

A Kantian Philosophy of Hope for the 21st Century?

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Zachary Vereb

Abstract: Humans find themselves in an unprecedented historical juncture. While self-interested, short-sighted considerations exacerbate the potential for future pandemics, climate change looms on the horizon. Both undoubtedly threaten us with moral and political paralysis. Environmental Kantian commentators have explored Kant’s ethics and aesthetic theory for climate change, but few have considered the relevance of his views on hope and progress. This essay aims to fill that gap by exploring the philosophical role that hope can play. I argue that Kant’s philosophy of hope presents valuable heuristics supportive for our current predicament, especially the climate crisis. With this future-oriented perspective, environmental ethicists and Kant scholars should find new reason to return to Kant’s thinking today.

1. Introduction

Humans find themselves in an unprecedented historical juncture. While self-interested, short-sighted considerations exacerbate the potential for future pandemics, human-caused climate change looms on the horizon. Both undoubtedly threaten us with moral and political paralysis. An adequate ‘philosophy of hope’ should attempt to cut through this paralysis, to show that if indeed we ought to do something with regard to them, then we in fact can. A shift in individual attitudes may even be the necessary precondition for larger institutional change. Though

environmental commentators have explored Immanuel Kant's ethics and aesthetic theory for climate change and related global problems,¹ few have considered the relevance of his views on hope and progress. This essay presents a secular interpretation of Kant's philosophy of hope relevant to present crises, environmental and pandemic.² It contains a future-oriented dimension that we can mobilize to address our irrational and nihilistic paralysis.

I begin in Section 2 by situating the global crisis to highlight philosophy's normative role. I then characterize several philosophical varieties of hope, spanning classic views with Ernst Bloch's influential study, to those in moral psychology and philosophical theology. Section 3 considers differing commentaries on Kantian hope and progress, triangulating them with my sketch of Kant's views on hope spanning his works. Section 4 then explores three angles of Kant's thought, including progress, community, and political change, supportive for our current predicament. I conclude with reflections on pessimism, optimism, and revolutionary thinking.

2. The Problem and Philosophy's Role

Humanity today faces a variety of global problems. The COVID-19 pandemic is perhaps most salient, but climate impacts are already being felt. I will discuss these problems with an eye to their interconnections, though climate change will be my focus. COVID-19 has claimed at millions of lives worldwide since 2019, and many survivors suffer long-term, permanent

¹ For recent works, see T. SVOBODA, *Duties regarding Nature: A Kantian Environmental Ethic*, New York, Routledge, 2015; G. WILLIAMS, *The Social Creation of Morality and Complicity in Collective Harms: A Kantian Account*, «Journal of Applied Philosophy», XXXVI, 1, 2019, pp. 457-470; A. PINHEIRO WALLA, *Kant and Climate Change*, in *Moral Theory and Climate Change: Ethical Perspectives on a Warming Planet*, ed. by B. Eggleston, D. E. Miller, New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 99-115; and Z. VEREB, *Kant's Pre-critical Ontology and Environmental Philosophy*, «Environmental Philosophy», XVIII, 1, 2021, pp. 81-102.

² Anglophone literature mainly explores the critical system apropos hope, belief, knowledge, and action. E.g., R. ZUCKERT, *Hidden Antinomies of Practical Reason, and Kant's Religion of Hope*, «Kant Yearbook», X, 1, 2018, pp. 199-217; F. FREYENHAGEN, *Acting Irrespective of Hope*, «Kantian Review», XXV, 4, 2020, pp. 605-630.

damage. And despite the recent IPCC AR6 report, some still consider this a future problem. Yet, climate impacts are apparent. Several regions are sinking, such as the Carteret Islands. Together with related factors like drought or tainted water tables, millions more will be displaced by 2050.

Climate related heat waves claimed thousands of lives in the last few years, developed countries such as Britain and France unexcepted, while COVID-19 made it rounds. Across the Atlantic, wildfires ravaged the United States and Australia suffered hundreds of deaths due to drier conditions. Extreme weather becomes more frequent and deadly with global heating: more energy input in the earth-system means more output, with different regional manifestations. Extinction rates are also accelerating, and numerous species are expected to become extinct before the new century. Increased vector-related disease is projected given larger mosquito ranges, and we may even witness the resurgence of long-forgotten diseases. Besides uncertainties associated with system threshold-crossings and feedback loops, much is clear: A hotter planet is less predictable, more erratic. As we leave the stable Holocene, where human societies flourished, we enter an uncertain epoch of human history.

I highlight these problems because they are ones that seem to short-circuit the attitudes and judgments of individuals more than many others. From the individual perspective, these global, collective, and intergenerational problems disrupt the normal way agents see themselves capable of effecting change. These problems at the end of the day discourage meaningful activity. For, perceived solutions that many individuals imagine lie solely outside themselves (requiring, *i.e.*, institutional or state action). Or, those entities potentially affected cannot be seen or related to by agents (such as people across the globe, non-humans, or those who do not yet exist); in such cases, agents feel ineffectual. This sense of futility is not far from demoralization.

With such pervasive global problems, many succumb to moral paralysis that at best blinds their ability to analyze the situation for the needed course of action, and at worst shuts them down. It is unsurprising, then, that many who reflect on these issues lose hope (consider the phenomenon of ‘climate nihilism’, especially among youth and researchers).³ Science can tell us a lot about our situation, and engineers can provide us with the tools to help fix it. Yet these problems also require a reexamination of values. This is where philosophy shines, and where environmental ethics has historically done much good. If philosophy can be helpful now, these imminent concerns—and the subsequent moral paralysis that makes them seem insurmountable—show us that its assistance is needed more than ever. And though Kant is not usually associated with environmental ethics, his future-oriented ideas turn out to be pertinent. In order to appreciate these ideas, we must first consider some of the literature on hope.

2.1 Classic Philosophies of Hope: Ernst Bloch

The most well-known study on hope from a philosophical perspective can be found in Ernst Bloch’s monumental three-volume work, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, published between 1954-1959. Underappreciated in Anglophone philosophy, Bloch draws from seemingly incompatible views such as German Romanticism, Idealism, mysticism, and Marxian thought. He attempts to integrate the systematicity expected with Kant, the stylistic tendencies prominent in poets and religious thinkers, and the concrete Marxian interest on material conditions of human reality. Though this paper does not have the space to fully articulate Bloch’s view, two aspects of it are useful. First, we can utilize, as a rough outline, his philosophical account of hope, and second,

³ This moral paralysis is fundamentally a problem for individuals—as I will focus on in this paper—but collective problems are also a root of demoralization. Kant’s view of hope concerns both of these, from the individual in history and her relationship (even duty with regard to) the collective human species. For the connection between individualism and collective dimensions of Kant vis-à-vis climate change, see Z. VEREB, *Sustaining the Individual in the Collective: A Kantian Perspective for a Sustainable World*. «Kantian Review», forthcoming, doi:10.1017/S1369415422000176.

we can appreciate what Bloch sees as the insights and apparent limitations of Kantian thought for the modern world.⁴ Still, Bloch's account is not conclusive, so afterward we must explore more contemporary philosophical views as a foil to return to Kant in Section 3.

Despite a very experimental literary approach, the introduction to *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* is fairly succinct. For Bloch, hope is on the one hand a future-oriented emotion, contrasted with passive expectant emotions such as anxiety and fear.⁵ Fear, by contrast, «presents itself as the subjectivist, nihilism as the objectivist mask of the crisis phenomenon... Hopelessness is itself, in a temporal and factual sense, the most insupportable thing, downright intolerable to human needs».⁶ On the other hand, hope is not just an emotion, but a mode of thinking to be cultivated. As a cognitive anticipation of the future, «hope is not taken *only as an emotion*, as the opposite of fear (because fear too can of course anticipate), but *more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind*».⁷ Authentic hope is not abstract and utopian (in the pejorative sense), but concrete, conditioning yet requiring action. It demands the «effort of will» and aims at «overtaking the natural course of events».⁸ Hope in this secular form is a kind of «venturing beyond [whereby authentic hope] knows and activates the tendency which is inherent in history and which proceeds dialectically».⁹ In sum, Bloch sees hope as the «most important expectant emotion» and the «most human of all mental feelings».¹⁰ It confronts moral and political paralysis as a productive synthesis of emotion, attitude, will, and action.

⁴ I cannot provide an exhaustive definition of hope here, given the diverse range of accounts and theorists on hope. For orienting this paper, I stipulate that Bloch's general characterization of hope will adequately motivate the present exploration.

⁵ E. BLOCH, *The Principle of Hope*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1986, pp. 3, 74.

⁶ *Idem*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ *Idem*, p. 12.

⁸ *Idem*, pp. 4, 12.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 75.

The philosopher's role vis-à-vis hope is one of 'construction', of providing conceptual blueprints to facilitate the actuality of utopian dreams. Hope, Bloch laments, has been overlooked in the history of philosophy. From Plato's 'anamnesis' to Hegel's owl Minerva, it remains implicit and backwards-looking. Bloch sees promise in Kant's view, but warns that it remains «thoroughly impaired by abstractness», blinded by a passive contemplation.¹¹ Bloch highlights the secular potential of Kantian hope dormant in his works¹² and reflects on Kant's untimeliness: «But what if even Kant's so rigid-seeming [moral and historical] proposition was precisely ahead of its time? If in its direction it contained a boldness and a happiness which are only waiting to be able finally to appear?»¹³ We shall reconsider Kant's timeliness in Section 4.

2.2 Contemporary Views of Hope

Although it would be tempting to begin our investigation into Kant's view here, I would be remiss to ignore the wide ranging more contemporary literature on this topic. I explore some of these, in brief, below. First, consider theistic views.¹⁴ The most obvious resource would be the existential faith of Paul Tillich, along with the literature on hope following his wake. Tillich engages Bloch. He argues that we have a right and justification to hope (especially for an eternal reality beyond earth). For Tillich hope is long-term. It requires active rather than passive waiting, coupled with the virtue of patience, much like Bloch's 'venturing beyond' or Kant's evolutionary political metamorphosis (*MS*, AA VI 340).¹⁵ «Is there a right to hope for mankind as a whole?»

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 147. For a detailed critique of Kantian thought that exceeds the present paper's scope, see Chapter 37 of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Vol. 2).

¹² *E.g.*, BLOCH, *The Principle of Hope*, pp. 844-845.

¹³ *Idem*, pp. 871-872.

¹⁴ M. M. MARTIN, *How We Hope: A Moral Psychology*, Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 72 notes that hope as virtue can be traced back to St. Paul, along with faith and charity.

¹⁵ Translations of Kant's works are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.

asks Tillich, much like Kant: «Is progress a justified hope for man?»¹⁶ Anna Peterson draws from Tillich's account of genuine hope vis-à-vis climate action, showing its relevance.¹⁷

Another theistic avenue on the power of hope turns on the environmentally sensitive judgments of Pope Francis. Francis argues that believers have a duty to secure their common earth through stewardship. Hope, in this Catholic perspective, is not simply transcendent-facing. Rather, like Kant's sublime, it grounds agents to the dangers of crisis, empowering them to do what is morally necessary. For Francis, we must ensure that the earth remains hospitable, while acknowledging the uncertainty for victory.¹⁸ Despite the humanistic appeals of Tillich and Francis, hope grounded on religious faith risks alienating many. Global crises and collective action problems demand more. A secular reading of hope and progress promises to provide a more stable foundation from which meaningful change can be initiated.

Second, consider how philosophers have viewed hope in moral psychology. Despite expansive literature, two recent works stand out: Adrienne Martin challenges the 'orthodox view' of hope, *i.e.*, desire conjoined with belief in possibility. Derived from the early moderns (especially with Hobbes and Hume), hope is «desire in the context of epistemic uncertainty».¹⁹ Martin, like Bloch, sees this definition as deficient since it fails to incorporate human agency, including reflection, emotive anticipation, and the setting of maxims (she relies on Henry Allison's account of Kant's action theory).²⁰ Blöser and Stahl detail this evolving account in

¹⁶ P. TILLICH, *The Right to Hope. Text: Romans 4, 18: »In hope he believed against hope«*, «Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie», VII, 3, 1965, pp. 375-76. Tillich answers these questions in the affirmative, but draws his strength from faith.

¹⁷ A. PETERSON, *Climate Change and the Right to Hope*, «Tikkun», XXX, 2, 2015, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸ «Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out...that we can always do something to solve our problems. Still, we can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation» (FRANCIS, *Encyclical on Climate Change & Inequality: A Care for Our Common Home*, Melville House Publishing, 2015. pp. 37-38).

¹⁹ MARTIN, *How We Hope*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 25. Martin develops a roughly Kantian view of hope.

moral psychology: Hope is dispositional, cognitive, and conative, though interest in the modern view, as emotive or affective, has revived.²¹ They note that Kant challenges the largely passion-driven view from the 17 and 18th century. Blöser discusses, among other things, objects of hope in Kant. These include the highest good, individual moral development, and moral progress. As expectant of its moral objects, «hope requires doing “as much as it is in [one’s] powers to do”». In other words, as she continues, «Kant emphasizes that one condition of rational hope is that we do our part to *promote* it... (6:101)». ²² Still, Blöser is skeptical of the motivational force of Kantian hope, though it may help us to better frame our moral ends.

The role that hope plays with regard to progress for Kant is admittedly complicated. On the one hand, Blöser is right to read progress as a proper object of hope, *i.e.* one thing for which we hope. On the other hand—and as I hope to show by surveying some of Kant’s primary works—hope, as more than mere affect, can be supportive of actions promoting the approximation of progress.²³ We can hope for progress, but the expectant mental activity of doing so, conjoined with other relevant judgments, also provides us with resources for making that hope closer to reality (cf. *SF*, AA VII 87). With this in mind, let us consider views in Kant scholarship.

²¹ C. BLÖSER, T. STAHL, *The Moral Psychology of Hope: An Introduction*, in *The Moral Psychology of Hope*, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020, pp. 2-5.

²² C. BLÖSER, *Hope in Kant*, in *The Moral Psychology of Hope*, London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020, pp. 62-67. She cites *KpV*, AA V 129, 123, 128, and *RGV*, AA VI 101.

²³ Several chapters in the 2009 collection on Kant’s *IaG*, edited by Rorty and Schmidt, take a position of this kind. *E.g.*, B. HERMAN, *A Habitat for Humanity*, in *Kant’s Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide*, ed. by A. Rorty, J. Schmidt, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 150-170. BLÖSER, *Hope in Kant*, p. 69 notes that some commentators «attribute to Kant the view that hope *can* be supportive of our moral motivation, without being necessary for it». I am sympathetic to this reading.

2.3 Hope in Kant Scholarship

In general, Kantian hope has received less Anglophone coverage than many other topics, such as Kant's account of faith or his view on Providence.²⁴ One point of departure would be Kant's philosophy of religion.²⁵ An aim of the critical project is to clear room for faith, and hope is central to this. Kant's third question of philosophy, «What may I hope?» follows the question of what we may know (*KrV*, A 805 B 833; cf. *Log*, AA IX 25). Michel Despland finds the religious reading most plausible,²⁶ while others favor a secular or humanistic lens. Yirmiyahu Yovel, for instance, takes the view that hope associated with institutional religion, if it matters at all, is only a vehicle for moral progress. Yovel thus considers Kant's God as a «systematic device» that, along with a rationalistic conception of hope, functions as a useful heuristic for ensuring moral progress on earth.²⁷ A related though less Hegelian reading along these lines can be found in Sidney Axinn, who interprets Kant's views on religion, including central questions on hope, largely in terms of his philosophy of history and the secular idea of world citizenship.²⁸

²⁴ Exceptions include M. DESPLAND, *Kant on History and Religion, with a Translation of Kant's "on the Failure of all Attempted Philosophical Theodicies"*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973; C. H. PETERS, *Kant's Philosophy of Hope*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 1993; and S. AXINN, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant's View of Religion*, Atlanta, Amsterdam 1994. One of the main aims of the present paper is to bring this discussion and its applied potential to Anglophone Kant scholarship. However, by no means do I wish to downplay the important literature published in other languages, especially in Italian, German, and French. It would be impossible to discuss all the relevant works, but notable examples include A. RIGOBELLO, *Kant. Che cosa posso sperare*, Roma, Edizioni Studium, 1983; P. KLEINGELD, *Fortschritt und Vernunft*, Würzburg, Königshausen und Neumann, 1995; and R. LANGTHALER, *Kant über den Glauben und die "Selbsterhaltung der Vernunft"*, Freiburg/München, Alber, 2018. This paper largely aligns with Axinn, Kleingeld, and Williams (whom I discuss later), but focuses on current global problems.

²⁵ Insole has written extensively on this. E.g., C. INSOLE, *Kant on Christianity, Religion and Politics: Three Hopes, Three Limits*, «Studies in Christian Ethics», XXIX, 1, 2016, pp. 14-33.

²⁶ DESPLAND, *Kant on History and Religion*; see M. KUEHN, *Kant: A Biography*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 7-16, 250 that favors the secular interpretation.

²⁷ Y. YOVEL, *Kant and the Philosophy of History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 100, 108-109.

²⁸ AXINN, *The Logic of Hope*; G. CAVALLAR, *The Logic of Hope*, «Kant-Studien», LXXXIX, 2.

Hope is also framed in terms of Kant's philosophy of history. Allen Wood, *e.g.*, sees Kant's philosophy of history as a proto-Marxian historical materialism.²⁹ Presumably, hope for the full realization of humanity's species-being, in the Marxian sense, operates as a regulative tool for making sense of and affecting human-historical development through conscious revolutionary action. Lucien Goldmann, following his Hegelian mentor Lukács, provides an influential proto-Marxian reading of Kant along these lines and Jean-Francois Lyotard draws from Wittgenstein and Kantian sublimity touching on enthusiastic vain hopes.³⁰

Lastly, some readings adopt a normative-centered reading. Hope is not simply an affect, concern for the transcendent, or view of history, but is rather a potential normative force. Commentators operating to some degree in this camp might include Howard Williams, Adam Cureton, Loren Goldman, Otfried Höffe, and Harry van der Linden. They emphasize Kant's account of hope in a practical and regulative sense: Hope is moral and political: capable of mobilizing social change approximating human progress. For Williams, reason demands that we see human development as continuous. We have a duty to hope for this progressive continuity.³¹ There are moral lessons from Kant's philosophical reflections: «conceiving of history in a teleological sense gives the added advantage of not only making sense of it for us, but also of opening up the possibility of realizing a purpose in the future development of man».³²

Linden considers the emancipatory power of Kantian moral progress and the sobering value of hope: «Kant's view of history is not optimistic, and he does not cover up the darker side of the past of humanity...optimism transcends the limits of reason and involves a dogmatic

²⁹ A. WOOD, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 244, 309.

³⁰ L. GOLDMANN, *Mensch, Gemeinschaft und Welt in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants*, Europa-Verla, 1945; J. F. LYOTARD, *L'enthousiasme: La critique kantienne de l'histoire*, Paris, Galilée, 1986.

³¹ H. WILLIAMS, *Kant's Political Philosophy*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1983, pp. 1, 4, 36.

³² *Idem*, p. 22.

interpretation of the idea of progress... Hope, to the contrary, moves within the limits of reason and the critical reflective judgment». ³³ Höffe similarly suggests that Kant «develops the concept of hope as a characteristic form of rationality (cf. Conradt 1999), in the sharpest conceivable contrast to hope understood as an affect (cf. *Anthropology* VII 251-253; *CPrR* V 74; *Conflict* VII 86). The *Critique* places this rationality in the context of morals and religion, but it may with equal justification be placed in the historical and legal spheres». ³⁴ More recently, Cureton and Goldman suggest that Kant's regulative view of reasonable hope has normative relevance. ³⁵ For Cureton, «Fully rational agents necessarily have reasonable hope in order to avoid lapsing into moral nihilism and despondency and in order to retain their commitment to the moral law». ³⁶ My view takes inspiration from related secular accounts applied to crises today.

3. Kant's Philosophy of Hope: A Sketch

Kant discusses hope in a number of ways. ³⁷ This section runs through passages from Kant's texts, from the pre-Critical to late works. In the early *Universal Natural History* Kant says that

Some human beings remain at this [hedonistic, immature] stage of development. The faculty of combining abstracted concepts and controlling the tendencies of his passions by the free application of insights comes late, for some never in their whole lives; but it is weak in all people... If one regards the life of most human beings, this creature seems to be created to absorb sap like a plant, to grow, to reproduce its species, finally to become old and to die. Of all creatures he achieves the purpose of his being least... He would also be the most despicable of all, at least in the eyes of true wisdom, were it not that the hope of what is to come elevated him, and a period of the complete evolution [*Auswicklung*] of the powers locked inside him were not in store for him. (*NTH*, AA I 356)

³³ H. LINDEN, *Kantian Ethics and Socialism*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1988, pp. 97-98.

³⁴ O. HÖFFE, *Kant's Cosmopolitan Theory of Law and Peace*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 164. This work is an English translation edition of *Königliche Völker: Zu Kants kosmopolitisher Rechts- und Friedenstheorie* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2001).

³⁵ A. CURETON, *Reasonable Hope in Kant's Ethics*, «Kantian Review», XXIII, 2, 2018, pp. 181-203; L. GOLDMAN, *In Defense of Blinders: On Kant, Political Hope, and the Need for Practical Belief*, «Political Theory», XL, 4, 2012, pp. 497-523.

³⁶ CURETON, *Reasonable Hope*, p. 197.

³⁷ YOVEL, *Kant and the Philosophy of History*, p. 98 notes that Kant's account of hope evolves.

While explaining the emergence of the cosmic systems, glimmers of Kant's views on hope materialize. Later (*NTH*, AA I 356-357), Kant explains the emergence of human cognition naturalistically, so it is fair to view the 'powers in store for' in secular terms, not transcendently.

This reading is consistent with the immanent aims of the text. Later, this theme is developed:

Human nature, which occupies as it were the middle rung on the ladder of beings, sees itself as being between two extreme limits of perfection, equally distant from both ends. If the idea of the most sublime classes of rational creatures that inhabit Jupiter or Saturn arouses their jealousy and humiliates them by the knowledge of their own baseness, then they can be satisfied again and comforted by the sight of the low stages on the Planets Venus and Mercury, which are lowered far below the perfection of human nature. (*NTH*, AA I 359)

There are two things to note here, which also coincide nicely with Bloch's injunctions for an authentic and effective philosophy of hope. First, Kant's earliest reflections on hope, though he does indeed discuss God, focus on earth: he is primarily interested on humanity's development as an earth-bound species. These ideas evolve in Kant's historical works of the 1780s. Second, and importantly for our later discussions on Kantian hope vis-à-vis environmental crisis, Kant adopts a less anthropocentric lens than is expected.³⁸ Environmental ethicists have argued that philosophers should be more humble at humanity's embeddedness in nature. Such humbleness is expressed here, though hope is as yet underdeveloped.

Kant discusses hope in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, which Bloch references in Vol. 2. Kant is, in an ironic and polemical way, concerned with dispelling speculative claims to knowledge, yet towards the treatise's end he reflects on our aspirations, our moral faith (*moralische Glaube*) «to the hope that there would be a future» (*TG*, AA II 373).³⁹ He concludes that we should remain indifferent about theories of future life, which he called «lazy philosophy» (*TG*, AA II

³⁸ VEREB, *Kant's Pre-critical Ontology and Environmental Philosophy*, pp. 97.

³⁹ At *TG*, AA II 349 Kant reflects on «the scale-pan of hope», presaging later distinctions in the first *Critique* between knowledge and faith.

331). Instead, Kant's reflections on «Hope for the future» turn on his developing thoughts of the human moral vocation. As Schönfeld puts it, «From the viewpoint of practical philosophy, the stipulation of a world of spirits is unnecessary...we do not need to hope that another world will reward us for virtue».⁴⁰ Kant's reflections emphasize humanity's moral power. This is why Kant concludes by citing Voltaire's *Candide*, who tells us, much like Tillich and Bloch, that we should tend the garden of the here and now. Contributing to human progress through virtue has more to do with the good that we do in the world and our beliefs in the efficacy of those actions. Rational hope is grounded, not otherworldly.⁴¹

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant takes a largely different route, though hope still has both a theoretical and moral dimension. He distinguishes knowledge from various species of belief.⁴² Hope concerns those states of affairs unknowable to us theoretically, but worthy of belief practically (*KrV*, A 820-831 B 848-859). According to Axinn, «hope of happiness as a consequence of worthiness to be happy» is the main object of hope «presented in the first *Critique*», though he interprets the object of hope to change for Kant, especially in the *Religion*.⁴³ On Kleingeld's view, the first *Critique* situates hope (for happiness) primarily in a future beyond humankind (*KrV*, B xxxii, cf. Kant's ironic treatment in *TG*). She notes that, alternatively, *Idea for a Universal History* reconfigures hope with regard to happiness and

⁴⁰ M. SCHÖNFELD, *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: The Precritical Project*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 239.

⁴¹ This is reflected in the critical project, too: «a possible object of hope cannot defy the requirements of possible experience» (AXINN, *The Logic of Hope*, p. 206).

⁴² See LANGTHALER, *Kant über den Glauben* for a careful discussion on these distinctions. Since I am concerned with hope vis-à-vis progress, I do not address these more theoretical elements specifically.

⁴³ AXINN, *The Logic of Hope*, p. 242. That hope in the first *Critique* mainly regards future happiness is clear from *KrV*, A 805 B 833, but Kant provides differing treatments in other works.

progress ‘on earth’.⁴⁴ This means that, at least when considering hope in the context of Kant’s historical philosophy, we do not have to hope *only* for a future world (*IaG*, AA VIII 30).

In *Idea*, Kant incorporates the normative elements of *Dreams* with *Universal Natural History*’s humble, earthly concerns for humanity. Hope is viewed in a political, global context:

Although this state body for now stands before us only in the form of a very rough project, nevertheless already a feeling begins to stir in all members, each of which has an interest in the preservation of the whole; and this gives hope that after many transforming revolutions, in the end that which nature has as its aim will finally come about – a universal *cosmopolitan condition*, as the womb in which all original predispositions of the human species will be developed. (*IaG*, AA VIII 28)

The connection between hope and progress becomes more apparent with the historical and political works, as the ‘project’ that Kant has in mind regards the belief that it is possible to (and that we ought to) strive for human moralization, enlightenment, and the approximation of a rightful condition (*MAM*, AA VIII 123; *ZeF*, AA VIII 386; *RL*, AA VI 354-355).

The *Critique of Judgment* forms a nice synthesis of the theoretical and psychological-practical remarks of the first two *Critiques*, and points to the necessity for a global cosmopolitan condition as a condition for the possibility of progress (*KU*, AA V 432-433).⁴⁵ Although this section does not directly reflect on hope, it is crucial for making sense of Kant’s evolving views on progress, and how they take on an increasingly political and secular color. Section 83 contains a foundation for a teleological interpretation of human history and culture, which includes technical, political, and educational progress. This interpretation again grounds hope under a

⁴⁴ KLEINGELD, *Fortschritt und Vernunft* p. 162.

⁴⁵ The *Critique of Practical Reason* glosses hope as a part of the human faculty of desire, as an inclination or affect contrasted with fear (*KpV*, AA V 74, 147). Hope understood as affect opposite fear is supported with remarks from *Anth*, AA VII 255. This aspect of hope is consonant with Bloch’s partial characterization, while Bloch is critical of the more abstract view regarding endless progress toward the highest good (*KpV*, AA V 122). Even so, hope in these works is both affective and moral.

regulative moral teleology, much like the secular teleology of Bloch. As a philosophy of hope, it is a very useful framework to draw from, and helps us make sense of Kant's maturing views.⁴⁶

In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant clearly connects duty with hope for progress. Then, the *Religion* expands on this as a full-fledged collective duty toward humanity as a species:

If it is a duty to realize the condition of public right, even if only in approximation by unending progress, and if there is also a well-founded hope of this, then the *perpetual peace* that follows upon what have till now been falsely called peace treaties...is no empty idea but a task that, gradually solved, comes steadily closer to its goal (since the times during which equal progress takes place will, we hope, become always shorter). (*ZeF*, AA VIII 386; cf. 354)

...human beings are not permitted... to remain idle in the undertaking [of an ethical community] and let Providence have free rein, as if each could go after his private moral affairs and entrust to a higher wisdom the whole concern of the human race (as regards its moral destiny). Each must, on the contrary, so conduct himself as if everything depended on him. Only on this condition may he hope that a higher wisdom will provide the fulfillment of his well-intentioned effort. (*RGV*, AA VI 100-101)⁴⁷

Just as our duties concern what is doable, so also must hope conform to what is possible on earth. Even if it is impossible to fully secure a global ethical community or rightful condition, duty demands that we bring humanity closer. Rational hope (that such approximations are possible) plays a motivational. *i.e.*, supportive and psychological role for Kant. Let us conclude our survey with a passage the second part of *Conflict of the Faculties*, where Bloch sees Kant's discussion on hope and progress as a humanistic evolution *Dreams* and *Universal Natural History*:

there must be something *moral*, which reason presents as pure; but because of its great and epoch-making influence, reason must present it as the acknowledged duty of the human soul, concerning humanity as a whole...which hails, with such universal and

⁴⁶ Z. VEREB, *Moral Views of Nature: Normative Implications of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, «Public Reason», X-XI, 1-2, pp. 139-140 addresses environmental implications of this section. This framework is useful to combat nihilism, but as it reinforces human exceptionalism, it is a possible stumbling block.

⁴⁷ In Part 3, Kant argues that this task will never be secured by individuals alone (*RGV*, AA VI 97). Kant sees signs for progress to include the mitigation of polarization, hierarchy, and enthusiasm, though I cannot discuss this further (*RGV*, AA VI 99; WOOD, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, pp. 309-320 glosses a secular reading of these passages). Progress in education, as I discuss later, is a sign to give us hope for problems today.

impartial sympathy, the hopes for its success and the efforts toward realizing it. (*SF*, AA VII 87)

Remarks from this section, though neither systematic nor exhaustive, support the view that Kantian hope is not just ‘mere’ affect, nor mental acts of wishing conjoined with epistemic uncertainty.⁴⁸ Like Bloch, it certainly involves those. But it also encompasses a range of normative demands and requirements connecting with his practical and historical philosophies. Hope’s object, besides abstract concerns for otherworldly happiness, can be framed as historical progress. Hope, historically understood, is interpreted in the context of a collective enterprise with the development of the human species. Evidence of piecemeal progress across history, despite its brutality, motivates our practical justification to hope (*SF*, AA VII 84; *IaG*, AA VIII 18). So, hope is often intimately connected with Kant’s larger evolutionary views on progress, for which we have a duty to contribute, though hope must be reasonable and cannot simply rely on duty (*SF*, AA VII 92).

Through hoping for progress, hope conditions us to act for it. Hope makes such actions appear possible, for reasonable hope concerns objects of possible experience in space and time. Practically understood, hope facilitates efforts for moral progress, including duties to moralize humanity, enlighten culture, and approximate a rightful condition. In short, hope helps «sustain our commitment to action» which in turn helps us resist the moral paralysis that would preclude them.⁴⁹ This is why Williams sees hope for progress in Kant as a duty.⁵⁰ To be sure, due to humanity’s cognitive shortcomings (for which education is supposed to play a crucial role in mitigating), Kant judges in *Conflict* that hope for progress is «to be expected only on the

⁴⁸ For a careful reconstruction of the logic of hope in Kant, see AXINN, *The Logic of Hope*.

⁴⁹ J. HUBER, *Defying Democratic Despair: A Kantian Account of Hope in Politics*, «European Journal of Political Theory», XX, 4, 2021, pp. 719-738.

⁵⁰ WILLIAMS, *Kant’s Political Philosophy*.

condition of a wisdom from above (which bears the name of providence)» (*SF*, AA VII 93). Yet ‘Providence’ can also be interpreted practically, in *Perpetual Peace*, as a regulative device to motivate us to act for the sake of duty (*ZeF*, AA VIII 362, 368). I return to this in Section 5.

4. Kantian Hope for Today

Kant is not naively optimistic: progress is never guaranteed (*SF*, AA VII 83). He still remains hopeful: with certain conditions and proper strivings, the human spirit will inch more closely toward sustainable, global peace (*IaG*, AA VIII 30; *ZeF*, AA VIII 368). Even if we cannot know such a stage in civil evolution will come to pass, it is rational from a practical perspective for us to hope for the realization of humanity’s civil evolution.⁵¹ In the following, I draw from Kant’s philosophy of hope as it pertains to education, community, and political change. By articulating these concepts in the context of a progressive, future-oriented philosophy of hope, it becomes clear that Kant’s philosophy offers conceptual heuristics to ward off pessimism.⁵²

4.1 Progress and Civil Evolution

We are at a fork in the road: «It is equally in man’s power to follow the path of progress as it is for him to follow the path of moral degeneracy. So man, for Kant, is continually at a crossroads».⁵³ This is a philosophical point, but it is also true empirically: we now sit at a

⁵¹ By ‘civil evolution’, which I draw from conversations with the late Schönfeld, I mean the progressive development of humanity’s propensities. Since I am not merely concerned with ethics, I do not discuss whether duties to promote civil evolution derive from the categorical imperative or some other principle, *e.g.*, the universal principle or right. I focus on hope for civil evolution rather than mere belief in its possibility, since hope has a future-oriented dimension that belief does not necessarily have. For Kant’s discussion on opinion, knowledge, and belief (including different species of belief, including moral belief), see *KrV* A 822-829 B 850-857.

⁵² Kantian hope is not necessarily incompatible with pessimism. One could, *e.g.*, hope for humanity to continue to progress while affirming its unlikelihood. Still, it is probable for pessimism to affect agents negatively, precluding them from adopting the belief that actions are reasonable to undertake. Likewise, optimism has its own set of problems. For a discussion on how reasonable hope relates to optimism and pessimism, and why Kant thinks an excess of the latter «can have a corrosive effect on our commitment to the moral law», see CURETON, *Reasonable Hope*, pp. 198-199. LINDEN, *Kantian Ethics and Socialism*, pp. 97-98 distinguishes hope, optimism, and pessimism.

⁵³ WILLIAMS, *Kant’s Political Philosophy*, p. 67.

crossroads with regard to climate change, and COVID-19 reminds us of the daunting challenges ahead. From a moral-political perspective, we have duties toward humanity, to the realization of progress, toward peace (*ZeF*, AA VIII 362; 368; cf. *RL*, AA VI 354, *RGV*, AA VI 97). Human development «is not a decline from good to evil, but rather a gradual development from the worse to the better; and nature itself has given the vocation to everyone to contribute as much to this progress as may be within his power» (*MAM*, AA VIII 123, cf. *RGV*, AA VI 100-101). Thus, a duty to pursue civil evolution is a practical implication of a secular Kantian philosophy of hope, with hope being supportive of that endeavor (*ZeF*, AA VIII 368). By this social duty, perhaps Kant has in mind more specifically that we help others to think for themselves, criticize unjust institutions, and develop humanity's predispositions. Whether pursued through policy or individuals, these relate to the education of humanity. Remaining hopelessly paralyzed amid crisis is a failure of these duties.

Kant suggests that education may play the secret key to civil evolution (*Päd*, AA IX 443-444).⁵⁴ Without adequate judgment faculties, many fall prey to conspiratorial thinking, as we see with COVID and climate-denialism. Without rational hope that educational institutions can be reformed—for example as a result of public policy following individual critique—civil evolution only stands to stagnate, since hope supports us in framing our moral ends and motivating us to act for those ends. Losing hope in the power of education is a quick road to failing our moral duty to promote human progress and our juridical duty to pursue a rightful state while preventing the state's dissolution (*RL*, AA VI 264, 307, 312, 325). Fatalistic nihilism demoralizes and alienates individuals from their collective struggles, while education empowers. Defeated and

⁵⁴ See P. JESUS, *From 'Homo Educandus' to 'Homo Aestheticus': Kant on Education*, «Studi Kantiani», XIX, 2006, pp. 121-130 and E. WYRĘBSKA-ĐERMANOVIĆ, *Kantian Moral Education for the Future of Humanity: The Climate Change Challenge*, «Journal of Philosophy of Education», LV, pp. 1045-1056.

ignorant individuals find little motivation to act more responsibly or criticize unsustainable leadership. Kant's emphasis on hope and progress, by contrast, has the potential to elevate us. The social frame of civil evolution indicates humanity's collective potential.

4.2 Global Community

Kant's teleological philosophy of hope can supplement and help frame our duties holistically in a global way, which may benefit us for the long-term.⁵⁵ Now, the moral and epistemic dimensions of civil evolution entail reciprocity. The notion of reciprocity, «which plays a pivotal role throughout Kant's lifelong work»,⁵⁶ helps us to appreciate our duties in communal terms: *i.e.*, we ought to relate to others as if we were part of one global community, by virtue of our shared rationality and interconnection as a developing species. Taking reciprocity seriously requires us to view ourselves in a mutually implicated global context.

Ethically-speaking, Kant calls this, as with the stoics, world- or earth-citizenship (*ZeF*, AA VIII 349n; *Anth*, AA VII 130, 333). Reciprocity requires consistent thinking, with eyes broadened toward others (*Log*, AA IX 57). Reciprocity can also be understood epistemically: we ought to promote information and knowledge of systems. Schönfeld reads Kantian reciprocity in line with the Confucian emphasis on ethical and epistemic civil evolution: «Kant takes his cue from Bacon's proposal of freely conducted, unfettered communication for the scientific sake of collectively generating lasting models».⁵⁷ Confidence in information and scientific models is, like education, an important way to confront the hopelessness of climate nihilism head on.

⁵⁵ Reciprocity may be unhelpful for thinking about 'intergenerational' climate issues since future peoples cannot reciprocate. The problem is a one way street, though perhaps Kant's views on public honor remind us to reflect on how we would like future generations to look back on us. To begin such an investigation on Kantian honor vis-à-vis climate legacies, which I cannot do here, see *V-Mo/Collins*, AA XXVII 281 and *Anth*, AA VII 257.

⁵⁶ M. SCHÖNFELD, *From Confucius to Kant—The Question of Information Transfer*, «Journal of Chinese Philosophy», XXXIII, 2006, pp. 67-81, p. 78.

⁵⁷ SCHÖNFELD, *From Confucius to Kant*, p. 75.

Duties do not hold merely to ourselves and our neighbors, but to those around the world. We see this notion fully developed in Kant's conception of a rational religious community. As Williams argues, Kant's vision can be viewed in non-theistic terms, akin to a secular formulation of Augustine's *City of God*.⁵⁸ For Kant, «we have a duty *sui generis*, not of human beings toward human beings but of the human race toward itself. For every species of rational beings is objectively—in the idea of reason—destined to a common end, namely the promotion of the highest good as a good common to all» (*RGV*, AA VI 97). Solving our present viral and climate problems requires us to think and act reciprocally, with an eye to the common good. This species-directed duty, in the face of climate change, requires consideration for future generations. Though they cannot yet reciprocate, they will be the next accretions of humanity's civil evolution. It is only, as Kant says, through the efforts of those

who take an interest in the best world and who are capable of conceiving the idea of a future improved condition, that the gradual approach of human nature to its purpose is possible...at first private individuals must also have nature's purpose before their eyes, but they must furthermore reflect especially on the development of humanity, and see to it that humanity becomes not merely skillful but also moral and, what is most difficult of all, they must try to bring posterity further than they themselves have gone. (*Päd*, AA IX 449)

A future-oriented, global, information-sensitive, community-focused, legacy-framed orientation such as Kant defends, is needed to combat pessimism and short-sighted self-interest.

4.3 Political Change and Metamorphosis

Kant deems illegitimate any violent or illegal resistance against government, and political change must follow from the top-down (*TP*, AA VIII 299; *SF*, AA VII 92).⁵⁹ At first glance, this appears

⁵⁸ WILLIAMS, *Kant's Political Philosophy*, p. 267.

⁵⁹ See H. WILLIAMS. *Metamorphosis or Palingenesis? Political Change in Kant*, «The Review of Politics», LXIII, 4, 2001, pp. 693-722. Curiously, Kant's initial appraisal of the French Revolution was highly positive in that it pointed toward his Republican ideal (*SF*, AA VII 85-86). Cf. with Section 52 of the *RL*, where Kant considers, along Mencian lines, that so-called revolutionary activity may not have been

to defang hope for bottom-up climate resistance. Yet Kant does admit the legitimacy of political actions like public critique, as well as legal opposition (a modern example of this would be the climate lawsuit filed by 21 youths in 2015, ‘Juliana v. United States’). A government precluding public political expression or legal complaints would hinder enlightenment, a «crime against human nature» (*WA*, AA VIII 39). Additionally, IPCC recommendations and UNFCCC negotiations operate at the policy level. Individual actions matter, but they are not sufficient.

Kant’s demand for top-down political change is in line with these recommendation. His assumption is that institutional reform (via educated leadership) is our best bet for retaining social stability. In addition to conceptual difficulties (*e.g.*, *RL*, AA VI 319), Kant fears that bottom-up revolutionary activities threaten the stability of the state (*ZeF*, AA VIII 355; *RL*, AA VI 312). Unmitigated climate change presents a strong parallel, entailing future wars over resources and habitable land. For this reason, translating the essence of Kant’s rationale for reform as metamorphosis with an eye to crises can be of use.⁶⁰ Individuals are justified in pursuing legal, non-violent direct action to pressure governments that maintain unjust and unsustainable policies conflicting with inner morality,⁶¹ but policy is needed to manage the crisis by the end of the century.

Climate change, like unmitigated pandemics, is a global threat to the external freedom of individuals and the stability of the state. Leaders act unjustly if they fail to enact sustainable

unlawful since the sovereign had abdicated his powers (*RL*, AA VI 342). Similarly, a legislature corrupted by environmental regulatory capture might arguably be thought of having renounced its legitimacy.

⁶⁰ Kant frames reform through the biological analogy of metamorphosis. One reason he does this is to contrast it with (what he sees as) more destructive ‘palingenetic’ tendencies. I cannot discuss these here, but note that metamorphosis emphasizes the organic and developmental nature of collective social totalities, as well as the possibility for qualitative change to happen despite apparently quantitative reform. This is precisely what we need now: a green paradigm shift. For more on these concepts, see WILLIAMS. *Metamorphosis or Palingenesis?*

⁶¹ A. D. ROSEN, *Kant's Theory of Justice*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993 cites two places where Kant might be interpreted to allow for justified revolution: *Refl*, AA XIX 594 and *RL*, AA VI 321n.

policies. For such failures would undermine the goal of a juridical state and the future progress of humanity. Policy makers and political leaders have a duty to moderate our polarizing social unsociability and promote conditions for autonomy, which, along with humanity's original common ownership of the earth, is the purpose and ground of the state for which they govern.⁶² Kant's political vision is a reminder that these leaders must pursue, advocate for, and implement policies that secure a rightful condition both domestically and internationally.

In fact, one of the main reasons Kant renounces revolution—that it risks plunging us back into a state of nature, regressing civil progress—is the same reason why leaders should act now for climate change, by adopting sustainable legislation. In fact, they have a duty to do so (*SF*, AA VII 92f). If they do not, civil society may suffer the same fate through worsening climate impacts, the likes of which will only exacerbate pandemic-like events in the future with increased vector-borne disease. Insofar as it shortsightedly facilitates self-interested action, political leadership is irrational: from the same pragmatic perspective of Kant in his rejection of revolution, such irrationality may send us back to the insecure state of nature, which in the 21st century appears as a resource-scarce 'hothouse-earth'.⁶³ In many ways, nature sets the material conditions for the possibility of civil evolution for which we hope, though it is still the duty of world leaders to legislate in a way that approximates international peace.⁶⁴

⁶² A duty of benevolent leadership is defended by ROSEN, *Kant's Theory of Justice* p. 179, using these passages: *RL*, AA VI 325-326; *TL*, AA VIII 393-394.

⁶³ If the stable Holocene is the condition from which Kant's original common ownership of the land (*RL*, AA VI 267) appears intelligible, then a post-Holocene world might make the duty of pursuing a sustainable juridical state (*RL*, AA VI 264) irrational.

⁶⁴ WILLIAMS, *Kant's Political Philosophy*, p. 253.

5. Concluding Remarks

Cycling back to the beginning, it might be objected that hope for progress is futile and therefore irrational in a world of failed education.⁶⁵ After all, enthusiastic COVID-19 denialism in the US is partly an educational failure. Moreover, many read Kant as a pessimistic, at least relative to other modern philosophers.⁶⁶ If hope remains, it would only be for a future life. Escapist hope confronts us as an enticing option. However, recall that Kant thought education the linchpin for human progress (*Päd*, AA IX 443-444), and that reform would be slow. Fortunately, renewed calls for (and implementation of) ecological education, experiential learning, and critical thinking, are starting to become more common. Pedagogical leadership leads the charge, which aims to help educators equip youth.⁶⁷ So hope for educational reform is not irrational, though it may be less likely for some countries without the aid of enlightened political leadership.

This objection's obverse contains the worry that Kant's historical philosophy is, alternatively, too optimistic. Anticipating Hegel, Kant appears to suggest that progress is something nature (via a «secret mechanism of Providence») achieves through our unsocial sociability (*ZeF*, AA VIII 360-361; *IaG*, AA VIII 24). In other words, the 'cunning of nature' as it were pushes us into conflict, forcing us to adapt. History thus inevitably engenders a more

⁶⁵ This relates to concerns Habermas raises against the justifiability of a community duty of cooperation (J. HABERMAS, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Suhrkamp Verlag AG, 2019). Although I cannot discuss this here, confronting Habermas is needed for future investigations on Kantian hope, especially given inadequate treatment in Anglophone literature. In short, Habermas «rejects Kant's arguments for the practical *necessity* of moral faith in a moral God» from the second *Critique*, wherein «religious belief is said by Kant to play in the encouragement (*Ermutigung*) of reason» (T. MCCARTHY, *On the Interest of Practical Reason in Hope*, «Constellations», XXVIII, pp. 11-12). My reading, since it relies on secular interpretations, is not necessarily subject to these difficulties, and even finds affinities with Habermas' own view of a «historical heuristic» though being less empirically-guided (MCCARTHY, *On the Interest of Practical Reason in Hope*, p. 13).

⁶⁶ Yovel, *e.g.*, paints a less pessimistic Kant. Cf. Kant's critique of Mendelssohn's pessimism, *e.g.*, *TP*, AA VIII 309. Perhaps Kant attempts to track a middle-path—one realistic to the difficulties facing humanity, yet reasonably optimistic and so hopeful of our destiny.

⁶⁷ *E.g.*, *EarthEd: Rethinking Education on a Changing Planet*, Washington, DC, Island Press, 2017.

perfect humanity over time. On this reading, intentional striving for sustainability is superfluous; nature will solve the problem for us, just as it presumably has with war in the past. This suggestion is, I think, implausible, and we can find tensions with it in Kant's own texts.

Kant is mainly concerned with war in these passages. The analogy between war and climate change is not unproblematic, though they share much in common: «whereas Kant sees in war an active force of nature driving the species and our predispositions for animality and humanity, climate change differs since it requires not only the development and cultivation of civilization (which 'artificer nature' can do alone, *TPP*, 8: 361), but also moralization; technical solutions produced from unsocial competition alone will not cut it.»⁶⁸ Returning to *Perpetual Peace* can be informative. Kant seems to suggest that the idea that progress is channeled through 'providential nature' is merely of regulative value for our moral ends (*ZeF*, AA VIII 362; 368; cf. *RL*, AA VI 354).⁶⁹ In other words, «Kant tries to mitigate this tension [between progress qua moral end and progress qua end of nature] by claiming that human reason and freedom are themselves part of the teleological order of nature (see 8:19 and 8:313)».⁷⁰ Rather than reading *Perpetual Peace* as suggestive of fatalistic complacency, we can interpret 'the great artist nature' as a heuristic with Kant's teleological-moral views from the *Critique of Judgment*. The great artist can be posited as a set of prospective empirical conditions that will help us, as a heuristic, reflect on what would be required to make human activity in harmony with natural limits.⁷¹

⁶⁸ VEREB, *Sustaining the Individual in the Collective*, n15 (forthcoming).

⁶⁹ It is unclear if *Idea*'s teleology is distinct from *Perpetual Peace*. In WOOD, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, p. 214, «teleology in Kant's philosophy of history is not a moral teleology». By contrast, R. B. LOUDEN, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 146 cites Howard Williams as a proponent of a moral reading of Kant's historical works.

HERMAN, *A Habitat for Humanity* pp. 164-167 also interprets Kant's view of progress in moral terms.

⁷⁰ BLÖSER, *Hope in Kant*, p. 68.

⁷¹ The set of empirical conditions I have in mind might be, e.g., realized constraints on emissions in line with the AR6, or a global treaty on fossil fuels, akin to the Montreal Protocol.

Lastly, one might worry that Kantian hope is an ideological consolation for powerless and defeated individuals. It is a kind of false consciousness. Those groups should rather forcefully abolish systems, institutions, and social structures that drive crises.⁷² While it is correct that global problems like climate change require solutions exceeding the powers of mere individuals, without a rational vision for a better world, the goal of revolutionizing institutions remains a utopian pipedream given current historic and material conditions. Even so, Kant can be interpreted to provide legitimate grounds for revolutionary action against unjust laws if they violate the moral law (*RGV*, AA VI 99n). On Byrd and Hruschka's reading, a non-judicial, rights-violating state constitutes a state of nature. Supposing they are right, resistance to it would not only be permitted, but obligatory (cf. *RL*, AA VI 307); even Bloch thinks that Kant's categorical imperative, consistently applied, would require the abolition of conditions for exploitation.⁷³ The hope to reform our present institutions is still reasonable. However, if failed leadership during crisis delegitimizes the state, forceful change would arguably be permissible.

Humanity finds itself in a perilous juncture, while many succumb to moral and political paralysis. A Kantian approach that frames hope in a normative light, as I have done here, is one way to move forward. Philosophy has said much about the past, but perhaps in the end Hegel was wrong: Minerva's owl does not only spread her wings at dusk: with Kant's future-oriented perspective, she might also help us project into the future and make it a sustainable reality.

⁷² Cureton notes that the overly optimistic reading is ideologically troubling, especially on the Marxian view; CURETON, *Reasonable Hope*, p. 198 disputes Kantian hope «as a form of false ideology use to justify, defend or resign people to oppression, injustice, war and other social evils». Instead, Kant «does not see reasonable hope as a way to rationalize bad behavior».

⁷³ B. BYRD, J HRUSCHKA, *Kant's Doctrine of Right: A Commentary*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 91-93; BLOCH, *The Principle of Hope*, p. 874.