions sketched in this essay. Rather, the story presented in it is a possible way in which they might have emerged that, regardless of whether it is historically accurate, sheds light on the nature of these capacities. Since this essay is a conjectural exercise, it might be reasonable to put aside the question about the exact epistemic status of

the story presented and view it instead as merely possible from the theoretical perspective, but useful from the practical perspective.

### 2.3 *The beginning of human history*

Having set the stage for understanding this essay, I will now reconstruct the account of our exit from the state of nature presented in it. Kant's starting point when sketching the beginning of human history in this essay is creatures that are in a position to become humans. They live not in a completely crude state of nature, but in a position to exit it. These individuals are physically prepared for this transition by virtue of being able to stand and walk upright, communicate about abstractions and teach themselves several primitive technical skills (CB, 8: 110–11). Loosely (sometimes even ironically) drawing on the biblical book of Genesis,<sup>5</sup> Kant also posits that they are a heterosexual couple who do not live in physical proximity to other individuals of their kind, and who live in a temperate climate abundant in opportunities for nourishment and secured against predators (8: 110). By virtue of belonging only to the realm of nature, this couple is fully 'guided' or determined by 'instinct, that *voice of God* which all animals obey' (8: 111).

Once Kant has characterized the two individuals in a position to leave the state of nature, he proceeds to sketch a speculative account of their first use of reason (which, we will soon see, marks this exit). At some point in time, Kant writes, one of the soon-to-be humans recognized within himself the ability to notice other possibilities for acting than the ones given by instinct, and thus the ability to invent desires independently of his natural instinct: '*reason* soon began to stir and sought through comparison of that which gratified with that which was represented to him by another sense than the one to which instinct was bound, such as the sense of sight, as similar to what previously was gratifying, to extend his knowledge of the means of nourishment beyond the limits of instinct' (CB, 8: 111). (Unfortunately, Kant provides no explanation why this happened exactly when it did or why it happened at all.) This ability to compare options for acting, create new desires that go beyond or against nature and to *choose* how to act in order to satisfy a particular desire was the first manifestation of the faculty of reason and reason's first step in elevating us above other species. The success of the first attempt to act independently from nature made the human 'conscious of reason as a faculty that can extend itself beyond the limits within which all animals are held' (8: 111–12). He noticed his reason's purposive capacity to determine his ends – to act rationally, according his own practical maxims. He 'discovered within himself a faculty of choosing for himself a way of living and not of being bound to a single one, as other animals are' (8: 112). This 'first attempt at a free choice' marked the beginning of our species' emancipation from the animal kingdom into the 'estate of freedom' (8: 112; see also LP, 9: 441).

Kant's speculative account of the first use of reason in the 'Conjectural Beginning' differs in style and form from his well-known critical works. But it can nonetheless be articulated in terms familiar from his critical philosophy. Doing so will help us see the conceptual connections between the ideas presented in this essay and those presented in his other works.

When Kant describes the first human's becoming conscious of his reason as a faculty that can extend itself beyond natural instincts, this realization can be understood

as awareness of his capacity to act in accordance with both technical and pragmatic hypothetical imperatives. Technical hypothetical imperatives are those grounded on any contingent end (means-end reasoning), whereas pragmatic hypothetical imperatives are grounded on fulfilling the ends one sets for oneself (prudential reasoning) (G, 4: 414–17). Both of these abilities are exercised in Kant's speculative account of the first human's choice to eat a fruit against the guidance of instinct. The more advanced capacity for prudential reasoning is exercised for the first time. Kant's depiction of the soon-to-be human in the condition of animality before the first use of reason makes it clear that such an individual would have lacked the capacity for prudential reasoning by virtue of pragmatic hypothetical imperatives. This is the crucial capacity that is discovered, as it were, through and in the first use of reason. (To be sure, this does not mean that prudential reason is somehow created at this point, which would be incompatible with Kant's assertions that humans of all eras enter the world with the same rational predispositions and moral potential (Kleingeld 1997: 65–6). Rather, it is a story of the human's becoming aware, or understanding, of his capacity for prudential reasoning.)

It is less clear whether the soon-to-be human in the condition of animality before the first use of reason in this speculative story also lacked the less advanced capacity for technical hypothetical imperatives (means-end reasoning), since Kant mentions that he had a degree of technical skill beforehand. But the animals who were to become humans were already different from other animal species even before they became humans proper. Perhaps, then, even if the soon-to-be human was able to act somewhat in accordance with the technical hypothetical imperative before the first use of reason, this does not mean that this ability was available to other animal species as well.

The story of the first use of reason in the 'Conjectural Beginning' can also be articulated in the terms Kant uses in the *Religion* to describe the three 'elements of determination of the human being' or features of human nature, which are: '1. The predisposition to the *animality* of the human being, as a *living* being; 2. To the *humanity* in him, as a living and at the same time *rational* being; 3. To his *personality*, as a rational and at the same time *responsible* being' (R, 6: 26). The first predisposition, animality, is further characterized as a predisposition for which reason is *not* required and one that consists of the drives for self-preservation, for the propagation of the species, and for coexistence with others (6: 26–7). Even though in the *Religion* we find no suggestion about the chronological nature of learning to exercise these predispositions, we might understand them in this way for regulative purposes in light of 'Conjectural Beginning' and Kant's anthropology lectures. This is because his characterization of the predisposition to animality in the *Religion* comes very close to what he says about the soon-to-be humans in the state of nature in the 'Conjectural Beginning'. There, these individuals are also incapable of using reason and are also in possession of instincts that allow them to survive and procreate. (One point of difference is that the 'Conjectural Beginning', presenting a story about a human couple, does not emphasize the social drive this early on in human development. This interesting difference can be attributed to Kant's heavy reliance on the story of the Garden of Eden from Genesis. But we find the mention of our social drive elsewhere: in the anthropology lectures, where Kant does not choose to rely on Genesis, he indeed suggests that our drive for social life forms a part of our animal nature (AMr, 25: 1416).)

Looking at the *Religion* passage about our three predispositions in light of the story of the first humans in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, we see that the former characterization may be viewed as having a temporal aspect to it (again, merely for regulative purposes). First, we could only exercise the predisposition to animality, for which reason does not have to be used and which matches the picture of the soon-to-be humans in the state of nature, when we belonged solely to the animal kingdom. Second, after the first active employment of reason, we became aware that we have the predisposition to humanity and are capable of prudential thinking. And, third, we have been and still are learning to be moral and responsible – to exercise our predisposition to personality – whose understanding is a gradual and long-term process.

I return to the story presented in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ and to the four steps of reason’s awakening. After the first step of humankind’s emancipation from the state of nature, which – as we have seen – consisted in becoming aware the faculty of free choice (reason), Kant sketches three further ones. Importantly, in the fourth step, the human ‘comprehended (however obscurely) that he was the genuine end of nature, and that in this nothing that lives on earth can supply a competitor for him’ (CB, 8: 114). This step is crucial because it consists in the realization that we are distinct from the other species and do not belong solely to the animal kingdom. It also involves the realization that we are equal to other human beings but not equal to other animals. Through this fourth step of reason’s awakening, Kant hints at the fact that the first humans must have had some – however crude and undeveloped – capacity for moral thinking and thus positive freedom:

The first time he [the new human] said to the sheep: Nature has given you the skin you wear not for you but for me, then took it off the sheep and put it on himself (Genesis 3: 21), he became aware of a prerogative that he had by his nature over all animals. . . . *This representation includes (however obscurely) the thought of the opposite: that he must not say something like this to any human being, but has to regard him as an equal participant in the gifts of nature – a preparation from afar for the restrictions that reason was to lay on the will in the future in regard to his fellow human beings, and which far more than inclination and love is necessary to the establishment of society. And thus the human being had entered into an equality with all rational beings, of whatever rank they might be (Genesis 3: 22); namely, in regard to the claim of being himself an end, of also being esteemed as such by everyone else, and of being used by no one merely as a means to other ends.* (CB, 8: 114; emphasis added)

This passage shows that Kant’s conjectural account of reason’s emergence is intended to be compatible with his transcendental account of freedom at least with respect to the idea that the ability to choose beyond natural determination entails a basic moral awareness. In its crude and undeveloped version from the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, this moral awareness amounts to an awareness that the human has ‘a prerogative’ over other living beings and that the human must regard other humans as ‘equal participant[s] in the gifts of nature’ or of equal moral status. Kant hastens to note that only the first thought is a clear one. The second thought is an obscure one and constitutes only ‘a *preparation from afar* for the restrictions that reason was to lay on the



will *in the future* in regard to his fellow human beings' (CB, 8: 114). He suggests that the newly emerged moral awareness or capacity for moral action will only be properly exercised by the human beings in years to come. For now, the moral awareness is not something the human being will actually act on (even though he could, theoretically speaking). This is why the first use of reason, choosing to eat from the tree of knowledge, consisted merely in exercising the pragmatic capacity of reason. We here witness a mythical beginning of the moral progress of our species – a progress with regards to how often and consistently we act from the moral law – toward which we will strive for millennia to come.

#### 2.4 *The human being as a unique member of the animal kingdom*

Once reason had 'awoken' and emancipated the human being from the tutelage of nature, the uniqueness of our species within the animal kingdom became fully evident.<sup>6</sup> The principal and overarching reason for this uniqueness is, of course, that the human being is the only animal that belongs not only to the system of nature, but also to the 'world system' (AMr, 25: 1415) or the 'rational' kingdom (AMr, 25: 1420). By virtue of belonging to two realms, we are able to manipulate and surpass our animalistic instincts, able to think and act independently from the laws of nature. What follows from this capacity is that we are capable of manipulating things (technical predisposition) and of creating culture and developing unequal relations with others (pragmatic predisposition) (*Anth*, 7: 323).

Non-human animals fully rely on their natural instincts and, as a result, do not have to train and teach their offspring anything they need for their survival and happiness. But the human being – who builds and invents things useful to him – has to be trained and taught by other people, and requires a longer period of time during which he is under their care (LP, 9: 441–51). The human is the only animal who needs certain external factors, such as appropriate education and political institutions, to develop his natural propensities and to improve his nature (AMr, 25: 1416–17). Given that one's education and formation necessarily require the input of other human beings, it comes as no surprise that Kant emphatically states that the human being cannot develop his predispositions and reach his vocation by himself, but only in a social setting (UH, 8: 18–19; *Anth*, 7: 324; LP, 9: 441–51). I will return to this topic in section 3.

While the fact of our belonging to both the animal and the spiritual kingdom is well known in Kantian scholarship, it is valuable to explore the ways in which this fact is discussed in the anthropological context. In the Friedländer transcription of Kant's 1775–6 lectures on anthropology, he states that '[the] human being has two determinations (*Bestimmungen*), one with regard to humanity, and one with regard to animality' (AF, 25: 682). (It is interesting that he uses the word *Bestimmung*, usually translated as 'vocation', in this context to denote both our humanity and our animality, even though this term is more often reserved for the former – the 'human vocation' – and conveys the idea of gradual fulfilment or development.<sup>7</sup>) In the Friedländer, as in the transcriptions of his later lectures – *Menschenkunde* (1781–2) and *Mrongovius* (1784–5) – what immediately follows the remark about our dual nature is the observation that our humanity and animality are fundamentally in

*conflict* (AF, 25: 682; Me, 25: 1199; AMr, 25: 1420). To achieve the perfection of humanity, we would have to 'do violence' to our animality (AF, 25: 682).

But the fundamental conflict between our two determinations is a productive one. As we read in the *Mrongovius*, 'this opposition between the animal and spiritual nature of the human being itself ultimately contributes to the production of the final destiny of the human being' (AMr, 25: 1420). This thought is echoed frequently in Kant's writings whenever he discusses his vision of humanity's progress. What Kant means is that the effects of our freedom of thought and action – gradual socialization and creation of culture – inflame our animalistic desires and inclinations, developing ever more overblown needs whose fulfilment requires competing with other people for social status, power and resources. This opposition between our animal and spiritual determinations is fundamentally about our relation to other humans, and is well known under the term 'unsociable sociability'. This term is introduced in the Fourth Proposition of the 'Universal History' essay and is characterized in the following way:

The human being has an inclination to become *socialized*, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e. 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 and hence expects resistance everywhere. (UH, 8: 20–1)

Unsociable sociability is the feature of our nature that describes the unique relationship we have with living in the condition of sociality. It is responsible for our capacity for forming comparative judgements: assessing our well-being and our needs in light of what others have (AMr, 25: 1422). It is exactly what Kant hints at when he answers the question 'Is the human being created for society or not?' in the *Mrongovius* anthropology lectures by saying:

The human being is not created for the hive like the bees, but he is also not placed in the world as a solitary animal; rather, on the one hand, he has a propensity toward society due to his needs, which are far greater for him than for the animals. . . . On the other hand, the human being also has a principle toward unsociability, for a society that is too large limits and discomforts him, and forces him to be on his guard. (AMr, 25: 1416)

Relatedly, in the *Menschenkunde* anthropology lectures Kant hints at the thought that, prior to the awakening of reason, our nature could not have been characterized by the principle of unsociable sociability. The second element of this term, sociability – the drive to live in a social condition – was simply not a part of our psychology (Me, 25: 1199). The awakening of reason and becoming humans proper, depicted speculatively in the 'Conjectural Beginning', put into action unsociable sociability. The entrance into sociality and frequent interactions with others thus caused the reliance on others when it comes to one's assessment of one's worth and happiness.

### 3. Reason's trajectory: from selfishness to morality

In the previous section I have reconstructed Kant's speculative remarks about our species' prehistorical existence as animals and his story of our species' transition from irrational animals into rational humans. To recap, the purpose of Kant's story is not to provide us with knowledge about events from the far past, but to equip us with a regulative idea which is useful for practical purposes, even if not theoretically true. We are permitted, from the practical philosophical standpoint, to think of the emergence of our rational capacities as described in this essay. This section will present my reading of Kant's teleological account of humankind's rational progress – of the further stages of the progress of human reason. I will also show how Kant's story of humankind's beginning fits with his broader vision of human history.

In section 3.1 I discuss the way in which the first use of reason awakened in us the propensity to evil and self-interested tendencies, and thus prompted humans to enter into the condition of sociality for self-interested purposes. Here I draw primarily on 'Universal History' and 'Conjectural Beginning'. In section 3.2 I show how our motivational psychology is supposed to develop and change alongside the gradual improvement of the rules that govern our social order. The change in our motivational psychology can be described as a slow attempt to mature or to adopt a 'pluralistic' standpoint of reason – the standpoint of assuming one's coexistence in a *community* with others and of regarding oneself as governed by the universal law which governs everyone's pursuits (*Anth*, 7: 130). I also discuss the three means by which this progress can happen: education, legislation and religion. In section 3.3 I conclude by briefly commenting on the ways in which Kant's speculative account of humankind's beginning fits together with his teleological view of human history.

#### 3.1 Reason's egoism

According to Kant's story of humankind's beginning in the 'Conjectural Beginning', the initial use of reason for setting ends that go beyond nature had enormous consequences for our species' further development. Most immediately, it was the cause of our feeling discontent for the first time and of the development of a vicious side of humans: the 'evil' that hence became a part of our nature (CB, 8: 119). This happened, Kant speculates, because the pleasant feeling of being superior to other living beings that are unable freely to choose their desires and act independently of their instinct was soon replaced by the feelings of 'anxiety and fright . . . concerning how he [the human being] . . . should deal with this newly discovered faculty' (8: 112). From there, the realization that particular desires can be controlled led to the emergence of evil desires, such as the desire to be comparatively better off than others and to gain control over others.

Kant's anthropological view of evil implies that the first occurrences of evil coincided with the entrance into the condition of sociality. Within the condition of sociality, the human being saw himself as having to pay attention to others because they posed, or at least could potentially pose, a threat to the realization of his own desires and needs. Moreover, paying attention to others resulted in the emergence of comparative judgements and competitive inclinations (see Wood 1999: 287). The conceptual relation between the evil in our nature and the gradual development of our predispositions can be understood in the following way. Sociality is a condition for

the very possibility of human, as opposed to purely animal, development (recall Me, 25: 1199). However, human sociality necessarily involves unsociable sociability, from which all kinds of evil are derived. Nevertheless, unsociable sociability (as a condition of human development) is also the condition for the development of the goods of human life, such as the sciences and the arts. Therefore, as Kant argues in 'Universal History', a just political order is needed in order to have these goods while minimizing the evils of unsociable sociability (greed, competitiveness and envy). The evolution of our juridical order is driven by the need to minimize the extent to which we are motivated by our propensity to evil.

These ideas echo Rousseau's 'Discourse on the Origins and Basis of Inequality among Men' – itself a conjectural account of the origins of sociality and morality. According to Rousseau, when our species existed within the state of nature, everyone was independent from one another and all of our needs were satisfied. This happiness and independence ceased after humans left the state of nature (the causes of which Rousseau only speculates about) and entered a preliminary condition of civility. This condition made us timid, feeble and servile (Rousseau 1984: 86). In particular, we developed new, excessive desires that could only be satisfied with the help of others, and, due to commodities that they enjoyed by living in small groups with others, we became dependent on other human beings. Rousseau writes: 'it is impossible to enslave a man without first putting him in a situation where he cannot do without another man, and since such a situation does not exist in the state of nature, each man there is free of the yoke, and the law of the strongest is rendered vain' (p. 106). As Jerome Schneewind puts it, Rousseau effectively claims that 'sociability develops with a vengeance: the struggle for social distinction makes us slaves to our need to impress others in whatever ways we can' (Schneewind 2009: 102).

According to Rousseau, moreover, the entrance into the condition of sociality or civility was the first step towards inequality among humans because it provoked interpersonal comparisons, jealousy, shame and the importance of public esteem. People became greedy and competitive, and thus started trying to use others for their own purposes (Rousseau 1984: 116–22). This picture closely resembles Kant's vision of the initial condition of sociality which led to the emergence of new (self-interested) desires correlated with comparative judgements and to the treatment of others as means to one's ends. Furthermore, according to Rousseau, the direct cause of the development of egoism in the human being was the realization that the species we belong to is better and more important than other species (p. 110). Kant reiterates this thought in the 'Conjectural Beginning' (8: 112).

Finally, Kant's view in the 'Conjectural Beginning' that non-human animals, by contrast with human beings, are limited to their natural instincts and thus do not have free will, can also be traced back to Rousseau's second 'Discourse'. Rousseau claims: 'while nature alone activates everything in the operations of a beast, man participates in his own actions in his capacity as a free agent. The beast chooses or rejects by instinct, man by an act of free will. . . . Nature commands all animals, and the beast obeys. Man receives the same impulsion, but he recognizes himself as being free to acquiesce or resist' (Rousseau 1984: 87–8).

But Kant's account of human nature is more positive in the large than Rousseau's. According to Kant, our propensity to evil is not just the cause of numerous bad things that happened to mankind, but also the indirect cause of everything good. Most

importantly, it has an indirect impact on the gradual development of the juridical order, whose rules, however unjust initially, slowly develop into ever more just and egalitarian ones. As Guyer puts it, ‘Human beings living in close contact with one another will apparently be forced by mere prudence to discover and adhere to just laws’ (Guyer 2009: 132). The gradual improvement of our juridical order results from minimizing our unsociable sociability, and this happens because we realize that a lawful condition will protect our individual self-interests (PP, 8: 348). However, as Deligiorgi (2017: 697–8) points out, the establishment of a just constitution does not require a complete eradication of this antagonism. We may perhaps think of the regulative idea of establishing an ethical community composed of perfectly moral citizens (see section 3.2) as synonymous with a complete eradication of unsociable sociability from our nature – a merely regulative idea.

The progressive development of social relations, therefore, is closely connected to the attempts to minimize the evil individuals are capable of via socio-political means – attempts that, however, are motivated by individuals’ self-interest and competitiveness. The phenomenon of unsociable sociability can also be observed at the level of international relations: while national self-interest drives individual states to war, their interest in commerce and trade leads them to the gradual establishment of peaceful relations (UH, 8: 24–6; PP, 8: 361). Without unsociable sociability and competition between human beings, therefore, the development of the arts, sciences or any complex rationality at all would not take place. But even though unsociable sociability can indirectly lead to a just juridical state, this passage makes it clear that, before such a state can be established, unsociable sociability leads to gross and terrible inequalities and injustices between people – a situation which can only be solved by establishing just rules of conduct.<sup>8</sup>

When in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ Kant speculatively describes the first use of reason and the resulting activation of our propensity to evil as well as the tendency to compete with others for self-worth, he seems to be suggesting that the standpoint of a hypothetical individual who has just entered into the condition of sociality – of an individual who uses reason to create new desires and find means to satisfy them – is *self-interested*, for such an individual is not capable of considering his own desires as on a par with the desires of others. Without fully fledged sociality, the individual portrayed in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ is not able to have a clear understanding that other human beings are his equals, but only an obscure one (see section 2.3). As both ‘Universal History’ and ‘Conjectural Beginning’ suggest, every human being, having noticed the egoism of his companions and having suffered from anxiety and fright concerning his future, was inclined to set up regulations that enforce just and fair behaviour, so that the self-interested others do not impede the realization of his pursuits.<sup>9</sup> Kant suggests that humans entered the condition of sociality for self-interested reasons, since sociality started with self-interested and competitive individuals who wanted to exploit others to satisfy their own ends. Specifically, the original reasons for setting up and developing socio-political arrangements and a juridical order, caused by non-rational emotions such as anxiety as well as by increasing knowledge about the capacities of others, were self-interested.

The first use of reason and the exit from the state of nature, therefore, led the human being to become what Kant calls in the *Anthropology* a ‘practical egoist’: someone who ‘limits all ends to himself, sees no use in anything except that which is useful

to himself, and . . . puts the supreme determining ground of his will simply in utility and his own happiness, not in the thought of duty' (*Anth*, 7: 130).<sup>10</sup> Kant's anthropological description of the practical egoist suggests that such a person would act solely in accordance with the technical-hypothetical imperative (he 'sees no use in anything except that which is useful to himself') and the pragmatic-hypothetical imperative (he 'puts the supreme determining ground of his will simply in utility and his own happiness'), but *not* in accordance with the categorical imperative. The practical egoist would know which means will satisfy which goals and is capable of determining or pursuing his own happiness. However, Kant suggests, the practical egoist would not regard himself as a citizen of the world (*Weltbürger*) or as a member of the community of all human beings (*ibid.*). The concept of happiness is not universally valid since every person can decide for himself what counts as happiness; by contrast, the concept of duty is universally valid, but to comprehend it would require seeing things from other people's standpoints.

### 3.2 Reason's gradual development

The picture that emerges from the 'Universal History' and the 'Conjectural Beginning' is that the first use of reason led the human to enter into the condition of sociality, and this in turn led to his becoming a practical egoist. However, as 'Universal History' goes on to explain, reason was not just the cause of this feature of our moral psychology. Once appropriately developed, reason can also be used to guide us to minimize our competitiveness and the evil in our nature. It can eventually, through appropriate political and institutional arrangements, resolve problems created by unsocial sociability and thus *change* our way of perceiving one another (UH, 8: 23–8; PP, 8: 666–7). An important purpose of Kant's regulative and teleological account of human history, therefore, is to promote the awareness of the aspect of human nature he calls 'unsocial sociability' and to show ways of gradually minimizing its force.

As Philip Kain has argued, referencing 'Universal History' and *Perpetual Peace*, self-interest, conflict and war slowly lead toward the same end that moral reflection would have dictated if it governed our actions from the beginning of humankind (Kain 1989: 331). However, Kain has not observed that the 'Conjectural Beginning' is also a text worth discussing in this context, as it contains valuable remarks about the way in which conflict leads to gradual moralization. Kant writes:

[C]ulture must proceed in order properly to develop the predispositions of humanity as a moral species to their vocation, so that the latter no longer conflict with humanity as a natural species. From this conflict . . . arise all true ills that oppress human life . . . but these predispositions, since they were aimed at the merely natural condition, suffer injury from progressing culture and injure culture in turn, until perfect art again becomes nature, which is the ultimate goal of the moral vocation of the human species. (CB, 8: 117–18)

The regulative idea of the progress of the human being and humanity as a whole can thus be understood as consisting in eliminating within oneself the standpoint of a practical egoist (discussed in section 3.1) and striving to adopt the opposite standpoint – that of an enlightened individual<sup>11</sup> or, as Kant puts it in the *Anthropology*,

of a 'pluralist' (*Anth*, 7: 130).<sup>12</sup> The progress of any individual, as we have seen, requires the help of others and the existence of appropriate institutional structures. More specifically, there are three means to human progress: education, legislation and religion, education being perhaps the most important and fundamental (Me, 25: 1198; AMr, 25: 1427–8; LP, 9: 443). As I will show here, these all emphasize the need to regard and conduct oneself as a citizen of the world (*Weltbürger*). Of course, while legal and political arrangements can only teach us to behave in conformity with the law, every individual has to decide for himself to begin obeying the law for its own sake. The institutional (legal, educational, religious) arrangements in place are supposed only to *aid* each individual in making this choice. Education, moreover, can provide us with materials for maxims, give us examples of virtuous actions, and make us realize the importance of moral resolution (*CPrR*, 5: 153; *MM*, 6: 477–84).

For Kant, the intellectual achievements of one generation are a baseline, as it were, for the education and development of the generation that is to follow. The maturing of people from the next generation depends on how enlightened the individuals in public roles – especially teachers and political and religious leaders – currently are. This is why 'the correct concept of the manner of education can only arise if each generation transmits its experience and knowledge to the next, each in turn adding something before handing it over to the next' (LP, 9: 446). If a critical number of generations succeeds in this regard, then 'each generation will move one step closer to the perfection of humanity' (9: 444). For one generation collectively to take a step toward enlightenment, therefore, is a necessary condition of the enlightenment of individuals who will live in the future.

The role of teachers, specifically, is to design and execute the right plan of education for the schools – a plan whose aim is to improve the human condition. Kant notes in the *Lectures on Pedagogy*: '[T]he design for a plan of education must be made in a cosmopolitan manner. . . . It is only through the efforts of people . . . who take an interest in the best world and who are capable of conceiving the idea of a future improved condition, that the gradual approach of human nature to its purpose is possible' (9: 448–9).<sup>13</sup> The role of teachers, he adds, is not only to promote technical skilfulness, but to instil the ability to think in an enlightened way. The best teachers and other public figures try to develop not only their pupils' technical and prudential skills, but their morality too, thus 'bring[ing] posterity further than they themselves have gone' (9: 449). Therefore, even though each person has to achieve a moral character through individual struggle and practice, later generations can benefit to some extent from the improved education and insights of previous generations.

In addition to teachers, political leaders and religious authorities also play a key role in the maturing of the generation that follows them. The role of enlightened political leaders and the state in general is to protect the rightful freedom of its citizens. The state, for example, guards us against civil compulsion and compulsion over conscience (O, 8: 144–5). It also ensures the freedom, equality and independence of each of its citizens (see TP, 8: 290–6 and O, 8: 144–5). It thereby removes the obstacles to adopting the three maxims of good thinking – thinking for oneself, from the standpoint of others and consistently – and encourages participation in the public domain and law-making. Here Kant's idea of a 'moral politician' from the *Perpetual Peace* – of a leader whose political principles and decisions are compatible with morality (*PP*, 8: 372) – can serve as an illustration of what kind of political leaders would be needed

so that the country in question can progress toward enlightenment. The role of enlightened religious leaders, in turn, is to encourage their own and one another's moral progress and the cultivation of moral virtue, so that our behaviour can transform from merely empirically to intelligibly good.

The development of political, religious and educational institutions and of our moral psychology are closely related. The disposition to practical egoism, which (as the 'Conjectural Beginning' may suggest) characterized the first humans who started using reason, led to the emergence of an unjust juridical order, motivated by individual self-interest and competitiveness of its members. And, in the same way, the gradual improvement of our juridical order seems to be coupled with a psychological disposition that opposes practical egoism – a disposition Kant labels 'pluralism': 'The opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world (*Weltbürger*)' (*Anth*, 7: 130). As a pluralist, Kant further explains, '[I would] have reason to assume, in addition to my own existence, the existence of a whole of other beings existing in community with me (called the world)' (*Anth*, 7: 130). On this anthropological picture, the pluralist – unlike the practical egoist – is capable of seeing things from other people's standpoints and of taking part in universally valid judgements. These passages from the *Anthropology* suggest that a necessary condition for the existence of a juridical order composed of correctly motivated (not merely correctly behaving) people is that it consists of members who are 'pluralists' in the Kantian sense, that is, who assume and accept their coexistence in a *community* with others (as citizens of the world), and hence regard themselves as governed by the universal law which governs the pursuit of their conceptions of happiness.

The definition of the pluralist from the *Anthropology* describes this individual as a *Weltbürger* – citizen of the world. This term is important for Kant's teleological view of humankind's progress. He uses it not only to describe what kind of standpoint of reason an individual should strive to achieve, but also to describe ideal political and juridical relations. Kant uses a cognate of this term in the 'Universal History' to define the ideal 'cosmopolitan (*weltbürgerlicher*) condition' between states (UH, 8: 25–6; see also CB, 8: 121; PP, 8: 354–5). The notion of a cosmopolitan condition is then clarified in the Eighth Proposition, which connects the development of our human predispositions to developing a perfect state constitution, where it is called 'the womb in which all original predispositions of the human species will be developed' (UH, 8: 28). Thus the Eighth Proposition explicitly connects the political condition of cosmopolitanism with the development of other predispositions of our species – including the psychological standpoint of pluralism discussed in the *Anthropology*. In the *Anthropology* Kant explicitly says that the gradual progress of our species is only possible by a progressive formation of all citizens of the world into a cosmopolitan system: 'one cannot expect to reach [humanity's] goal by the free agreement of *individuals*, but only by a progressive organization of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system that is cosmopolitically united' (*Anth*, 7: 333). The right treatment of others within a large community – the *telos* of humankind's progress – must therefore be achieved via two separate, but mutually reinforcing, processes: one internal (arriving at the disposition to *pluralism* within individuals) and one external (arriving at the political condition of *cosmopolitanism*).



Developing the political condition of cosmopolitanism is supposed to happen alongside the gradual moralization of its citizens, which would ‘transform a *pathologically* compelled agreement to form a society finally into a *moral whole*’ (UH, 8: 21). For Kant, forming the cosmopolitan condition is a necessary condition of people’s achieving as virtuous a character as is humanly possible, just as forming individual states is a necessary condition of the beginning of our process of moralization. It would seem that a *pathologically* compelled agreement is the national juridical order, while a *moral whole* would be a community of virtue (an ‘ethical state’ in the terminology of the *Religion*), which perhaps aligns with the cosmopolitan condition. Such a community (also called an ‘ethical state’ in direct contrast with the ‘juridico-civil state’) would only need an ethical legislation (one that is freely accepted by all its members), not a coercive legislation (R, 6: 94–5). The community of virtue – a regulative ideal – would be composed of perfectly moral citizens who always choose to act on duty. The rational development of humankind ‘is ultimately to culminate in the self-transformation of society into a moral community’ (Kleingeld 1997: 61; see also *Anth*, 7: 331). The idea of an infinite moral and political progress toward a successful formation of the ethical community or the cosmopolitan state is central to the idea of virtue. This progress can never be fully completed, however, because human beings will never be able to have a holy will devoid of non-moral inclinations.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3 *The beginning of human history in light of its later stages*

Having sketched Kant’s view of human progress and of the gradual realization of the human vocation, I want to conclude by showing how it is complemented by the conjectural account of the beginning of human history that I presented in section 2.

When Kant speculates about the way we became rational in the distant past, he puts an emphasis on the new uncertainties that the newly emerged human being had to face once he realized he can think and act independently of nature’s causal laws. Kant portrays this human being as faced with ‘anxiety and fright . . . concerning how he . . . should deal with this newly discovered faculty’ and imaginatively depicts the position this human being is in as standing ‘on the brink of an abyss’ (CB, 8: 112). The human is uncertain about how to use reason in the right way. But because his reason is not a part of the natural world, he cannot rely on his innate instincts in order to know how to rightly use it. He also lacks training in this regard because he belongs, by assumption, to the first generation of rational human beings.

The history of humanity is, then, the history of learning how to exercise reason in the right way. Consequently, given the conflict between rationality and animality, the history of humanity is also the history of learning how to polish and tame our animality or ‘crudity’ (LP, 9: 443). To do so, the human being needs to slowly teach himself – and others around him – how to do this. Hence the human being ‘can only become human through education’ (LP, 9: 443). But this process of learning to exercise reason in the right way and to overcome natural inclinations is slow and gradual because it is filled with numerous failed attempts and mistaken choices (UH, 8: 23; CB, 8: 123; LP, 9: 451). Kant illustrates this point in ‘Universal History’ by saying that the human being needs a ‘master’ who will teach him how not to misuse his freedom and how to obey the universal law, but the only people who can perform such a role are other human beings who are in need of a master themselves (UH, 8: 23). Unlike in

the case of other animals, then, realizing our human predispositions and becoming the best version of ourselves requires social, political and pedagogical experiments: 'With the human being, the species first reaches the destiny of humanity from generation to generation, since a generation always adds something to the enlightenment of the previous one' (AMr, 25: 1417). It is impossible to learn to make a fully fledged, mature use of reason in isolation from other humans or over a short period of time. This impossibility is already evident in the story of the first use of reason which begins human history in the 'Conjectural Beginning': the first use of reason does not bring any positive changes to the life of the individual who uses it; nor does it make evident how reason should be used to his benefit and the benefit of his species.

Finally, Kant's account of human progress and moral learning is not incompatible with the idea that the moral law is unconditionally and universally valid. First, reason's development portrayed in the 'Conjectural Beginning' and 'Universal History' depicts the gradual improvement of our moral and rational capacities, not the emergence of new mental structures. Second, this account tells us not how morality is created, but how moral demands and principles gradually become fully understood by humans – a phenomenon compatible with the timeless and universal validity of the moral law. In other words, it is not morality that goes through a historical process; rather, it is human understanding of it that does (cf. Kleingeld 1997: 65–9).

#### 4. Conclusion

By bringing attention to Kant's 'Conjectural Beginning' essay and other writings in anthropology and the philosophy of history, I have reconstructed his speculative account of the beginning of rationality and the transition from mere irrational animals into rational human beings who gradually come to understand their practical capacities. I have also tied this account to his broader teleological view of humankind's progress and to his prescriptions for the continued advancement of humanity.

The upshot is that Kant's vision of reason's future can be unified with his theory of the history of reason, including its very emergence. In particular, a careful reconstruction and better grasp on the epistemic status of his speculations on reason's emergence shows that this account fits very well with his understanding of human history as a *post facto* reflection that imposes *a priori* conditions for our comprehension of certain phenomena in order to help us make these phenomena intelligible.

#### Notes

1 I will use the following abbreviations and translations for Kant's works: AB = Busolt anthropology lecture notes, AF = Friedländer anthropology lecture notes (trans. Felicitas Munzel in Kant 2012), AMr = Mrongovius anthropology lecture notes (trans. Robert Clewis in Kant 2012), *Anth* = *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (trans. Robert Louden in Kant 2007), CB = 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History' (trans. Allen Wood in Kant 2007), *CPrR* = *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999), *CPJ* = *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews in Kant 2000), *G* = *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999), LP = Lectures on Pedagogy (trans. Robert Louden in Kant 2007), Me = *Menschenkunde* anthropology lecture notes (trans. Robert Louden in Kant 2012), *MM* = *Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999), O = 'What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?' (trans. Allen Wood in Kant 1996), *PP* = *Perpetual Peace* (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999), *R* = *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (trans.

George di Giovanni in Kant 1996), TP = 'On the Common Saying' (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999), UH = 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan End' (trans. Allen Wood in Kant 2007), WE = 'What is Enlightenment?' (trans. Mary Gregor in Kant 1999).

2 This account is presented in CB and in Kant's lectures on anthropology.

3 Kant mentions these phases in UH, 8: 26; *Anth*, 7: 324; LP, 9: 449–50; and several other places.

4 See, for example, Yovel 1978, 1989; Kain 1989; Wood 1991, 1999; Kleingeld 1997, 2009; Munzel 1999, 2003; Deligiorgi 2005, 2017; Herman 2009; Schneewind 2009; Loudon 2011, 2017; Cohen 2012; Formosa 2012; Kuehn 2012; Moran 2012; Frierson 2013; Shell 2015.

5 'Conjectural Beginning' may be viewed as Kant's response to Herder's own account of the early stages of humankind, which itself largely draws on the biblical Genesis. Unlike Kant's essay, Herder's *Oldest Document of Humankind* (1774) takes the Bible to be a literal, historically reliable account of humanity's beginning (Herder 1877–1913: 90). Kant criticizes Herder's treatment of Genesis by being explicit in the 'Conjectural Beginning' that a historiography based on the Bible is only of conjectural and speculative value (Kant 2007: 160–2; Beiser 1987: 149–52).

6 I say *fully* evident because even before the first use of reason our species was in some ways special and distinct from any other in its physical characteristics, social drive and primitive technical abilities that could be passed across generations. Moreover, before reason's awakening this faculty had presumably been dormant, not non-existing.

7 In the later Mrongovius transcription of his 1784–5 lectures, he similarly says: 'Here we have only spoken of the animal determination (*Bestimmung*) of the human being. But now we must speak also of the spiritual determination of the human being', again using the term *Bestimmung* to refer to both of our natures.

8 Despite the general progressive character of our socio-political development, it is not exactly a straightforward, linear process. (See *Conflict of the Faculties*, 7: 87.)

9 On the picture I am sketching concerning the 'Universal History', it is *not* the case that my realization that other people's wills conflict with my own straightforwardly amounts to achieving a capacity for moral reasoning. Therefore, I disagree with Moran's (2012: 224–6) reading of the moral progress of our species as Kant presents it in the 'Universal History', and in particular in its Fourth Proposition. Moran claims: 'When we live in society with others, we begin to recognize that others' wills can often come into conflict with our own, and we begin to see that we will have to think from their standpoint *in order to come to the appropriate moral conclusions*' (Moran 2012: 225; my emphasis). On my picture, first, the realization that other people's wills conflict with my own is initially used only for egoistic purposes (rational egoism), and secondly, this takes place (temporally speaking) much before our species attains the very capacity for moral reasoning.

10 In the same section from the *Anthropology* (7: 128–30), Kant distinguishes three types of egoism: logical egoism (when one 'considers it unnecessary to test his judgment also by the understanding of others'), aesthetic egoism (when one 'is satisfied with his own taste, even if others . . . criticize or even laugh at [it]') and practical egoism. The terms 'practical egoist' and 'practical egoism' do not appear in Kant's writings before the *Anthropology*.

11 In the essay 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' (1784), notably written around the same time as 'Universal History', Kant defines the condition of enlightenment as 'humankind's emergence from his self-incurred minority' (WE, 8: 40), that is, emergence from the inability to use one's understanding without someone else's help due to lack of resolution or courage.

12 Kant's pluralism is not specifically a political notion, but an ethical one. I have at least two good reasons to interpret Kant's pluralism in ethical terms. First, pluralism gets defined in the *Anthropology* as an attitude of '*regard[ing]* and *conduct[ing]* oneself as a mere citizen of the world'. While the phrase 'conducting oneself' typically refers to the way a person is behaving or acting (as an external phenomenon) regardless of the motives of such behaving, the phrase 'regarding oneself' typically refers to the way a person is thinking about himself. My second reason for interpreting Kant's pluralism in moral terms is that in the relevant passage from the *Anthropology* pluralism (of a single type) is contrasted simultaneously with three types of egoism: logical, aesthetic and practical or moral ('practical egoism' and 'moral egoism' are synonymous for Kant in this passage). This juxtaposition suggests that pluralism should be understood as a moral notion (contrasted with moral or practical egoism) and simultaneously as an aesthetic and a logical notion, which is contrasted with the other two types of egoism.

13 Kant defines the cosmopolitan perspective as ‘a view to the well-being of the human race as a whole and insofar as it is conceived as progressing toward its well-being in the series of generations of all future times’ (TP, 8: 277–8).

14 Unfortunately, the relation between an ideal cosmopolitan condition (which would presumably require some coercive laws) and an ideal ethical community (which would not require them) does not emerge clearly from Kant’s writings. The *Religion* expands Kant’s ideas about the moral progress of a human community which we find in a more preliminary form in the ‘Universal History’. Unlike ‘Universal History’, the *Religion* and the Doctrine of Virtue in the *Metaphysics of Morals* are concerned with people’s moral education and development aside from political or legal means of furthering it. The *Religion* and the *Metaphysics of Morals* do not draw a distinction between a national state and a cosmopolitan state when discussing the ethical community. It is thus unclear whether an ideal cosmopolitan state composed of pluralistically minded citizens needs no juridical regulations – whether moralizing involves making a collective effort which is also a political effort.

## References

- Beiser, Frederick C. (1987) *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cohen, Alix (2012) ‘Enabling the Realization of Humanity: The Anthropological Dimension of Education’. In Klas Roth and Chris Surprenant (eds), *Kant and Education: Interpretations and Commentary* (New York: Routledge), 152–62.
- Deligiorgi, Katerina (2005) *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*. New York: SUNY Press.
- (2017) ‘The Philosopher as Legislator: Kant on History’. In Matthew Altman (ed.), *The Palgrave Kant Handbook* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 693–703.
- Formosa, Paul (2012) ‘From Discipline to Autonomy: Kant’s Theory of Moral Development’. In Klas Roth and Chris Surprenant (eds), *Kant and Education: Interpretations and Commentary* (New York: Routledge), 163–76.
- Frierson, Patrick R. (2013) *What is the Human Being?* London: Routledge.
- Guyer, Paul (2009) ‘The Crooked Timber of Mankind’. In Amélie Rorty and James Schmidt (eds), *Kant’s ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim’: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 129–49.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried (1777–1913), *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Bernhard Suphan. Vol. VI. Berlin: Weidmann.
- Herman, Barbara (2009) ‘A Habitat for Humanity’. In Amélie Rorty and James Schmidt (eds), *Kant’s ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim’: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 150–70.
- Kain, Philip J. (1989) ‘Kant’s Political Theory and Philosophy of History’. *Clio*, 18, 325–45.
- Kant, Immanuel (1996) *Religion and Rational Theology*. Trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1999) *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2007) *Anthropology, History and Education*. Ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert Loudon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2009) *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2012) *Lectures on Anthropology*. Ed. Allen Wood and Robert Loudon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kleingeld, Pauline (1997) ‘Kant, History, and the Idea of Moral Development’. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 16(1), 59–80.
- (2009) ‘Kant’s Changing Cosmopolitanism’. In Amélie Rorty and James Schmidt (eds), *Kant’s ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim’: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 171–86.
- Kuehn, Manfred (2012) ‘Kant on Education, Anthropology, and Ethics’. In Klas Roth and Chris Surprenant (eds), *Kant and Education: Interpretations and Commentary* (New York: Routledge), 55–68.

- Louden, Robert B. (2011) *Kant's Human Being: Essays on his Theory of Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2016) 'Applying Kant's Ethics: The Role of Anthropology'. In Graham Bird (ed.), *A Companion to Kant* (London: Wiley-Blackwell), 350–63.
- (2017) 'Becoming Human: Kant's Philosophy of Education and Human Nature'. In Matthew Altman (ed.), *The Palgrave Kant Handbook* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 705–27.
- Moran, Kate A. (2012) *Community and Progress in Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Munzel, G. Felicitas (1999) *Kant's Conception of Moral Character: The 'Critical' Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgment*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- (2003) 'Kant on Moral Education, or "Enlightenment" and the Liberal Arts'. *Review of Metaphysics*, 57(1), 43–73.
- Palmieri, Frank (2016) *State of Nature, Stages of Society: Enlightenment Conjectural History and Modern Social Discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1984) *Discourse on the Origins and Basis of Inequality among Men*. Trans. M. Cranston. London: Penguin Books.
- Schneewind, Jerome B. (2009) 'Good Out of Evil: Kant and the Idea of Unsocial Sociability'. In Amélie Rorty and James Schmidt (eds), *Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim': A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 94–111.
- Shell, Susan (2015) 'Kant's Lectures on Pedagogy'. In Robert Clewis (ed.), *Reading Kant's Lectures* (Berlin: de Gruyter), 277–98.
- Smalligan Marušić, Jennifer (2017) 'Dugald Stewart on Conjectural History and Human Nature'. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 15(3), 261–74.
- Stewart, Dugald (1858 [2010]) *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart: Biographical Memoirs of Adam Smith, William Robertson, Thomas Reid. To Which Is Prefixed a Memoir of Dugald Stewart. From His Correspondence*. By J. Veitch. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
- Wood, Allen W. (1991) 'Unsociable Sociability. The Anthropological Basis for Kantian Ethics'. *Philosophical Topics*, 19(1), 325–51.
- (1999) *Kant's Ethical Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu (1978) 'Kant and the History of Reason'. *Philosophical Studies Series in Philosophy*, 11 (*Philosophy of History and Action*), 115–32.
- (1989) *Kant and the Philosophy of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

---

**Cite this article:** Lenczewska, O. (2022). From Rationality to Morality: The Collective Development of Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Anthropology. *Kantian Review* 27, 363–383. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000152>