

Globalization and Enlightenment

Bridging the Divide

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In the widest sense, my topic concerns the question of whether the relations among modernity, the process of civilization, and violence¹ (which have been observed mainly by social scientists in the course of globalization), are to be interpreted as an act of the Enlightenment. And if so, how one can make the connections among these acts intelligible, even though the order of things have turned entirely upside-down. In this connection belongs the contentious thesis that globalization, which began in the last century and which we celebrate today as a great step forward for human civilization, was above all nearly the opposite: a globalization of power and terror.² Modern sociologists and historians see terror as an immanent effect of modernity.³ Such theses, as they stand currently, contrast with the theories of (for example) Norbert Elias, for whom the long-term development of European history shows pacification and reduction of violence. But they are also opposed to theories in the tradition of Max Weber, according to whom a process of differentiation, i.e. rational management and education, as well as democratic institutions, are to be equated with modernity, so that the excesses of violence seen in the 20th century are actually the opposite of modernization. "The violence-free character of modern civilization," as the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman puts it, "is an illusion, a myth with an apologetic-idealizing function."⁴ In any case, it must be pointed out that the current patterns of explanation treat terror more as an external, empirical, and statistically describable phenomenon. In this way the dehumanization of victimhood belongs to the instrumental rationality of a modernity which is undergoing but has not yet completed enlightenment; ideological frames such as nationalism, racism, and "social hygiene" belong to the aggressive drive to national statehood which originated in the 19th century. Even the lack of control-mechanisms, or rather the lack of a developed democracy with effective separation of powers is not interpretable as the unique precondition of terror.⁵ If one interprets globalization positively as a phenomenon which can only be investigated through empirical facts and statistics, then one must shut one's eyes to terror. - Today we have rediscovered globalization primarily in the international financial markets, which constrain national spheres of action and seem to operate in a lawless space; we see globalization in the consequences of high unemployment, the loss of the social state's sphere of action, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. "The riches are global, the misery local."⁶ "Globalization" is obviously a myth, it has an order-establishing function for economic liberalism, but at the same time it spreads fear and terror in its victims. It polarizes society into those who participate and those who are merely affected, into workers and consumers. "Thought falls into a globalization-trap when it attempts to get at the whole," says Rüdiger Safranski.⁷ According to him, "globalization" is a worldview which starts from the actual worldwide integration of economies, politics, communications, and

¹ Cf. Hans Feger, Hans-Georg Pott, Chr. Wolf: Terror und Erlösung. Robert Musil und der Gewaltdiskurs der Zwischenkriegszeit. Musil-Studien Bd. 37. München 2009. This essay is a critical remark and reinterpretation on Bruce Matthews's article: Kant's Utopian Imperative and the Global Marshall Plan Initiative. In: Journal of Globalization for the Common Good (2006).

² The question about the relation between globalization and violence is currently being debated by a wide range of scholars and theoreticians, including Baudrillard, Enzensberger, Guéhenno and Rancière. For the above-mentioned thesis in the narrow sense, see Rummel, Rudolph J.: Statistics of Democide. Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900; New Brunswick London Münster 1998; Rummel, Rudolph J.: Death by Government; New Brunswick London Münster 1994.

³ So claims the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in his book „Modernity and the Holocaust“ (1989, deutsch 1992).

⁴ Bauman, 1992, S. 111.

⁵ For a discussion of this thesis, see Hartmut Böhme: Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert. Demozide in der Sicht von Erinnerungsliteratur, Statistik und qualitativer Sozialanalyse. In: figurationen 0 (1999), S. 139–157.

⁶ Zygmunt Baumann: Globalization. The Human Consequences. New York: Columbia, 1998, S. 74.

⁷ Rüdiger Safranski: Wieviel Globalisierung verträgt der Mensch. München 2002.

information, and derives from these uncontested processes a moral demand to drive this same global integration onward – simply because it is good and worthy of striving after. It is thus a “symptom of excessive demand,” which neglects the individual and attacks even his individual sphere of value.

Opposed to this is the Project of Enlightenment, which is driven by concern for the “tradition of the Enlightenment;” that is, concern for an orientation toward universal value systems of human rights, of social justice and of freedom. These values have been weakened through the threatening dominance of other viewpoints such as national identity, friend-enemy polarization, and a view of life opposed to modernity. Terror, particularly in its global manner of action,⁸ is today identified as the greatest enemy of this Project of Enlightenment. It forces us to investigate the idea of the Enlightenment critically. In this context it is helpful to make a distinction within the Project of the Enlightenment as Kant did, that is, to understand that one cannot simply enlighten without having first enlightened oneself. The naïve view that one can simply produce enlightenment is to be criticized, just like the naïve view that globalization is valuable in itself. Kant determined that Enlightenment is not to be understood merely negatively as a freeing from superstition, but should go beyond this skepticism and be understood as a form of maturity that is to be realized in practice. For that reason, enlightenment must be defined as a search and not as a possession: “So if it is asked, ‘do we live in an enlightened age?’ the answer must be no, but we certainly live in an age of enlightenment.”⁹

If one wants to make this new orientation in our understanding of the enlightenment fruitful for our current understanding of globalization, it’s worthwhile to consider how Kant himself sketched world-historical utopian perspectives in his later writings. When Kant published his *Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent* in 1784, he could not imagine that his supranational and cosmopolitan thought would be taken up by historiography in the following two centuries. Filled with the optimism of the Enlightenment, he saw an age of rational world-citizens for whom a future cosmopolitan society and world-state drew near, whose development could now be exposed and whose prehistory could now be sketched. Without using the concept of “globalization” Kant proposed that “the history of the human race as a whole should be regarded as the fulfilment of a hidden plan. - I first of all want to ask for the relationship of this hidden plan to what is obvious - to reality.

1. Reality of Globalization

Kant’s idea of globalization is based onto the fragile essence of human freedom, especially on the idea that its proper application also includes its thorough misuse, and that only a transcendental legal process of critical ethics protects against this natural misuse of human freedom. The process of globalization (Kant used the expression: cosmopolitan civil state) should be directed not by self-interests and empirical motivations (this is the natural misuse), but on the autonomy of our moral law alone.

Self-interest is not a viable principle to guide us. It has led to our current state of affairs - modern speaking: a consumerist society based on a „universe of me” that engages in wars to

⁸ Modern terrorism recognizes the vulnerability of complex processes of civilization, and it forces countermeasures which can only be tackled (not pragmatically, however) from the position of a cosmopolitan understanding of the law. As an internationally-acting network, these terror groups presumably have their origin in the conflicts which were produced by globalization itself. Therefore it can also only be fought internationally. But precisely here a change in thought from the critical understanding of the Enlightenment is to be noted: To declare war on international terrorism is a *contradictio in adjecto* (self-contradiction, like the sentence: No freedom for the enemies of freedom). Fighting terrorism with the military alone forces one to the awkward logic of having to make use of the same means as that of one’s enemy. And that means that the perfidy of suicide-terrorism, that is the idea that the end really justifies any means, must in the end also be applied to oneself.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung?*, AK VIII, S. 40.

plunder resources and whose over-consumption results in the waste that is sickening us and our planet. We need a new point of orientation to guide us out of our current crisis. Calling to mind the ideas of Kant, such an imperative shows us the way beyond the idolatry of self-interest. Repulsed and disturbed by our unceasing habit of repeatedly engaging in the mass murder of each other in wars, Kant's essay *Perpetual Peace* (1795) argued for the creation of a global confederation of nations that would use the rule of law to replace the rule of the sword, thereby elevating the shared interests of the common good above the competing self-interests of individual nation states. The forum of the world public demands a dimension of thought that involves anybody's standpoint¹⁰ – that is, a dimension that lives up to the maxim of generalization that we should think in the categorical imperative. Like the concept of inalienable human rights, it took around more than 200 years for us to even attempt to realize Kant's vision, first in the League of Nations and then in the United Nations.

So what are the dangers of self-interest? Whoever has doubts about the mandatory nature of a global human rights system or at least a transnational code of ethics, falls back on the values that one's national state provides as orientation and on one's cultural-political conception. The sceptic who contests a global legal system uses an argument that Thomas Hobbes has already proposed in his social contract theory of the state: only that state that, like a dragon (the mythological Leviathan), wages war externally against all other states can internally maintain an artificially organized order which guarantees the freedom of the individual at most. Macchiavelli has already proposed the tenet that it is only possible to manage a form of order that preserves freedom by adopting policies of maximum deterrence. These positions cannot provide a reason for this scepticism with regard to a global law-governed peace. The war of nations has, like the natural state among people, in these theories the status of a self-evident principle. Given this precondition, the domestic ethics of a national state cannot be extended to the intergovernmental level. Kant concludes: the principles that hold good for the peaceful coexistence of people are extendable; they also hold good for the peaceful coexistence of nations. There are not two different codes of ethics, as Hume asserts – one that applies to relations between people, and another to relations between nations – on the contrary, both are in principle the same. The scepticism with regard to a globalizing code of ethics, that exists in the conceptions of Hobbes and Macchiavelli, is transformed by Kant into its opposite: only a code of ethics whose principles hold good beyond the borders of the community and the state are also good for the coexistence of people.¹¹ In the Hobbesian world „the head of state has no contractual obligations towards the people, he can do no injustice to a citizen, but may act towards them as he pleases“; a maxim of action whose results in the political realm. Kant found „quite terrifying“, since it inevitably leads to despotism domestically and perpetual war externally.¹²

And with this we come to the heart of the matter: a politics of self-interest, at the most basic level, removes the possibility of any form of cooperative engagement. Yet such cooperation is the condition of any form of peaceful and sustainable coexistence. As an alternative what is required is a politics that exceeds self-interest, becoming instead a politics of principle, which necessitates a redirection of interest away from self and towards what is bigger than, and thus transcends, the immediate empirical desires of self. While this redirection of interest does not ignore the desires of the empirical self, it does subordinate them to that which transcends them, which for Kant is the moral law. For according to Kant it is only through a reorientation of the self, whereby it sacrifices self-interest to the obligations of the moral law, that humans will find the possibility of realizing the project of perpetual peace.

¹⁰ „Eine Weltöffentlichkeit setzt genau jene Form unbegrenzter Kommunikation voraus, die Kants Ideal des gemeinen Menschenverstandes verlangt“ (James Bohman: *Die Öffentlichkeit des Weltbürgers: Über Kants ‚negatives Surrogat‘*. In: M. Lutz-Bachmann et al., *Frieden durch Recht*. Ibid. p. 95.

¹¹ Cf. in detail the typology of this scepticism proposed by Wolfgang Kersting in a „kosmopolitischen Kognitivismus“, „geltungstheoretischen Kontextualismus“ and the scepticism of the „Sonderethikthese“ (Wolfgang Kersting: *Recht, Gerechtigkeit und demokratische Tugend. Abhandlungen zur praktischen Philosophie der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 243-256).

¹² Immanuel Kant: *Political Writings*. Trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 84.

To keep a promise demands obligation to the moral law. The categorical power of the verb ought expresses this imperative. As a demand, this ought not only implies that we have not yet lived up to the moral law, it also speaks to the reverence and awe the moral law generates. Together these emotions supply this demand of duty with the binding power that calls us to live up to our obligations. This is an essential point for Kant: the moral law provides this binding power only through the reverence and awe we have for it, since it is only through reverence and awe that the moral law is capable of compelling action without coercing it, thereby preserving our autonomy. This freely chosen compulsion is the feeling of obligation and duty to the unconditioned demand of the ought of the moral law; a feeling of obligation and duty which according to Kant is the necessary condition for all moral acts.

For Kant, obligation to a promise is not conditioned by the empirical will, which, as heteronomous, is driven by the consequences of its decisions, and thus obeys only fear and coercion, since only fear is stronger than desire for sensual pleasures. The rational will on the contrary, is autonomous, since it can freely determine itself to act in accordance with the moral law and not the consequences of an action. What motivates the rational will is not fear, but rather reverence, attraction, respect, even love of justice. It is not the possible consequences of action that determines the rational will, but rather the allegiance and reverence it has to the moral law.

Thus only those nations who have such a reverence for the moral law would be capable of keeping the promises. Such nations would be guided by leaders who are capable of transcending their self-interest. Unlike the political moralists who, in good Machiavellian fashion, understand „the principles of political prudence“ according to their own self-interest, Kant called those statesmen „moral politician[s]“ who interpret and apply the principles of political prudence so „they can be coherent with morality“¹³. A deeply difficult and almost otherworldly task that forces us now to move to consider the utopian dimension in Kant's project.

2. Utopian Aspects of Globalization

Kant argued that the moral law which directs us beyond the interests of the self is sacred, and should therefore be revered. Why? Because for Kant, only by obligating our life to be guided by the moral law can we realize the telos and purpose of our existence, which is none other than to be worthy of happiness, where happiness is understood in the Aristotelian sense of Eudaimonia, or human flourishing. Despite a prevalent misunderstanding, Kant's categorical imperative is not a behavioral guideline which wants to express human insight into the reciprocity of sensible ways of behaving, but rather a condition that must be fulfilled in order to enable one to act morally at all. It is not to be understood in a logically consistent way¹⁴ as a general precept of moral behavior that one applies in certain cases (as it is often misunderstood in the Anglo-Saxon tradition¹⁵); rather, it is a law of self-preservation of freedom that must be fulfilled if one wants to act morally – regardless of how one does this.

Generally speaking: This practical idea of reason provides the metaphysical infrastructure for the rational order and co-operative unity that is the necessary condition for the type of reciprocal political rights and freedoms, which, externalized into the world of global affairs, provides the conditions for a moral world of international right and perpetual peace. In brief, political rights externalize the moral law as a political law requiring duties to others. Here laws are given and enforced by others, they are designed to guide and judge actions, and demand mandatory participation. Consequently, legal systems and social sanctions must be used to make the demands of po-

¹³ Kant, (1991), 128.

¹⁴ In the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant explicitly avoids talking about consequences that result from determining the will. The only place where he does this, V 24, only serves to reject blissful happiness as a possible consequence of absolutely determining the will.

¹⁵ This doctrine of the transcendental act characterizes the „stumbling block for all empiricists“, writes Kant in the Critique of Practical Reason B 13.

litical law real. Power must be used, but only in accordance with law. This application of power is not a moral problem (of internal self-determination), but rather a political problem (of external determination). Our rights can only be guaranteed by our agreeing to submit to external guidance through laws.

Extrapolating to the global level of international relations, in the same way that an individual freely submits to live by the just laws of a nation, Kant's idea of political rights demands nations to freely agree to submit to the binding force of a similar external code, namely that of international law. If the autonomous individual ought freely to submit their self-interest to the dictates of the moral law, then so too ought the nation state freely submit to the requirements of international law. And it is here that Kant's longing for a truly human and humane civilization, in which justice holds sway over brute force and destruction, joins harmony with a longing as old as our species.

For this to work, Kant acknowledges that we must have reason to hope that this is possible. It is „of the utmost importance that we should be content with providence, even if the path it has laid out for us on earth is an arduous one“ (A 23), says Kant in his treatise *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* (1786). And for this we require what I want to call a utopian perspective, for as Kant argues, for us to have the hope of this possibility of becoming worthy of happiness we must see our empirical world as if it were a moral world, which he describes „as a corpus mysticum of the rational beings in it“; a world which he further defines as a world in which „the free will of each being is, under moral laws, in complete systematic unity with itself and with the freedom of every other“.¹⁶ Kant claims that practical reasons, which want to generate the reflective idea of a moral world, need to create a moral image of history in order to transcend individual aims. This is of highest importance for his idea of globalization. The crucial problem is that actors in human history, when they want to assert a position of freedom within it, must have a completely different image of history from those who remain trapped within its constraints and who only understand it on the basis of empiricism. The worldview involving actors who are free to make decisions requires a different constitution: a constitution that is not organized according to the principle of causality, but which describes a connection that is purposefully organized around an actor whose actions are unspecified.¹⁷ This idea of a moral world – of a corpus mysticum – applies only to the world of our imagination and thoughts, since it is a „mere idea“ whose function is to help us bring the real world „as far as may be possible, into conformity with the idea“.¹⁸ And it is only to the extent that this idea helps us achieve that this idea has objective reality.

In the 17th and 18th century have always been a lot of writings dared to advance imaginative renderings of possible future societies and states, based on principles clearly at odds with the power principles that ruled the real world of historical peoples and lands: First of all Francis Bacon's *Nova Atlantis* (1627), and Leibniz' *Corpus Juris Pentium* (1693). More directly related to our theme, we must not forget the first plan for an international court and league of states, outlined by Abbe de Saint Pierre's in his *Projet de Paix Perpétuelle* (1713) - a writing that was closely studied and imitated by none other than Rousseau, in his own essay entitled *The Plan for Perpetual Peace* (1761). In doing this, utopia confronts us with a vision of life and the world that is far more robust and pregnant with meaning than the sober and boring reality of the everyday; indeed, its relation to this reality of the everyday was that of fulfilment to longing. It should test human possibilities and sustains our demand for happiness and beauty. Utopia's point of reference is a future that doesn't yet exist; its power is that of the imagination to critically reject an inhibiting reality in favor of a vision of what could become a reality. And indeed it is precisely this dimension of irreality in the utopian vision that Kant criticised with the argument that it could not have a subversive and emancipatory power. To integrate a utopian vision of this kind in our own society would not have the power to transcend the concrete restrictions of our empirically real. A utopian vision of this kind could not move our imagination in a way that, at the same time, it also claims to be

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1964), (B 836).

¹⁷ See Pauline Kleingeld: *Fortschritt und Vernunft: Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants*. Würzburg 1995, p. 91.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

promoting moral history itself. In contrast to this, I would like to suggest that the utopian imperative in Kant's writing is the demand of reason to cultivate the „utopian conscience“ without realizing the value and necessity of imagination and yes, even illusion, in creating a future different than our past.¹⁹ The utopian perspective in Kant's concept is the opposite of certainty and naive optimism, since it entails risk and possible disenchantment: hope must be capable of disappointment for it to be hope.

Thus do we demand the idea of a moral world that does not yet exist, for it is only through the belief in the possibility of a morally perfect world that we can have the „hope“ required for us to fulfil our duty to the moral law; a law which demands we believe the human race can make progress towards making „the moral end of its existence“ a reality.²⁰ „I base my argument“, Kant writes, „upon my inborn duty of influencing posterity in such a way that it will make constant progress, and that this duty may be rightfully handed down from one member of the series to the next“.²¹ Following the contours of the categorical imperative, we can say that its utopian perspective is the duty not to envision a more perfect world but to act in such a way as to make a more perfect world real.

3. Bridging the Divide

And with this I would like to move to a very brief sketch on the utopian perspective of these thoughts, for here globalization manifests itself as a prophetic call for a transformation of our consciousness, whereby interest of the self is directed toward that which transcends its own empirical, short-term interests. As with the evolution of human rights, we stand at the beginning of an age when self is guided not by tribe, ethnicity, identity, creed or nationality, but by obligation and commitment. To push this process forward requires a new way of thinking about both ourselves as individuals and as citizens of a world community; a transformation of consciousness that will result in a new player and force in the political arena, namely that of civil society. This new political force will be the result of interconnected associations of citizens who know no limitations such as national identity, religious creed, or ethnic identity. As such, the civil society will even become a political force on a par with the established powers of business and government, but will refuse to be guided by the self-interests of profit and power, choosing instead to act in accordance with the dictates of the moral law. Only the conviction and action of civil society can displace the interests of business and governments, by providing a utopian vision for a world ordered according to moral principles, and not by profit or the power interests of individual nations. This sounds very idealistic. So let us go back to the essence of Kant's of cosmopolitan idea of 1784.

In his essay *Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent* (1784), Kant proclaims that an „un-social sociability“ would promote historical progress towards a better society. Kant's historical hopes are based on non-moral motives which should be able to be sublime into moral tendencies. But how do these predispositions to humanity lead to moral improvements? How can we bridge the divide? And how can we be convinced that this progress is a moral one, when our image of history and globalization is always empirically focused on the cruelty of global conflicts? In his later writings, i.e. the essay *Contest of the Faculties* (1798), Kant picks up these questions again and argues: While we cannot empirically experience the moral progress of history and thus verify our hope that history is progressing towards a cosmopolitan end, we might locate a „historical sign“ (*Geschichtszeichen*) in a modest but accessible event that can demonstrate or „point towards“ a progressive moral tendency. We have to reinterpret historical events steadily as „historical signs“ to be confident that globalization is a process of morality to become real. [to reject

¹⁹ Ibid, 14.

²⁰ Kant, (1991), 128.

²¹ Ibid.

a prevalent misunderstanding: It can't be understood as an act of maximization of morality.] And Kant gives us an example: Such a sign revealed in the „universal yet disinterested sympathy“ of observers of the French Revolution. Only aesthetic reflection or an aesthetic „mode of thinking“ - I want to claim - is able to notice the direction of history towards a better society. In his Critique of Judgement, Kant interprets this as the aesthetic transfiguration to a „world view“ [Weltanschauung]²²; today we might say - mythological thinking.

Let us take a closer look on this very interesting issue: Not the empirical view of the French Revolution, whose cause appears to be the revolutionary consciousness, but the aesthetic view, that reflects upon it as an indicatory event, can recognize the sense of direction of the historical sign of 1789. The sign that refers to a general and necessary but temporally unidentifiable causality must be defined as a signum rememorativum, demonstrativum and prognosticon in its function of providing evidence in all three temporal ecstasies. As a natural sign, it is at the same time a deputizing expression of human reason in history, and thus it is evidence of the reality of a causality that comes from freedom. „Foretold by natural means“, it marks the sublime turning point in the transition from natural to rational history, or let me say: from violence to freedom. The event of the Revolution manifests that causality through freedom has always been (recollective), is (demonstrative) and always will be (predictive) effective, but only for those people who perceive it and reflect upon it not as a fact itself (after the event of violence), but who look at it as an aesthetic phenomenon with the enthusiasm of spectators. It is not an empirically objective knowledge that leads here to the conviction that the course of globalization is taking a rational direction, but a subjective legitimation that gives this course a rational foundation in a moral image. The approval and partiality felt even by people who are not involved²³ indicate that the creation of a goal for everyone suddenly determines the actions of the individual. This „openly expressed universal yet disinterested sympathy for one set of protagonists against their adversaries“²⁴ reveals in history of globalization a public spirit that borders on an enthusiasm that, for Kant, is otherwise only effective in the moment of aesthetic reflection. In the aesthetic reflection on the events of the Revolution, the drama of this history gives the critical philosopher confirmation that independent reason „founds, preserves and executes the hidden order of things“²⁵. It is more than just a course that nature unwinds according to a plan in order to support practical reason through a moral image of history. For him, the drama of history is transformed into a philosophical drama.

Some conclusions: To interpret the awareness of globalization as an act of reflexive judgement can bridging the divide of enlightenment and globalization. The „faintest signs“²⁶ taken together, these signs are to be interpreted as evidence that the process of enlightenment becomes irreversible and that the plan of how a history of globalization must be written even has effects on the outcome of that history. From the perspective of Kant's critique of history, they are the „faintest signs of its approach“²⁷ that are interpretable as evidence that proves to be the heuristic

²² Kant KdU B 91 (§ 26). The term Weltanschauung exists in English, as does the literal translation 'world-view'.

²³ „This revolution has aroused in the hearts and desires of all spectators who are not themselves caught up in it a sympathy which borders almost on enthusiasm (...)“ (Kant Contest of the Faculties A 144) (ed. Reiss, p. 182).

²⁴ Kant Contest of the Faculties A 143 (ed. Reiss, p. 182).

²⁵ Kant KdrV B 842.

²⁶ In this respect, Kant talks about the hermeneutic cycle of his philosophy of history in terms of a „cycle of events“, which shows „faintest signs of its approach“ in order „to complete“ such a „cycle of events“ after „a long time“ (Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent A 404). The dominant metaphoric imagery is also here once again the Copernican Revolution according to which the observer rotates, leaves the stars in peace and so compels nature to answer his questions (KdrV B XIII). The indications for making progress for the better, that he discovers through the argumentation of „negative wisdom“ (Contest of the Faculties A 160) through a „mixture of evil and good (...) in man's natural endowments“, are all just indications that man does not have a firm character, but that he still has to create such a character – punctum flexus contrarii.

²⁷ Kant Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent A 405 (= 8th Sentence) (ed. Reiss, p. 50).

adoption of a plan of nature. Here, the idea of a teleological image of history has already proved itself, „if only indirectly“, to be „supportive of reason“.²⁸

In this way, cultural growth, civil freedom or free trade represent progress as such – only if it is also safeguarded to the extent that steps backward can occur only to the disadvantage of everyone – but this kind of progress does not remain without consequences. Simultaneously, as a consequence, this process produces attempts, which are increasingly independent of traditional ties, to move towards a systematic process of progress, and to constantly create new relationships that are „without precedent in the past“.²⁹ In this process of acceleration that no longer allows the past to be connected to the future, history ultimately reaches that endless break point of natural self reference at a turning point that Kant, with regard to the autonomy of the will, had already described paradigmatically in his Critique of Practical Reason³⁰ as an act of self-determination. This act can be conceived as self-referential that is as an act, which is dependent on the form of legislation alone. And this legislation no longer has the character of a permanent natural law; on the contrary, it is a condition, resulting from the future, to adopt the challenge of autonomy. It is in the form of an instruction to behave consciously in such a way as if there were a natural law that is valid and obligatory for everyone. -

In his Opus posthumum finally, Kant still maintains that the source of historical progress is hidden in a natural cause.³¹ Of course, what is discovered is only the capacity for progress. The hope that moral progress in history really is effective – this hope exceeds all concepts. Reason cannot acquire goodness as an extended possession, rather, it can only produce it. This is why reason has to rely on a moral image of history if it wants to become global.

²⁸ Kant Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent A 404 (= 8th Sentence). In Contest of the Faculties Kant asks himself the question: „In welcher Ordnung allein kann der Fortschritt zum Besseren erwartet werden? die Antwort: „nicht durch den Gang der Dinge von unten hinauf, sondern den von oben herab“ [„In which order alone can progress towards something better be expected? The answer: „not through the course of events from bottom-up, but from top-down“] (A 158) (ed. Reiss, p. 188).

²⁹ Kant Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent A 406 (= 8th Sentence) (ed. Reiss, p. 51).

³⁰ See for example Kant KdpV A 131.

³¹ In his Opus posthumum, Kant still holds on to the hidden (perhaps not in its effect, but at least „as the basis of a targeted“) natural cause of historical progress: „Die Zeichen der Zeit entdecken öffentlich am menschlichen Geschlecht im Großen der Gesellschaften, worin sie antagonistisch nebeneinander stehen, eine moralische, sonst niemals im gleichen Grade wahrgenommene Anlage zu einer uneigennütigen Neigung, sich zu dem Zweck zu verbünden, das größte Hindernis des Fortschreitens zum Besseren, den Krieg wegzuschaffen“ (Academy edition 22, p. 623 f.).