

PURPOSIVENESS, TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAS, AND PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY. NOTES ON THE *IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH A COSMOPOLITAN AIM*, IN LIGHT OF THE *TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC OF THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

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1. THE METHOD OF HISTORY AS A PROBLEM: THE INTRODUCTION TO THE *IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH A COSMOPOLITAN AIM*

It is known that the first text Kant explicitly dedicated to reflecting on history was the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (IaG), published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* on November 4, 1784.² In the brief observations that serve as an introduction to the nine propositions of the IaG, Kant does not provide sufficient indications to understand the systematic placement that his philosophy of history – or rather, philosophical history – has within critical writings of the first half of the 1780s.³ Perhaps it is also for this reason that this writing offers many suggestions when it is related to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV):⁴ from the opening pages of the IaG, the reflections present in the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the KrV seem to echo, both the passages referring to the antinomy of reason and, above all, those concerning the principle of purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) and the question of the method of philosophical investigation in general. Thus begins the writing of 1784:

Whatever concept one may form of *the freedom of the will* with a metaphysical aim, its *appearances*, the human actions, are determined just as much as every other natural occurrence in accordance with universal laws of nature. History [*Geschichte*], which concerns itself with the narration of these appearances, however deeply concealed their causes may be, nevertheless allows us to hope from it that if it considers the play of the freedom of the human will *in the large* [*im Großen*], it can discover within it a regular course; and that in this way what meets the eye in individual subjects as confused and irregular yet in the whole species [*an der ganzen Gattung*] can be recognized as a steadily progressing though slow development of its original predispositions (IaG, AA 08: 17.01-12).

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Regardless of the meaning and ontological status that could be attributed to human actions from a metaphysical point of view, what is important to note is that they, even if recognized as manifestations of freedom, present themselves as facts of nature, that is, as phenomena subject to “universal laws of nature”. History, as a simple narrative⁵ of these specific phenomena, would be nothing more than natural history or a kind of branch of physics.⁶ However, precisely because they are also recognized as manifestations of freedom, human actions cannot be reduced only to facts of nature but also need to be investigated according to the “play of freedom”. If there are traits – even if phenomenal – of freedom in nature, the historical narrative of this freedom needs to address the problem that Kant presented in the antinomy of pure reason: it needs to reconcile the demand of the understanding for a determined and determinant knowledge, limited to the objects of experience, with the demand of reason for a possibly more comprehensive ‘knowledge’, which admits, in a certain way, the noumenal point of view.

It is from this assumption that Kant can declare, in the form of hope, what is the first aspect of the task of history: going beyond a purely naturalistic investigation of human actions, without, of course, harming the teachings of the *Transcendental Analytic*. The second aspect of the task of history depends intimately on this first aspect: understanding the actions of each individual in light of the actions of human beings as a whole, as a species. As the idea of humanity – in both a synchronic and diachronic sense – indicates the most comprehensive dimension that the investigation of human actions can reach, it is precisely on this scale that history needs to try to clearly identify the signs by which it is possible to recognize an order and a regular course in the actions of humanity as a whole.

Kant does not deny that each individual is already, in a certain sense, a history, but not in the proper sense in which history is assumed to be knowledge. Each individual already presents a certain order as an agent subject, and it is possible to elaborate a narrative that concerns him. If this were not the case, we would not be able to speak of an individual or of an agent subject. In other words, it is possible to make a history, in a certain sense, of the individual based on his conduct. Similarly, it is possible to make a history, in a certain sense, of a family, community, state, nation, or civilization. Even so, there would be a totality that, due to its maximum scope, would impose itself on an investigation of human actions that aims to find – and establish – with clarity the regular tendencies of human actions. According to Kant, this totality can be represented by humanity only as a species. The investigation of the human species as a whole – more than the study of other human groups – allows us to recognize the continuous and constant development of human faculties.

In this sense, history, as a narrative of this development, needs to address the question that Kant posed in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, that is, it needs to be concerned with the requirement that reason orders its own knowledge not only in a determined manner but simultaneously in a systematic way in order to achieve its fullest possible development. History is nothing but a specific application of the general regulative tendency of human reason, which, by demanding completeness in its knowledge and science, demands that the

investigated object also be considered as if it tended toward completeness, and, therefore, be approached on the scale that best reals this tendency toward completeness.

However, it seems appropriate to provide a brief analysis of the first pages of the IaG before reconstructing in a more specific way some passages of the argumentative movement that Kant presents in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic* to prepare some final observations on the philosophical history still in the IaG.

At first sight, the task of history boils down to finding the plan of nature behind the phenomenal manifestations, which in themselves are chaotic and meaningless.

Here there is no other way out for the philosopher - who, regarding human beings and their play in the large [*im Großen*], cannot at all presuppose any rational *aim of theirs* - than to try whether he can discover an *aim of nature* [*Naturabsicht*] in this nonsensical course of things human; from which aim a history in accordance with a determinate plan of nature [*Plane der Natur*] might nevertheless be possible even of creatures who do not behave in accordance with their own plan. (IaG, AA 08: 18.05-10).

This methodological prescription is based on the premise that

individual human beings and even whole nations think little about the fact, since while each pursues its own aim in its own way and one often contrary to another, they are proceeding unnoticed, as by a guiding thread, according to an aim of nature [*Naturabsicht*], which is unknown to them, and are laboring at its promotion, although even if it were to become known to them it would matter little to them (IaG, AA 08: 17.23-27).

Both statements would be dogmatic if they were not critically limited. In fact, it is necessary to consider the condition from which the plan of nature is conceived as objective, to affirm its existence and then the need to discover it for historical investigation to be valid.⁷ In other words, the previous problem reappears: since the observer of human actions encounters a potentially infinite multiplicity of isolated phenomena, if he remains strictly faithful to them, any possibility of a systematic history, guided by a principle of synthesis, will be excluded. Therefore, we can only hope for the existence of an objective plan of nature, which, of course, is not enough to demonstrate its real existence. Instead of a contradiction,⁸ there seems to be a tension between the two extremes, in which Kant indicates that there is room for the discovery of a principle in historical research that is objective but not determined.

It can be observed that if, on the one hand, Kant attributes to nature itself a aim, which represents the guideline in light of which the empirical manifestations of human freedom must be interpreted, on the other hand, it is the hybrid nature of the human being that prevents this principle from being considered determined.

Since human beings in their endeavors do not behave merely instinctively, like animals, and yet also not on the whole like rational citizens of the world in accordance with an agreed upon plan, no history of them in conformity to a plan [*planmäßige Geschichte*] (as e.g. of bees or of beavers) appears to be possible (IaG, AA 08: 17.28-32).

The actions of the human being, whose faculty of will can be determined both rationally and sensibly, cannot being reduced only to the mechanism of nature, as with “bees and beavers”,

or only to a pure will always *in actu*, as with beings that are perfectly rational in their actions, that is, beings whose will is holy. The phenomenal character of the manifestations of human freedom inevitably also suggests their noumenal character; the latter, in turn, is glimpsed in the concrete actions that manifest it. Hence, an impasse results, “so that in the end one does not know what concept to make of our species” (IaG, AA 08: 18.04-05), given the absence, in human actions, of a determined objective systematic order but also given the rational need to consider this order as if it truly existed.

If it is possible to adopt a point of view that allows us to understand human actions as organized into a system according to a somewhat objective principle, without yielding to a naturalistic perspective, then we will be able to understand in what sense it is possible to speak of a plan of nature determined for humanity. At the same time, it is necessary to avoid the opposite danger, which is violating the dictate of the *Transcendental Analytic*, according to which knowledge is obtained only through determined and determinant concepts.

Having defined the extreme limits of the field of action of the history of the human species – the uselessness of a mere physics of human actions, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the illegitimacy of an illusory knowledge as transcendent –, it remains to be understood if and in what terms Kant can speak of a philosophy of history as transcendental, that is, what epistemological status can be conceived for the principles on which this philosophical history is based. To try to elucidate what has been presented by this point in the IaG, the pages Kant dedicates to the teleological principle and the idea of systemic unity in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic* of the KrV will be summarized.

2. TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAS AND PURPOSIVENESS: THE *APPENDIX TO THE TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC*

2.1 THE USE AND OBJECT OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAS

When approaching the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason, Kant quickly exposes the complementarity of dialectical logic to analytic logic: the demonstration of the illusion of the pretensions of dialectical reason confirms that our inferences, when they demand to be considered scientific truths, must be subject to the natural and necessary limit represented by experience. Therefore, Kant systematically connects the function of dialectical logic to what had been identified as the engine of all KrV. The objective is to understand the meaning of the “natural propensity” of human reason “to overstep all these boundaries” (KrV, A642/B670.12) imposed by experience, although reason itself recognizes the illegitimacy of the results to which this inclination leads. It is from this radical tension that animates human reason that the effort to understand the legitimacy of the use of transcendental ideas becomes significant because these ideas “are just as natural to it [to human reason] as the categories are natural to the understanding” (KrV, A642/B670.13-14). When it comes to metaphysics and scientific knowledge, which should not be confused with each other or even identified as being similar, one cannot be suppressed to the detriment of the other. The *Transcendental Dialectic* ends up representing not only a confirmation of the *Transcendental Analytic* but also the part of the KrV

aimed at answering the main question of the work,⁹ showing how the natural ideas of pure reason reveal their legitimacy, which is as necessary as it is peculiar.

Kant is quick to clarify in what terms one can speak of a legitimate use of transcendental ideas. Since “everything grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive [*zweckmäßig*] and consistent with their correct use” (KrV, A642/B670.18-19), the characterization of transcendental ideas as natural and necessary products of human reason implies that their correct use must be possible. The existence of natural faculties devoid of utility would be an absurdity, as Kant repeats in the first proposition of the IaG.¹⁰ This legitimate use is possible as long as the end for which the ideas of pure reason – as well as the categories of the understanding – are given is respected. Furthermore, as Kant explicitly states, transcendental ideas in themselves are not the point at issue, as we can recognize only their naturalness, that is, the spontaneity with which reason produces them (as problematic concepts). The point is to recognize that the danger of error and illusion resides in a use of transcendental ideas that does not conform to their proper end. The criterion for discerning a correct use of the ideas of pure reason according to their end is the same as that which applies to the categories of the understanding and permeates the entire KrV: the relationship with possible experience. In other words, in relation to transcendental ideas, one can and should ask what possible experience justifies their use.

If transcendental ideas are related directly to an object that, as it is assumed, corresponds to them (KrV, A643/B671.09-10), we will make a transcendent (*transzendent*) or extravagant (*überfliegend*) use of them. This use is illegitimate because there is no sensible intuition of the supposed object corresponding to transcendental ideas – the soul, the world, or God. Since transcendental ideas do not operate like pure concepts of the understanding, that is, they do not operate through the categorial subsumption of intuitions received by sensibility, Kant identifies the only possible experience for transcendental ideas no longer found in the objects themselves that are known to us through understanding, but rather in the way in which these objects are known to us through understanding. More specifically, the object of the ideas of reason is no longer the formal content that our understanding receives as a result of the intuitive reaction to things through sensibility, but rather the very form of synthetic intellectual activity in general. The immanent (*immanent*) or indigenous (*einheimisch*) use of the ideas of reason will then exist only in relation to the general use of the understanding (*Verstandesgebrauch überhaupt*) with respect to the objects with which our understanding deals (KrV, A643/B671.10-12).¹¹ It is in this sense that “reason never relates directly to an object, but solely to the understanding and by means of it to reason’s own empirical use” (KrV, A643/B671.15-17) and is therefore legitimate. If the pure concepts of the understanding find their legitimate use – immanent, internal, empirical – through their application to the possible objects of sensible intuition determined *a priori* by the pure forms of space and time, it is this same activity of intellectual synthesis that ultimately constitutes the only possible object of experience for the ideas of pure reason, whose aim, therefore, is not to determine concepts of objects but to organize them and provide them with “that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension, i.e., in relation to the totality of series” (KrV, A643/B671.17-20). Here, there is a clear indication of what, three years later, was written in the introduction to the IaG: it is no longer a matter of knowing the objects of experience in their individuality, but of giving order and shape to the

intellectual activity of knowing these individual objects of experience, considering them now on another scale, that is, in their maximum extent, in their totality. Kant therefore outlines the nature of this totality.

Thus, reason really has as object only the understanding and its purposive application, and just as the understanding unites the manifold into an object through concepts, so reason on its side unites the manifold of concepts through ideas by positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the understanding's actions, which are otherwise concerned only with distributive unity (KrV, A643/B671.22-672.06).¹²

In addition to reiterating the difference between the categorical synthesis of understanding and the synthesis of reason through,¹³ and in addition to introducing the fundamental distinction between the constitutive use of the pure concepts of the understanding and the regulative use of transcendental ideas, Kant explains the meaning of human cognitive activity in general, inserting the principle of finality into its double opening. On the one hand, the principle of purposiveness is used by Kant in a normative way to identify the legitimate use of the ideas of pure reason. As mentioned, in this respect, Kant's reasoning does not propose anything new regarding the discussion of pure concepts of the understanding. The specific difference lies in the object to which the transcendental ideas must refer, so that an empirical use can be made of them – which is legitimate because it conforms to ends – since, in the case of ideas of pure reason, the peculiar object of experience is the empirical use – which is legitimate because it conforms to the ends – of the understanding. On the other hand, it can be observed that it is the very reflection of reason on such use and legitimate object that realizes and implements the principle of purposiveness: when reason questions the legitimacy of both a use (which is identified as legitimate when it conforms to ends) and an object (which it identifies as legitimate when directed at an empirical use – a use that conforms to ends – of the understanding), reason itself recognizes that all human activity involving research, explanation and knowledge exists only in orientation to a specific end – that of systematizing individual intellectual knowledge and guaranteeing it as a collective, that is, total unity.

In other words, reason, through its ideas and the activity of reflecting upon the activity of intellectual synthesis, recognizes that the individual knowledges produced distributively by understanding is naturally predisposed to be collectively understood, organized and unified in a system. In addition, it could not be otherwise because only in a system do such knowledges properly make sense. The reflection of reason on the principle of purposiveness seems to performatively abide by this same principle as the scope within which cognitive activity is effected on a larger scale. This explains the natural tendency toward a collective and total unity on the part of reason, which is dissatisfied with the only distributive unity achieved by understanding. The latter, in fact, is subject to potentially infinite fragmentation, unless it is conceived starting from the idea of totality that guides and orders it, unifies it and gives it meaning, presenting the general rule of its use – purposiveness – as the end that naturally moves it.¹⁴

However, the internal tension of human reason persists. The Kantian conclusion about the epistemological status of transcendental ideas is, at first sight, paradoxical because even in their legitimate use, these ideas do not lose their illusory character, even though

this illusion (which can be prevented from deceiving) is nevertheless indispensably necessary if besides the objects before our eyes we want to see those that lie far in the background, i.e., when in our case, the understanding wants to go beyond every given experience (beyond this part of the whole of possible experience), and hence wants to take the measure of its greatest possible and uttermost extension (KrV, A644/B672.21-673.05).

In this sense, Kant can define transcendental ideas as a “*focus imaginarius*” (KrV, A644/B672.14-18). Until now, the teleological use of ideas of reason, which places the principle of purposiveness as the scope for the cognitive activity, still lacks a deduction that attests to its objective necessity. Justifying the necessity of the empirical use of transcendental ideas through the mere observation of their naturalness, as Kant has done thus far in the KrV, is equivalent to admitting only the subjective necessity of such use.

2.2 THE INDETERMINATE OBJECTIVE NECESSITY OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAS

In the first part of the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant seems to reinforce the subjective nature of the necessity of the principle of purposiveness, even when he introduces a second movement in his reasoning. Through the distinction between the apodictic use of reason and its hypothetical use, and through the distinction between logical and transcendental principles, Kant reaffirms both the problematic nature and the mere regulatory function of the empirical use of transcendental ideas, as well as the merely subjective need for such use. In the hypothetical use of reason, the idea as the rule to which the particular is reduced is only assumed to be universal, since it is impossible to objectively represent its condition, contrary to what happens with rules that are universally given in an objective determined way, such as categories. Therefore “the hypothetical use of reason, on the basis of ideas as problematic concepts, is not properly constitutive, that is, not such that if one judges in all strictness the truth of the universal rule assumed as a hypothesis thereby follows” (KrV, A647/B675.05-09).

As Kant states, the use of transcendental ideas, when in accordance with their end, can only be regulative because it has the end goal of “bringing unity into particular cognitions *as far as possible* and thereby approximating the rule to universality” (KrV, A647/B675.11-13, emphasis added). Strictly speaking, therefore, one cannot speak of universality, only of an approximation of it or, in other words, of “*projected* unity, which one must regard not as given in itself, but only as a problem” (KrV, A647/B675.16-18).¹⁵ In this sense, the systematic unity of knowledge – that totality which reason sets as the end goal of the cognitive activity, thus making it its possible object of experience – will be only a logical not contradictory principle and is intended to help our understanding harmonize the result of the distributive synthesis, in the search for a so-called superior collective synthesis. Returning to the lexicon of the introduction to IaG, it can be said that the systematic unity represents the expected

principle, so that the isolated manifestations of freedom can be considered within the totality of the human species. On the other hand, to say that

all possible cognitions of the understanding (including empirical ones) have the unity of reason, and stand under common principles from which they could be derived despite their variety: that would be a transcendental principle of reason, which would make systematic not merely something subjectively and logically necessary, as method, but objectively necessary (KrV, A648/B676.10-16).

This last indication is particularly relevant for the philosophical history because, translating the terms of Kant's hypothesis, would be equivalent to saying that even the systematic unity of human actions would be objectively knowable, as a plan of nature. Kant thus shows at least two things: 1) the question of the epistemological status of transcendental ideas must be examined and resolved within the space comprised between objective constitutive transcendental rules and subjective regulative transcendental principles; 2) transcendental ideas, in their legitimate use, are universal rules that are necessary – albeit only from a subjective, hypothetical and problematic perspective – to recognize the methodical nature of human cognitive activity, that is, its organizing systematicity centered around the idea of purposiveness. While the argumentative continuity with what was said above may be evident, Kant also seems to suggest the need to find objective validity for the ideas of reason. Kant clarifies his purpose through the example of the concept of force in general.

Due to their heterogeneity, the forces acting on a specific phenomenon cannot be reduced to the concept of a fundamental force if the only possible use of reason is apodictic and constitutive because this idea of a fundamental force, as a universal rule, does not subsume a specific empirical determination. However, the idea of a fundamental force is not only needed by reason as a logical and methodological principle that can provide the maximum possible unity to the specific knowledge of individual forces but also ultimately plays the role of a fundamental principle, since “the more appearances of this power and that power are found to be identical, the more probable it becomes that they are nothing but various expressions of one and the same power” (KrV, A649/B677.11-14).¹⁶ In addition, if Kant hastens to repeat that the rational unity represented by the idea of fundamental force “is merely hypothetical” (KrV, A649/B677.18-19), that is, it meets a subjective requirement of reason, he also affirms with equal rapidity that,

if one attends to the transcendental use of the understanding, it is evident that this idea of a fundamental power in general does not *function* merely as a problem for hypothetical use, but pretends to objective reality, so that the systematic unity of a substance's many powers are postulated and an apodictic principle of reason is erected (KrV A650/B678.03-08).

The oscillating movement of the argument can be read as an attempt to account for the continuous displacement of the point of view proper to the dialectic of reason. If the distinction between the apodictic and hypothetical use of reason were assumed statically, that is, understood only according to the determinant judgment of the understanding, it would not be possible to understand how an idea of reason, such as force in general, could remain a mere hypothetical principle and, at the same time, be something more than a simple subjective

principle, until it becomes an apodictic principle of reason. However, looking at this same distinction from different perspectives, such as understanding and reason, it may be possible to overcome the contradiction as apparent. As apparent at least for reason. Therefore, it is necessary to remember that in its relationship with understanding, reason does not address understanding in the same way that understanding deals with determined objects; instead, reason considers only the conditions that allow understanding to operate as an activity of synthesis in its empirical use. It is in this sense that the objective reality and validity of the principle of purposiveness must be admitted.

For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary (KrV, A651/B679.12-17).

Only by reaffirming that the reflexivity of reason exclusively addresses the empirical use – that is, according to its end – of the understanding in general, Kant can, without losing coherence, to comprehend this same reflexive activity of reason from a perspective different from that of the determinant judgment of the understanding. The problem, therefore, remains that which was posed at the beginning of the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*: defining the legitimate use of transcendental ideas, that is, their objective and necessary validity, without compromising the results of the *Transcendental Analytic*. However, the progressive specification of the terms in which this demonstration is possible leads Kant to change the point of observation of the problem, initially corresponding only to the perspective of determinant judgement of the understanding and now gradually to the perspective of reason as well. For this change in perspective to be complete, a final movement is still necessary – a deduction.¹⁷

Kant's cautious statement in this regard, in the second part of the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, confirms that the perspective for demonstrating the objective validity of the immanent use of transcendental ideas has changed: in fact,

the ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories; but if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible (KrV A669/B697.15-698.01).

This represents “the critical business of pure reason” (KrV A670/B698.03). Kant returns, therefore, to the initial question of the legitimate use and object of the ideas of reason, specifying the necessary ways to think about these issues:

it makes a big difference whether something is given to my reason as an object absolutely or is given only as an object in the idea. In the first case my concepts go as far as determining the object; but in the second, there is really only a schema for which no object is given, not even hypothetically, but which serves only to represent other object to us, in accordance with their systematic unity (KrV, A670/B698.05-12).

From the point of view of reason as reflecting upon the empirical use of the synthetic activity of the understanding, the object of transcendental ideas is redefined as a schema necessary

to give systematic and complete unity to cognitive activity. As schemas, transcendental ideas are related to a form – the synthetic activity of the understanding itself – that is approached by them as its object. A paradigmatic example of this is the theological idea, the most comprehensive and complete of all, which Kant uses to further specify the objective validity (from the point of view of reason, not of the determinant judgement of the understanding) of the transcendental ideas and the principle of systematic unity that they carry.¹⁸

Then it is said, e.g., that the things in the world must be considered as if they had gotten their existence from a highest intelligence. In such a way the idea is only a heuristic and not an ostensive concept; and it shows not how an object is constituted but how, under the guidance of that concept, we ought to seek after the constitution and connection of objects of experience in general (KrV A670/B698.21-A670/B699.05).

Finally, Kant can present the result of all dialectical logic and, taking stock *Of the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason*, declares that

Pure reason is in fact concerned with nothing else but itself, and it can have no other concern, because what is given to it is no objects to be unified for the concept of experience, but cognitions of understanding to be unified for the concept of reason, i.e., to be connected in one principle (KrV A680/B708.02-06).

If Kant recovers the point of view of the determinant judgment of the understanding, according to which “the systematic unity [of reason] does not serve reason objectively as a principle [...] but subjectively as a maxim”, it is precisely thanks to the relation, now explicit, between the self-referentiality of reason and the legitimate heuristic function of his ideas that Kant can simultaneously affirm that the systematic unity – established by transcendental ideas as the end to the cognitive activity of the understanding – is a principle “also objective, but in an indeterminate way (*principium vagum*)” (KrV A680/B708.08-15).

Although Kant still does not fully formulate the question, as this occurs only in the KU, here we can glimpse the problem regarding the lack of a specific domain for reflective judgment. Only from the point of view of reflective judgment can transcendental ideas gain an objective necessity, which is otherwise denied to them. However, this is precisely an indeterminate objectivity, since there is no object, if by object we understand the determinate object known by understanding.¹⁹ In this sense, the idea of God becomes paradigmatic when it represents, as the totality of totalities, the very form of totality. As a finite being, the human being, on the one hand, needs an object to fulfill the idea of an infinite totality, but on the other hand, ends up confusing this object – which is only the schema that reflective reason uses to exemplarily understand the form of the principle of systematic unity – with a determined object of the understanding. Transcendental ideas in their legitimate use should instead show that

this highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the purposive unity of things; and the speculative interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them (KrV A686/B714.18-A687/B715.04).

3. PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY AND PURPOSIVENESS: THE METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSITIONS OF THE *IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH A COSMOPOLITAN AIM*

Now, returning to a more detailed examination of the IaG, we will focus mainly on those propositions – the first three and the last – in which the methodological relevance of the principle of purposiveness is highlighted.

The first proposition explicitly refers to the systematic unity in the investigation of phenomena according to the principle of purposiveness, as seen previously in the KrV. From the title, Kant states that “all natural predispositions of a creature are determined sometime to develop themselves completely and purposively [*zweckmäßig*]”,²⁰ and explains that “with all animals, external as well as internal or analytical observation confirms this. An organ that is not to be used, an arrangement that does not attain to its end, is a contradiction in the teleological doctrine of nature” (IaG, AA 08: 18.19-24).²¹ Here, Kant reaffirms one of the first issues addressed at the beginning of the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*: by its very organic-functional nature, any original disposition is ordered to a specific end. The legitimate use of this provision is using it to achieve its own end. Kant confirms this relationship between the natural disposition of the faculties toward an end and their legitimate use as a realization of that end is confirmed by the fact that the opposite would be contradictory. The contradiction would occur not so much in relation to the understanding, which knows only certain individual objects, but rather in relation to reason, which reflects on the form of cognitive activity in general. The determinant judgement of the understanding could very well find, for example, an event that, in its individuality, falsifies and contradicts the rule according to which the natural dispositions of living beings operate according to an end; however, this same falsifying case not only is possible but also is understood and recomposed without contradiction within a general system of knowledge thanks to reason, for example, through the exception to the rule scheme, given the need for an orderly, systematic and complete knowledge. Reason, which conceives of nature as a regular and unitary totality, precludes any other explanation, under penalty of the contradiction of reason with itself: “if we depart from that principle, then we no longer have a lawful nature but a purposelessly [*zwecklos*] playing nature; and desolate chance takes the place of the guideline of reason” (IaG, AA 08: 18.24-27). In other words, to paraphrase the mentioned words of the KrV, without a rational principle that unifies and systematizes the historical events known in their individuality, historical knowledge itself would be impossible.

It is the necessity and interest of reason in its speculative use that now not only makes one wait but also imposes on the knowledge of phenomena – including human actions – the necessary systematic unity according to the rational principle of purposiveness. It is not a matter of finding this unity systematically and teleologically organized in a determined way in nature – this statement would only be possible in a dogmatic way, not from a critical point of view – but rather to understand that reason immediately and necessarily uses this same systematic and teleologically organized unity at the moment when we question ourselves about how we know the phenomena of nature, including the manifestations of human freedom.

In this sense, as the title of the second proposition of the IaG states, “in the human being (*as the only rational creature on earth*), those predispositions whose goal is the use of his

reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual” (IaG, AA 08: 18.29-32).²² Kant uses a double characterization of reason to mark it as one of the natural human dispositions and, at the same time, as the peculiar natural disposition of the human being, the one that allows him to specifically distinguish him from other animals. Like any other natural disposition, reason finds its legitimacy in complete development according to its own end. In this sense, reason is analogous not only to any other physical organ but also to other human faculties, for example, to the understanding: the legitimate use of both faculties consists of conforming to the end to which they are naturally disposed. However, unlike all other natural dispositions of the human being, reason does not suffer any limitation: even the understanding, in its legitimate use, must be limited to sensible experience. The specificity of reason lies in its power to extend “the rules and aims [*die Regeln und Absichten*] of the use of all its [of human being] powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects” (IaG, AA 08: 18.33-19.01), i.e., it does not know those limits imposed by sensibility to the understanding but recognizes only in itself the conditions that shape its drawings and, therefore, make them legitimate. If the human being, as a being endowed with reason, is allowed to overcome her sensibly determined nature, this is legitimately allowed only according to the principles of reason.

Thus, it seems possible to strictly interpret Kant’s proposition according to which reason prevails among the natural human dispositions, which it understands as being disposed toward its end. This is true of all natural human dispositions, including reason itself, understood as the object of its most specific reflexive activity. Reason, when reflecting on its own legitimate use and object of investigation, discovers human rational activity as a producer of knowledge only when subjected to the principle of purposiveness, which leads it to bring all cognitive activity – including determinate cognitive activity of the understanding and indeterminate activity that reason itself produces not only in relation to the objects investigated by it but also in relation to itself – back to the same principle. The circularity of the argument should not come as a surprise given the premise, already explained in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, that pure reason is properly concerned only with itself. If reason, when reflecting on its own activity, understands the objective necessity of the principle of finality that animates it, in this same self-reflexive movement and at the same time, it recognizes in itself the legitimate and spontaneous author of this principle as well as of its own activity and end.²³

In the philosophical history, the design of nature, which is indispensable for systematically accounting for free human actions, actually proposes a specific articulation of the schema that reason uses to understand all of its cognitive activity. It is not, therefore, an illusory and transcendent fantasy but an objective necessity – although, from the point of view of the determinant judgment of the understanding, it is subjective and indeterminate as to its object – because it conforms to the natural end of rational activity. *Mutatis mutandis*, reason cannot find meaning in its activity of research, explanation and understanding of the individual phenomenal manifestations of human freedom unless it starts from a schema, through which it is necessary to think of them as teleologically inserted in a plan of nature that is not limited to the mere physical determination of individual actions.

Therefore, it is a matter of reconciling, according to the principle of purposiveness, the activity of systematization and indeterminate unification typical of reason with the determination of the human being and with that finitude that makes it impossible for him to have an all-comprehensive intellectual intuition and imposes to him the individuality of the person and the singularity of actions. As mentioned, starting in the introduction to the *IaG*, Kant resorts to the idea of species, which avoids a phenomenal spatiotemporal determination and at the same time does not require appealing to cognitive faculties that do not belong to the human being. In the second proposition, Kant specifies that in the case of a finite rational being, such as a human being, reason, like any other natural human disposition, is not perfect from the beginning but undergoes development.

Reason itself does not operate instinctively, but rather needs attempts, practice and instruction in order gradually to progress from one stage of insight to another. Hence every human being would have to live exceedingly long in order to learn how he is to make a complete use of all his natural predispositions (*IaG*, AA 08: 19.02-05).

If, in fact, the improvement of all natural dispositions is impossible for the individual human being (and for the individual nation, as seen in the introduction to the *IaG*), this is not impossible for the species, understood as “an immense series of generations, each of which transmits its enlightenment to the next, in order finally to propel its germs in our species to that stage of development which is completely suited to its aim” (*IaG*, AA 08: 19.07-10). Thus, Kant echoes the questions raised by the dialectic of reason in relation to the transcendental ideas of the soul, the world and God, which represent indeterminate totalities that, although remaining indeterminable and indeterminate due to the impossibility of subsuming sensible intuitions under them, must be thought of and applied to cognitive activity to systematically know all determinable and determinate individual phenomena. Within the idea of the species as the indeterminate totality of the individual manifestations of human freedom, Kant identifies the appropriate object of historical investigation. In the idea of species, reason finds the idea for the maximum expansion of its heuristic and explanatory use of the free actions of individuals. Only by reflecting on humanity as a whole, in its spatiotemporally indeterminate totality, reason will be able to identify a common thread that serves as an objective methodological criterion and, at the same time, a motivation for historical investigation.

As is well known, Kant articulated this thread in the realm of pure practical reason. The third proposition of the *IaG* corroborates the idea that resorting to the teleological scheme as a condition for elaborating the history of humanity as if it followed a real plan of nature implies the recognition of the eminently moral end of human reason, that is, the ability of reason to determine the will by itself. “Nature has willed that the human being should produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical arrangement of his animal existence entirely out of himself, and participate in no other happiness or perfection than that which he has procured for himself free from instinct through his own reason” (*IaG*, AA 08: 19.28-33).

Kant develops the previous statement that reason is the faculty of extending beyond the mere natural mechanism the use of natural dispositions in general and of rational activity itself in particular. To do this, he takes up what has been said from the beginning about the perfectibility

of human faculties, constantly in tension and therefore never determined necessarily or only by sensibility and instincts or by perfect pure reason and a holy will. Advancing in the direction already highlighted, according to which reason legitimately considers conform to its own end, individual natural actions were recognized and organized consistent with the progressive realization of human rationality as freedom. Thus, Kant can state the specific conformity to the specific end of the human being: to obtain everything from one's own means or, in other words, to be autonomous. In this sense, historical reflection allows us to consider the individual events of nature as oriented so that human beings, when trying to satisfy their needs, progressively affirm their autonomy, cultivating and developing their rationality (IaG, AA 08: 19.33-20.08). Likewise, it is not contradictory that each generation, taken individually, seems to work only for future generations, without ever being able to enjoy the fruit of its own effort (IaG, AA 08: 20.13-20). The point of view to be adopted is, in fact, always that of the species as the idea of reason – and therefore, the idea of an indeterminate totality – according to which the happiness of the individual (individual human being, individual family or nation or generation) is subordinated to the dignity of the happiness of humanity as a whole, since “it appears to have been no aim at all to nature that he [the human being] should live well; but only that he should labor and work himself up so far that he might make himself worthy of well-being through his conduct of life” (IaG, AA 08: 20.10-13).²⁴

From the more strictly moral considerations of the third proposition, as is well known, in the subsequent propositions, Kant's argumentative movement extends to the field of law and politics – or rather, to the application of moral rationality to social organization, both for the constitution of the rule of law and for a federation of states.²⁵ The eighth proposition summarizes in its title the trajectory of Kant's reasoning: “One can regard the history of the human species in the large as the completion of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an inwardly and, to this end, also an externally perfect state constitution, as the only condition in which it can fully develop all its predispositions in humanity” (IaG, AA 08: 27.01-07). Only in the last proposition, the ninth, does Kant return to the more strictly methodological issues addressed in the introduction and the first three propositions, no longer emphasizing only the theoretical aspect of the issue, since the difficulties related to the epistemological status of historical investigation were resolved and the practical character of human reason was made explicit. Having shown in what sense “a philosophical attempt to work out universal world history [*Weltgeschichte*], according to a plan of nature the aims at the perfect civil union in the human species, must be regarded as possible and even as furthering this aim of nature” (IaG, AA 08: 29.01-05), we can now take another step toward a political intervention, specifically from the historical investigation thus conducted.²⁶ This philosophical attempt to construct universal history, as a systematization of individual actions according to the teleological scheme of the realization of freedom as rationality of human species, at the same time must be considered an effective means of accelerating the constitution of a rule of law that is as diffuse as possible, which effectively guarantees the conditions for the free cultivation of natural human dispositions. The rational reflection on history, therefore, far from corresponding to “only a novel” (IaG, AA 08: 29.10) or to “history [*Historie*] proper, that is written merely *empirically*” (IaG, AA 08: 30.31-32), presents itself as an activity that feeds and participates in the unfolding of reason

itself according to its own end: its spontaneous freedom as independence and autonomy. It is this same reflexive activity of reason, focused on free human actions as “philosophical history [*philosophische Geschichte*]”, that allows us to understand the world and imposes the duty of trying to change them, or in Kant’s words, “to direct it [the desire for honor of the heads of state as well as their servants] at the sole means by which they can bring their glorious remembrance down to the latest age” (IaG, AA 08: 31.06-08). It is thanks to “that idea of a world history that has, which in a certain way has guiding thread *a priori*” (IaG, AA 08: 30.30-31) that Kant defines the specific scheme and the completely peculiar territory for human reason to satisfy the need to orient itself in the world, affirming humans’ willingness to escape from mere natural mechanisms without falling into the fantasies of visionaries.

We can conclude by saying that history as philosophical history certainly does not refer to attributes belonging to the world: the limits imposed by the understanding to determined knowledge of things do not allow for that. However, this determined knowledge of the world does not seem to represent the primordial need of our rationality because the most urgent need is to signify the world and our actions in it. Kant considers reason an expansive power that, in view of its own end – freedom – gives a superior meaning to the world by unifying apparently disaggregated phenomena and guiding our instincts. This is perhaps the most emphatic result, in terms of historical analysis, of Kant’s commitment to an idea of rationality that is, not only in the practical but also in the speculative sphere, not only determinant.

Abstract: This paper aims to point to relationship between *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV) and *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (IaG). Specifically, it seeks to show the theoretical and methodological foundation that the principle of purposiveness and the systematicity of reason, as presented in the KrV, offer to Kant’s philosophical conception of history in the IaG. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section presents – as problematic – the premises that, in the introduction to the IaG, Kant adopts in his philosophical investigation of history. The second section focuses on the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, examining the legitimate use of transcendental ideas, as well as their indeterminate objective necessity. Finally, the third section examines some propositions of the IaG, suggesting that the repercussion of the *Transcendental Dialectic* on the IaG allows us to understand Kant’s distinctive investigative method in philosophical history.

Keywords: Kant, purposiveness, transcendental ideas, indeterminate objectivity, method in philosophical history.

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NOTAS / NOTES

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² On the development of Kant's political thought in the precritical period until his early writings on the philosophy of history, see Vlachos 1962, 15-231. For an analysis of the methodological suggestions on history offered by Kant, in an unsystematic way, in his geography and logic classes, see Gonzales 2014, 265-290.

³ Since the early systematic analyses regarding the placement of Kant's philosophy of history within his critical philosophy, the most common interpretation has been to understand the IaG in light of the critical writings from the second half of the 1780s and the entire decade of the 1790s. See, for example, Weyand 1963, 49-107 and Galston 1975, 205-261. This kind of interpretation also persists in more recent analyses, as exemplified by Allison 2009, 24-45. On the other hand, there are readings that emphasize

the relationship between IaG and Kant's critical writings of the first half of the 1780s, as can be seen in Kleingeld 1995, 13-31 and Guyer 2000, 372-407. In turn, IaG is presented as still precritical by those interpreters who consider that Kant's philosophy of history acquires a critical character only with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (KU). In this regard, see, for example, Yovel 1980, 154-157 and 252-270.

⁴ The *Prolegomena* (Prol.), of 1783, as well as the *Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals* (GMS), of 1785, but already completed in 1784 (see the letter to Biester of 31 December de 1784, Br, AA 10: 398.01-03), are, together with KrV, the other critical and systematic works available to Kant at the time of publication of the IaG. *Zweckmäßigkeit's* idea seems to represent a good criterion for reasonably focusing only on the KrV: in the Prol. the notion of *Zweckmäßigkeit* does not appear, whereas in the GMS it is briefly mentioned by Kant – and we will also do so here (see below, the last part of the paper) – although the notion of end (*Zweck*) is widely present when it is described the deliberative dynamics. On the relevance of the KrV – among the critical writings of the first half of the 1780s – for the systematical foundation of the IaG, see Kleingeld 1995, 110-115; Kleingeld 2008, 524-526; Hoesch 2014, 198-231 and Deligiorgi 2017, 685-695. It is worth mentioning that a brief note in the same direction is already found in Wilkins 1966, 172-181 and Riedel 1978, 6-9.

⁵ In one of his rare pronouncements during the years of elaboration of the KrV, the writing *Of the different races of human beings* of 1775/77, Kant already distinguished between the description of nature (*Naturbeschreibung*) and the history of nature (*Naturgeschichte*). He emphasized how the former, based on the empirical observation of the similarities between animals, constituted only “a school system for memory” and “only aims at bringing creatures under titles”, while the latter, based on the principle of reproductive affinity, was “a natural system for the understanding” and “aims at bringing them [creatures] under laws” (VvRM, AA 02: 429.17-19). If the mere empirical description does not go beyond “the cognition of natural things as they *are now*”, on the other hand, “always leaves us desirous of the cognition of that which they once *were* and of the series of changes they underwent to arrive at each place in their present state”, transforming the scholastic mnemonic classification technique “into a physical system for the understanding” (VvRM, AA 02: 434.23 footnote). In 1775, Kant already showed the minimum presupposition for one to be able to properly speak of *Geschichte*: when making a history of natural phenomena, one cannot fail to seek a principle of systematic unity beyond the mere empirical description. The latter leaves the understanding unsatisfied, feeding its natural tendency to unify, according to universal principles, cases that, when taken only as they appear to the observer, can only show an individual and accidental character. It is in accordance with *Geschichte's* notion that, in the ninth proposition of the IaG, Kant proposes the definition of (philosophical) history as *Weltgeschichte*, while the *empirische Historie* refers only to the description of human phenomena (IaG, AA 08: 30.30- 35). We will see, however, that the need for systematicity attributed in 1775/77 to the understanding will still be identified by Kant from the KrV as proper to reason. On these themes, see Marcucci 1972, 163-168; Marcucci 1974, 425-432 and Düsing 1986, 133-142.

⁶ On the relationship and distinction between philosophy of nature and philosophy of history in Kant's thought, see Kaulbach 1965, 430-451.

⁷ On the role of the plan of nature in critical foundation of Kant's philosophy of history, see Deligiorgi 2006, 451-468.

⁸ Yovel argues that Kant only critically employs the notion of teleology from the KU onwards, while, still in the IaG, Kant resorts to a dogmatic concept of teleology. According to Yovel, in the IaG, Kant commits “the major dogmatic error” by ascribing to nature “such a hidden teleological plan”, thus contradicting the dictates of the KrV. It is worth noting that when referring to the KrV, Yovel considers only the *Transcendental Analytic*, i.e., the knowledge derived from the determinant judgment of the understanding. When Yovel mentions the *Transcendental Dialectic*, he confines himself to considering the antithesis of the second antinomy of pure reason, without considering the other sections and chapters, nor the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*.

⁹ Recall the beginning of the preface of 1781, and therefore of the entire KrV, in which Kant points to “the peculiar fate” that characterizes human reason, “that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason” (KrV, AVII.01-05).

¹⁰ See below, the last part of the paper, in which the question is taken up again.

¹¹ For an analysis of the terminology used by Kant, see Zachhuber 2000, 139-154. Note, *en passant*, that with regard to the equivalence established by Kant between ‘immanent’ and ‘internal’, the parallel between transcendental ideas and pure concepts of the understanding does not lose cohesion, as the categories also have an immanent and internal use, referring not to the thing itself - in this case, the categories would have an external and transcendental use - but to the mere a priori form of the phenomenon given to sensible intuition (KrV, A20/B34.06-09). For an explanation of what Kant understands by immanent as opposed to transcendent, and by transcendent as opposed to transcendental, see the third paragraph of the first part, *On the transcendental illusion*, of the introduction to the *Transcendental Dialectic* (KrV, A296.11-19/B352.17-353.06). In the KrV, Kant will reformulate the two terminological pairs – *transzendent/überfliegend* and *immanent/einheimisch* – associating *immanent* with *physisch* and *transzendent* with *hyperphysisch*. Kant reaffirms that only “the first use [of reason] is addressed to nature, insofar as its knowledge can be applied to (concrete) experience; the second, to the connection of the objects of experience that transcends any experience”. Note that it is now only the transcendent or hyperphysical use of reason that is distinguished as internal (*innere*) or external (*äußere*), as referring, respectively, to the knowledge of the world or of God, while the idea of soul – as a thinking nature (*denkende Natur*) – is understood through the immanent or physical and legitimate use of reason. See the third chapter, *The Architectonic of pure reason, of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method* (KrV, A845/B873.09-875.01).

¹² See the brief but insightful observation by Weil 1990, 140-141, which emphasizes how history – and, with it, politics – become a philosophical problem when they are related to totality.

¹³ See what Kant says in the penultimate and third-to-last paragraphs of section A, *On reason in general*, of the second part, *On pure reason as the seat of transcendental illusion*, of the introduction to the *Transcendental Dialectic* (KrV, A302.01-12/B358.14-359.06). Here, although the “entirely different” nature of the synthesis of reason through principles compared to the synthesis of understanding through concepts is already recognized, this differentiation is still not articulated and explained based on the criterion of purposiveness.

¹⁴ On the relationship between systematicity of reason and its purposiveness, see Guyer 1990, 17-43; Buchdahl 1992, 183-191; Rescher 2000, 64-98; Abela 2006, 408-422; Mudd 2017, 81-106; Zuckert 2017, 89-107 and Ginsborg 2018, 131-162.

¹⁵ On projecting order and unity to nature as rational necessity of a kind of meta-methodological basis for employing particular knowledges, see Kitcher 1986, 201-233 and Kitcher 1994, 253-272.

¹⁶ “Unique and radical, that is, absolute” (KrV, A649/B677.18), Kant adds a little later.

¹⁷ For an exposition of the theme, see Marcucci 1985, 127-156.

¹⁸ On the not merely subjective use of the transcendental ideas, see Marcucci 1972, 106-132.

¹⁹ Read, for example, what Kant will write in the third part – *On the critique of power of judgment, as a means for combining the two parts of philosophy into one whole* – of the introduction to KU, to justify the reflexive and self-referential activity of the faculty of judgment, presenting its role in the critical system: “in the family of the higher faculties of cognition there is still an intermediary between the understanding and reason. This is the power of judgment, about which one has cause to presume, by analogy, that it too should contain in itself *a priori*, if not exactly its own legislation, then still a proper principle of its own for seeking laws, although a merely subjective one; which, even though it can claim no field of objects as its domain, can nevertheless have some territory and a certain constitution of it, for which precisely this principle only might be valid” (KU, AA 05: 177.04-12). The reflexive activity of reason as a faculty of judging is guided by a principle – purposiveness – which remains subjective only from the perspective of reason as a faculty dedicated to the determination of objects: despite the clear distinction of its use, reason intends to determine its objects according to the categories or the law of liberty, according to whether its use is speculative or practical. It is in this sense that reason as a reflective faculty belongs to both an indeterminate domain and a purely subjective principle, insofar as such a principle is not immediately directed to the determination of objects of sensible experience or practical experience but only to the way in which activity rational cognitive development generally occurs in the knowing subject.

²⁰ On the theoretical role of the idea of development of human natural predispositions in Kant’s philosophy of history, see Kleingeld 1995, 193-210 and Ameriks 2009, 46-67. The same idea is utilized by Wood to assert – perhaps somewhat radically – that Kant’s philosophy of history is naturalistic, that is, a branch of biology. On the other hand, Cohen, while acknowledging an important relationship between philosophy of history and biology, recognizes that Kant’s philosophy of history is not merely naturalistic. Cohen distinguishes two strands within Kantian reflection on history: an empirical history (linked to biology) and a practical history (linked to morality). However, Cohen does not recognize empirical history as grounded in the principle of purposiveness. Also, Zammito suggests some reservations regarding the naturalistic approach to Kant’s philosophy of history. On the other hand, however, he questions the extension of the notion of development of natural predisposition to reason and freedom. See Wood 1999, 207-215; Zammito 2008, 29-62 and Cohen 2009, 109-142.

²¹ At the beginning of the first section of the GMS, we find something very similar: “In the natural constitution of an organized being, that is, one constituted purposively for life [*zweckmäßig zum Leben eingerichteten*], we assume as a principle that there will be found in it no instrument for some end other than what is also most appropriate to that end and best adapted to it” (GMS, AA 04: 395.04-08). A specification of the organic character of living beings as an indication of a natural disposition is already found in the mentioned writing of 1775/77, in which Kant, when dealing with the ability of organisms to adapt in the evolution of animal species, states that “chance or the universal mechanical laws could not produce such as *preformed*. Yet even where nothing purposive shows itself, the mere faculty to propagate its adopted character is already proof enough that a particular germ or natural predisposition for it was to be found in the organic creature. For outer things can well be occasioning causes but not producing ones of what is inherited necessarily and regenerates agreements” (VvRM, AA 02: 435.01-09). Although Kant’s appeal to teleological understanding and explanation is still very timid and deliberately presented as a mere unchecked possibility, the need to resort to the principle of purposiveness through the idea of preformed disposition is already shown. The tone and context will be different in §81 of KU, *On the association of mechanism with the teleological principle in the explanation of a natural end as a product of nature*, whose central part is dedicated to the analysis of the application of the teleological principle to the explanation of evolution animal from the point of view of occasionalism or preformation, in its evolutionary and epigenetic articulations (KU, AA 05: 422.20-424.18). On the relationship between the systematic understanding of history and the organic development of rationality, see Lehmann 1980, 96-140 and Ypi 2021, 69-75.

²² Again, at the beginning of the first section of the GMS, Kant establishes a relationship between the subordination of natural human dispositions to reason for moral improvement as a natural end of the human being, a theme proposed in the third proposition of the IaG. In the GMS, Kant states that “in a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its *preservation*, its *welfare*, in a word its *happiness*, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions that the creature has to perform for this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be marked out for it far more accurately by instinct, and that end would have thereby been attained much more surely than it ever can be by reason; and if reason should have been given, over and above, to this favored creature, it must

have served it only to contemplate the fortunate constitution of its nature, to admire this, to delight in it, and to be grateful for it to the beneficent cause, but not to submit its faculty of desire to that weak and deceptive guidance and meddle with nature's purpose [*Naturabsicht*]" (GMS, AA 04: 395.08-22). In contrast, and as stated in the second proposition of the IaG, the finite rational beings act according to "another and far worthier purpose of one's existence, to which therefore, and not to happiness, reason is properly destined, *b* and to which, as supreme condition, the private purpose of the human being must for the most part defer" (GMS, AA 04: 396.10-22).

²³ For an analysis of the dogmatic, regulative, and reflective approaches to history that can be detected in Kant's philosophy of history, see Makkreel 1995, 123-137.

²⁴ At the end of the second section of the GMS, this paradox is recalled in the following terms: "even though a rational being scrupulously follows this maxim himself, he cannot for that reason intelligible world count upon *every* other to be faithful to the same maxim nor can he count upon the kingdom of nature and its purposive order [*zweckmäßige Anordnung*] to harmonize with him, as a fitting member, toward a kingdom of ends possible through himself, that is, upon its favoring his expectation of happiness; nevertheless that law, act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends, remains in its full force because it commands categorically. And just in this lies the paradox that the mere dignity of humanity as rational nature, without any other end or advantage to be attained by it - hence respect for a mere idea - is yet to serve as an inflexible precept of the will, and that it is just in this independence of maxims from all such incentives that their sublimity consists, and the worthiness of every rational subject to be a law giving member in the kingdom of ends; for otherwise he would have to be represented only as subject to the natural law of his needs (GMS AA 04: 438.33-439.12).

²⁵ Some years later, Kant contextualizes these same themes in §83 of KU, *On the ultimate end of nature as a teleological system*, within the distinction between happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) and culture (*Kultur*), which judgment makes use "to judge the human being not merely, like any organized being, as a natural end, but also as the *ultimate end* [*letzten Zweck*] of nature here on earth, in relation to which all other natural things constitute a system of ends [*System von Zwecken*] in accordance with fundamental principles of reason" (KU, AA 05: 429.25-30). More precisely, Kant will state that "the formal condition under which alone nature can attain this its final aim [*Endabsicht*] is that constitution in the relations of human beings with one another in which the abuse of reciprocally conflicting freedom is opposed by lawful power in a whole, which is called *civil society*; for only in this can the greatest development of the natural predispositions occur" (KU, AA 05: 432.26-32).

²⁶ Kaulbach identifies three main uses of Kant's philosophy of history: epistemological, political, and prognostic, while Krasnoff, for example, explains the teleological foundation of Kant's philosophy of history as necessary for political action. See Kaulbach 1975, 65-84 and Krasnoff 1994, 22-40.

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