13 • Perfected Humanity: Nature's Final End and the End in Itself[1]

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Kant's position that we must attribute to nature a final end and that this end is the rational and moral perfection of humanity raises a number of interpretative questions. One obvious textual issue is that Kant makes seemingly contradictory statements about the extent to which individual humans can intentionally contribute to progress toward this end, but this tension in Kant's claims can be resolved fairly satisfactorily just by noting the different extents to which human efforts can play a role at different stages of history. However, there are deeper questions to be answered as well, regarding why we have a duty at all to contribute to nature's final end of human perfection and how this duty is connected to the categorical imperative and to Kant's moral philosophy as a whole. To illuminate these deeper issues requires appreciating that nature's final end is actually identical to the categorical imperative's end in itself – in both cases, the end is actually a rationally produced idea of perfected humanity, as described in *Critique of Practical Reason* and other works.

1. Background: the final end of nature

Much of *Critique of Judgment* is devoted to explaining Kant's position that we must view nature as teleological, as having purposes rather than just mechanical causes. One statement of this position is in §61 of the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant says, 'Transcendental principles do provide us with a good basis for assuming that nature in its particular laws is subjectively purposive for the ability of human judgment to take [it] in, making it possible to connect the particular experiences to a system of nature' (*KU*, 5:359). Kant emphasises that the need to attribute purposes

to nature does not tell us that such purposes are actually part of the operation of nature. Instead, it tells us how we must conceive of nature because of 'the peculiar character of [human] cognitive powers' (*KU*, 5:397–8).[2] Furthermore, not only must we attribute a purpose or final cause to some parts of nature (such as individual organisms), but we also must then view nature as a system of such purposes (or ends – the same German word, *der Zweck*, is often translated as 'purpose' in *Critique of Judgment* but as 'end' in Kant's works on moral philosophy).[3] To account for the 'unity' of 'the whole of nature as a system', we must then posit a purpose or final end (*Endzweck*) for the whole system of nature (*KU*, 5:381; see also *KU*, 5:425–9).

Kant treats the purposiveness of nature as also implying an intention, so 'we find it completely unavoidable to apply to nature the concept of an intention' (*KU*, 5:398; see also *KU*, 5:220). Ultimately, this line of thinking is the justification for thinking that God, an intelligent being capable of having intentions, is the originator of nature (*KU*, 5:398–9, 5:441–2; see also *KrV*, A685–7/B713–15). Kant cautions his readers to avoid thinking that this offers a proof that God objectively exists, or that we can ever have direct acquaintance with him or his attributes (*KU*, 5:399), because it really only shows that we must posit such a being in order to explain how the system of nature is possible. To avoid confusion, Kant sometimes recommends sticking to talk of a 'purpose of nature' instead of providence or divine intentions (*KU*, 5:381–2; *ZeF*, 8:362). But Kant himself flouts this terminological distinction, saying, for example, that 'it must be left up to providence, to choose the means in regard to the best ultimate end, since, as this must result from the course of nature, what those means are always remains uncertain' (*EaD* 8:337), or that the final end of nature must be achieved by 'nature, or rather only from providence (since supreme wisdom is required for the fulfillment of this end)' (*TP*, 8:310).

Kant specifies what the final end of nature is. The only thing that can serve as a final end of nature is the human 'power of desire' (*KU*, 5:443). But Kant quickly clarifies that he does not mean that every type of use of the power of desire can serve as the final end of nature. The power of desire would be just another link in the causal chain of nature, making humans 'dependent on nature (through impulses of sense)', if it were employed only to satisfy inclinations

and sensual desires. A human, or rational, being can serve as the final purpose of nature only inasmuch as he demonstrates 'freedom of his power of desire; in other words, I mean a good will' (*KU*, 5:443). 'Therefore, it is only as a moral being that we acknowledge man to be the purpose of creation' (*KU*, 5:444). This account fits with Kant's claim that the final end of nature is 'man considered as noumenon', since considered as noumenon, a human being not only is free, but legislates and acts upon moral principles and so can 'cognize the law … the object that this being can set before itself as its highest purpose (the highest good in the world)' (*KU*, 5:435). Kant's position, then, is that nature has as its final end the progress and eventual perfection of humans as rational beings, who, as rational, will recognise and act on the priority of rationally legislated moral principles.

This position, that the rational, and so moral, perfection of humankind (or rational beings in general) is nature's final end, is developed most thoroughly in the third *Critique*, but the position that humankind has a natural destiny or purpose of moral perfection also plays an influential role in several of Kant's essays and his lectures on ethics and on education. For example, in 'Speculative Beginning of Human History', Kant says that the 'vocation' of the human species is 'progress toward perfection' (*MAM*, 8:115). In 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent', Kant concludes that we can 'represent from afar how the human species finally works its way up to that state where all the seeds nature has planted in it can be developed fully and in which the species' vocation here on earth can be fulfilled' (*IaG*, 8:30), with the vocation being 'morally good character' (*IaG*, 8:26). In 'On the Proverb: That May be True in Theory but Not in Practice', Kant maintains that nature directs the human race on a path of 'eternal progress toward betterment' (*TP*, 8:310). In Collins's notes on Kant's lectures on ethics, Kant is recorded as saying 'The final destiny of the human race is moral perfection' and 'The universal end of mankind is the highest moral perfection' (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:470). In the lectures on education, Kant similarly speaks of the 'destiny' of humanity (*Päd*, 9:442) and of humans' 'purpose' (*Zweck*) and 'vocation' (*Päd*, 9:445). This vocation is 'the perfection to which humanity is destined' (*Päd*, 9:448) and this perfection includes being 'not merely skillful but also moral' (*Päd*, 9:449).[4] Throughout many works, Kant consistently claims that we must view humankind as having

a purpose or destiny assigned by nature and that this ultimate purpose is moral perfection.[5]

When viewing nature as having a final end of human moral perfection, this end is actually an idea (*Idee*), in Kant's technical sense of the word. This ultimately is vital to understanding the connections between Kant's teleology and his moral philosophy. An idea, as defined by Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, is a 'pure' or 'necessary concept of reason'. Ideas are 'transcendent concepts', which are 'given as problems by the nature of reason itself' and to which 'no congruent object can be given in the senses' (*KrV*, A327/B383–4). For Kant, these ideas have a use for both speculative reason and practical reason. For practical reason, an idea is 'fruitful in the highest degree', because it 'must serve as a rule' demanding that one 'bring about what its concept contains' (*KrV*, A328/B385). For speculative or theoretical reason, an idea 'serves only to preserve the greatest systematic unity in the empirical use of reason' (*KrV*, A670/B698), by guiding the understanding toward a 'concept of a maximum' (*KrV*, A327/B384) or toward the 'totality of conditions to a given conditioned thing' (*KrV*, A322/B379). In the first *Critique* (A702/B730), Kant specifies that ideas of reason allow us to attempt to comprehend nature 'in accordance with all possible principles of unity, of which the unity of ends is the most prominent'. If this emphasis on a unity of ends evokes Kant's teleological project in the third *Critique*, that is no coincidence. Kant explicitly says in the third *Critique* that he is dealing with 'rational ideas' as 'transcendent concepts' which 'differ from concepts of the understanding' in that rational ideas cannot be 'supplied with an experience that adequately corresponds to them' (*KU*, 5:342). The 'idea of a natural purpose' is such an idea in Kant's technical sense (i.e. it is one 'to which no commensurate object can be given in experience, so that they can only serve as regulative principles in the pursuit of experience') (*KU*, 5:405). A final end or final purpose of nature is 'unconditioned', meaning that in thinking of such an end, we must think that for it 'to exist necessarily as the final purpose of an intelligent cause [it] must be of such a kind that in the order of purposes it depends on no condition other than just the idea of it' (*KU*, 5:435). This fits with Kant's description of ideas as directing the understanding toward the 'unconditioned' (*KrV*, A322/B379). So, when Kant says that we must view nature as directed toward a final end of human moral perfection, the perfection we should have

in mind is the idea, or rational concept, of perfected human rationality and morality.

It is not only in the third *Critique* that Kant equates the ends of nature with ideas, in his technical sense. In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, in discussing the ends (*Zwecken*) of nature, he says 'The relationship of objects to and their conformity with the purposes that reason sets out for us (the end of morality) can be represented from a theoretical point of view as a transcendent idea' (*ZeF*, 8:362). In the lectures on pedagogy, Kant refers to an 'idea of humanity' and says each person has an 'original' of morality 'in his idea with which he compares himself' (*Päd*, 9:491) and that moral education should proceed 'in a manner appropriate to the idea of humanity and its complete vocation' (*Päd*, 9:447). It is plausible, then, to read passages in Kant's other works about an idea of human perfection as concerning an 'idea' in his technical sense, as when he says, for example, that our ideas can extend to an end of perpetual progress of the human species (*TP*, 8:310), or refers to the idea of a time of complete development of human reason (*IaG*, 8:19) and says that such a state can 'be promoted by its idea' (*IaG*, 8:27) or that we can have an idea of how the world can approach a 'certain rational goal' (*IaG*, 8:29). This supports a consistent account of human rational and moral perfection as an idea of reason that we must regard as the final end of nature.

2. Interpretative problems: perfecting humanity

A closer examination of Kant's position that human moral perfection is the final end of nature gives rise to a number of challenges for sympathetic commentators. Some of these challenges can be fairly easily answered by distinguishing different stages of human political and moral progress. But others require a deep examination of the basis of moral duties in Kant's ethics and its relation to his teleological claims about the final end of nature.

The interpretative issues arise from a claim that Kant often makes, that our role in perfecting humanity (bringing about the final end of nature) is largely passive. Kant seems to say that the human race's progress toward perfection is something we see, not something in which we play a significant, deliberate role. In 'Theory and Practice', Kant says that our 'eternal progress toward betterment' is a 'distant

result' that 'depends not so much on what we do (e.g. on the education we give the world's children) nor on what method we adopt to bring it about', but rather on nature or providence (*TP*, 8:310). It is 'providence that brings the end of humanity as a whole to a successful issue' (*TP*, 8:312). The general account developed in several works, such as 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View', *Toward Perpetual Peace* and 'Theory and Practice', is that, in fact, it is human conflict and competition that ultimately lead to humanity's perfection. First, humans' 'unsocial sociability' leads to the development of intellect and culture (*IaG*, 8:20–1), then individuals' self-interest leads to the organisation of states in a way that gives each individual freedom to pursue her own ends. The fear of war between states will lead eventually to something like a world senate or league of nations, which will provide for significant international stability. And this security and freedom will allow the further development of human reason and so of morality. What is striking in much of Kant's writing on the topic is how little he seems to think these steps toward nature's final end depend on any individual human's intentions. In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant succinctly says:

> Perpetual peace is insured (guaranteed) by nothing less than that great artist nature (*natura daedala rerum*) whose mechanical processes make her purposiveness visibly manifest, permitting harmony to emerge among men through their discord, even against their wills. (*ZeF*, 8:360; see also *ZeF*, 8:366; *TP*, 8:311)

So, Kant frequently maintains not only that nature has a plan and final end of perfecting human rationality and morality, but also that nature carries out this plan more in spite of than because of any human intentions.

In some passages, Kant maintains only that the role played by good humans who aim at the improvement of humankind is less important than the unintended effects of self-interested human behaviour, not that intentional attempts at human progress are completely inert. In 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' Kant admits that among political leaders, there 'will always be a few who think for themselves' and who 'will spread the spirit of rational appreciation for both their own worth and for each person's calling to think for himself' (*WA*, 8:36). Kant similarly says, in 'The

End of All Things', that if religious leaders can agree on doctrines of 'enlightened practical reason' and arouse public interest in these doctrines, then 'nothing would appear to be more advisable than to permit those wise men to set out and pursue their course' (*EaD*, 8:336). Although Kant immediately adds that providence will play a greater role than human planning, he does here grant some possible role for a deliberate human intention of bringing about moral progress. In contrast, he sometimes more starkly dismisses the possibility that progress toward the end of humanity's perfection can be even partly the result of individual humans making it their end. Kant says that 'a good national constitution cannot be expected to arise from morality, but, rather, quite the opposite, a people's good moral condition is to be expected only under a good constitution' (*ZeF*, 8:366), implying that the constitution must first arise from self-interest, before humans can become morally good enough to care about justice. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant puts the point as a paradox, saying that deliberate moral education apparently cannot lead to moral progress, because successful moral education would require leaders and teachers who already are morally good (*Anth*, 7:327). Kant claims, then, that any individual human's end of helping to perfect humanity plays, at most, a minimal role in the actual progress of the species and that it may not play any role at all.

The first interpretative difficulty with this position is that it appears to conflict with some of Kant's statements in other works, at least in spirit and perhaps in substance. In his lectures on pedagogy, Kant is recorded as saying that the only way that human progress toward perfection is possible is through the efforts of individuals:

> It is only through the efforts of people of more extended inclinations, 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. (*Päd*, 9:449)

Even if one dismisses this passage, as a slip or as an inherently unreliable transcription of Kant's lectures, Kant does at least maintain that 'it appears that we can by our own rational organization hasten this happy time for prosperity' (*IaG*, 8:27). And there is a further question of why Kant maintains that we have a duty to contribute to humankind's moral progress, given that our intentional actions will play little or no role in this progress. In *Toward*

Perpetual Peace, he says the idea of nature's end is related, from the practical point of view, to our duty to seek perpetual peace (*ZeF*, 8:362). And in *Metaphysics of Morals*, he mentions that a full application of moral principles to human conditions will include a duty of spreading and strengthening the influence of moral principles through education (*MS*, 6:217).[6] If Kant really means to say that human progress toward moral perfection is not a result of intentional actions by individuals, then, intuitively, it is hard to see why we as individuals would have a duty to try to contribute to it.

The tension between Kant's emphasis on the passive role of humans in nature's plan for humankind and his claims that we must contribute to humanity's perfection can be resolved, more or less, by noting the stages of historical progress that Kant posits. In the stages through which humankind has passed and in which we remain up to the present day, competition and self-interest have been the main sources of intellectual, cultural and political progress. Competition between individuals was a spur to the development of reason, and self-interest along with fear of war between nations is currently the primary motive toward the orderly internal organisation of states. But Kant foresees a time when sufficient stability and freedom within states, and proper education, will make it possible for individuals to reach a higher stage of moral development, in which they make humanity's perfection their own end. Kant thinks that humanity as a whole can only take a firm turn away from evil and achieve the 'victory of the good principle over the evil one' when living in what Kant calls an 'ethical community' (*RGV*, 6:94).[7] A well-ordered 'political community' is a necessary precondition for establishing this kind of ethical community, but the ethical community has a 'form and constitution essentially distinct from those of the other' (*RGV*, 6:94). Nature works its way toward just political communities without substantial help from human intentions, through self-interest and competition. But when living in just political communities, we have a duty to bring about a moral community, to contribute to the final stage of human progress, namely moral perfection (*RGV*, 6:95). This overall picture fits with Kant's frequent claims that we are still not far along in human history, as when he speaks of 'the small part of it through which mankind has until now passed' (*IaG*, 8:27) or says that 'culture founded on true principles for the education of men and citizens has not even properly made a beginning, much less been completed' (*MAM*, 8:116). Kant adds, in the latter passage, that culture will

eventually 'progress so as to develop the capacities belonging to mankind's vocation as a moral species and thus end the conflict within himself as [a member of both a] moral species and a natural species' (*MAM*, 8:116).

This picture of humanity's history explains Kant's claims that individual efforts (so far) contribute little to the end of human perfection, but also why acting on a duty to promote this end, through education and the deliberate establishing of an ethical community, will ultimately be important. Even some of Kant's more apparently extreme claims, such as the claim that human perfection is possible *only* through deliberate efforts of enlightened individuals (*Päd*, 9:449), can be seen as applying primarily within well-ordered, just states in which it is possible to establish an ethical community to achieve the 'moralization' of humans through education (*Päd*, 9:450).

But the claim that we are obligated to contribute to progress toward human moral perfection raises much deeper issues of why we ought to adopt such an end of human perfection at all. Even if we must take human rational and moral perfection to be nature's end, it is not clear that we are obligated to adopt nature's ends, or even nature's final end, as our own, so some account is needed of why, or whether, we ought to contribute to the moral progress of humanity. Presumably, an obligation to do so would be a moral duty. But then the basis of the duty ought to be the categorical imperative, at least in some formulation, and one might expect the duty to be catalogued along with other duties in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. In fact, there is very little discussion of a duty of perfecting humankind in Kant's central writings on ethics – *Groundwork*, the second *Critique* and *Metaphysics of Morals*. Although intuitively it seems that we should have a duty to contribute what we can to humankind's rational and moral progress, the paucity of Kant's own references to such a duty is a puzzling lacuna in his work and threatens to undercut any strong connection between his teleological view of nature and his moral philosophy.

3. The solution: the idea of perfected humanity as a final end and an end in itself

Accepting one basic claim about Kant's moral philosophy goes a long way toward solving the interpretative problems posed above

and providing a strong link between Kant's ethics and his teleological view of nature. This key claim is that the humanity formulation of the categorical imperative, which demands that we must always act so as to treat humanity as an end in itself and never merely as a means, is really requiring that what we treat this way is the rationally produced idea of humanity. In the remainder of this chapter, I will present a case for taking the rational idea of humanity to be the end in itself and then will explain how this reading of the humanity formulation resolves the interpretative puzzles about the duty of contributing to humanity's moral progress.

In the first *Critique* (A568–70/B596–8), Kant describes the rational idea of humanity as a rationally produced concept of 'Virtue, and with it human wisdom in its entire purity' (*KrV*, A569/B597) or as 'humanity in its entire perfection' (*KrV*, A568/B596, see also *KrV*, A312–20/B368–77). Like other rational ideas, the idea of perfected humanity is a concept presented to us by reason alone and is not based on any empirical observation. So the idea of humanity would not include empirically observed characteristics of humans, but rather characteristics necessarily related to their possession of theoretical and practical reason. These would presumably include such features of practical reason as the power of choice (*Willkür*) and the power to legislate moral principles to oneself, and furthermore would include (as a concept of perfectly functioning human practical reason) the characteristic of placing priority on moral principles over inclination. Because of this, the idea of perfected humanity can serve as a 'model of virtue' and 'it is only by means of this idea that any judgment of moral worth or unworth is possible' (*KrV*, A315/B372).

It is clear enough that, at least in the first *Critique*, Kant means the rational idea of humanity to play some role in morality, but in fact, it also is specifically suited to serve as the end in itself in the humanity formulation of the categorical imperative. In the first *Critique*, Kant tells us that ideas have a causal power in practical reasoning, unlike in speculative reason, where they only play a role in guiding the understanding (*KrV*, A316/B372, A328–9/B384–6, A569/B597). He follows up on this claim in some of his main writings on ethics. In *Groundwork*, Kant says 'here pure reason by means of its Ideas (which furnish absolutely no objects for experience) has to be the cause of an effect admittedly found in experience' (*GMS*, 4:460). And in a note in *Critique of Practical Reason*,

he says that 'moral ideas' ('If I understand by such an idea a perfection to which nothing adequate can be given in experience') serve as 'the indispensable rule of moral conduct and also as the standard of comparison' (*KpV*, 5:127). More specifically, an idea can meet Kant's technical definition of an end. In *Groundwork*, Kant defines an 'end' as something that serves the will as a ground of its self-determination, or that directs one's actions (*GMS*, 4:427). A concept (and so an idea, as a rationally produced concept) can do this, if it is action-guiding, and Kant says rational ideas are action-guiding. In fact, in *Critique of Judgment*, Kant defines an end as a kind of concept, saying that 'insofar as the concept of an object also contains the basis for the object's actuality, the concept is called the thing's purpose', or end (*KU*, 5:180). Moreover, since the regulative practical force of an idea is produced by each rational being's own power of reason, an idea is necessarily and inescapably action-guiding. In other words, it is what Kant calls an 'objective end' or an end in itself.

Since the rationally produced idea of humanity is supposed to be action-guiding, even unconditionally action-guiding, and can serve as an end, there is at least conceptual space to think it can be the end in itself in the humanity formulation. But taking the rational idea of humanity to be the end in itself will no doubt arouse considerable opposition. For one thing, commentators have generally taken the 'humanity' (*die Menschheit*) that is an end in itself to be some set of characteristics possessed by rational beings such as typical humans (see, for example, Hill 1992, p. 39). Taking humanity instead to be a rationally produced concept requires rethinking the demands of the humanity formulation. Since the rationally produced idea of humanity is a concept of perfected humanity, taking this rational idea as the end in itself implies that many influential readings of the humanity formulation are mistaken in claiming that ordinary humans (who are of course rationally and morally imperfect) necessarily have an incomparable moral status in virtue of their own minimally rational characteristics, such as the power to set ends or the (often unfulfilled) capacity to act upon self-legislated moral laws (Korsgaard 1996, pp. 106–32, p. 346; Wood 1999, pp. 118–20; or Hill 1992, pp. 40–1). Nevertheless, despite the contentiousness of taking the rational idea of humanity as the end in itself, it is arguably the best reading of the humanity formulation. I provide a fuller defence of this claim elsewhere (Dean, 2013), but below I will

summarise some of the most important reasons in favour of this reading of 'humanity'.

One basic reason for thinking that Kant means that the end in itself is humanity as represented in the rationally produced idea of humanity is that the categorical imperative is supposed to be a purely rational principle, produced independently of empirical observation, and so only a rationally produced concept of humanity is suited to play a role in the categorical imperative. Kant says that his task in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is to seek out a 'genuine supreme principle of morality' that is 'grounded on pure reason alone, independently of all experience' (*GMS*, 4:409; see also *GMS*, 4:411). And as for the end of morality (the end in itself), it must be 'given by reason alone' so as to be 'equally valid for all rational beings' (*GMS*, 4:427). Our empirically acquired knowledge of humans must not play a role in the humanity formulation of the categorical imperative and the only alternative is that some rational concept of humanity must play that role. The only such rational concept of humanity that Kant mentions is the idea of humanity as perfected human wisdom and virtue.[8] Furthermore, it is no accident when Kant says that the rationally produced idea of humanity is a concept of humanity as perfected. Experience can never tell us what belongs necessarily to a concept, Kant maintains, and this is why even though 'experience proves often enough' people also can act contrary to what is rationally (and so, morally) required, 'we still cannot comprehend how this is possible' (*MS*, 6:226). The rational concept of humanity is of a properly functioning human being and so deviations from what is rationally required can be observed empirically but not made consistent with the rationally produced concept of perfected humanity.[9]

Besides these broadly thematic reasons for taking the rational idea of humanity to be the end in itself, there are also specific references to humanity that support this reading. In Kant's initial presentation of the humanity formulation in *Groundwork*, most English translations have Kant saying a categorical imperative 'must be such that it forms an objective principle of the will from the idea of something which is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself' (*GMS*, 4:428–9), suggesting that an idea of humanity is central to the humanity formulation. However, the German word Kant uses for 'idea' here is *die Vorstellung*, while in *Critique of Pure Reason* the word he uses for an idea in the technical sense

is *die Idee*. But other passages in *Groundwork* seem less ambiguously to identify *die Idee* of humanity with the requirement to treat humanity as an end in itself, equating 'the mere dignity of humanity as rational nature' with 'respect for a mere idea [*eine Idee*]' (*GMS*, 4:439) and claiming that the proper object of respect is an 'ideal will, which is possible for us', or, in German, a will that is possible for us '*in der Idee*' (*GMS*, 4:440). In *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant often speaks of the object of concern in morality as humanity or human beings 'in general' (*überhaupt*) rather than specific actual humans,[10] and he even goes so far as to say that 'lawgiving reason' is concerned with the 'idea of humanity as such' and 'not the human being' (*ihrer Idee der Menschheit überhaupt … nicht der Mensch*) (*MS*, 6:451).[11]

This is not, of course, a complete defence of reading 'humanity' in the humanity formulation as 'the rational idea of perfected humanity'. But the important point here is how well this reading of humanity solves the interpretative problems described above, at the end of section 2. The most basic problem is why we should think we have any duty at all to contribute to humanity's progress toward perfection, or why we should adopt nature's end as our own end. The answer is that nature's end and the end required by morality are one and the same. The rationally produced idea of perfected humanity is the end that speculative reason attributes to nature as its final end in order to understand how a system of nature is possible and it is also the end that a rational agent's own will presents as an inescapable end in itself in practical reasoning. The position that the same rational ideas may have roles in both speculative and practical reasoning is hardly a matter of controversy – Kant says exactly this in some of his most basic discussions of ideas as concepts of reason in the first *Critique* (*KrV*, A321–2/B377–9, A567–71/B595–7). In *Toward Perpetual Peace* he reaffirms the claim that an idea can serve 'from a theoretical point of view as a transcendent idea' and 'from the practical point of view … as a dogmatic idea' that grounds duties (*ZeF*, 8:362). Taking the 'humanity' that is an end in itself to be the rational idea of perfected humanity provides a strong connection between Kant's ethics and his teleology and provides the conceptual basis for a duty to contribute to humankind's perfection.

The main remaining question is why this duty receives so little discussion in Kant's writings on ethics. If perfected humanity is

the central object of concern in one formulation of the categorical imperative, we might expect to see Kant emphasise a duty to bring about this perfection.[12] The explanation of this apparent oddity lies in the structure of Kant's ethical system, particularly in his division of ethics into a purely rational 'metaphysics of morals' and an empirically informed application of morality to actual human conditions, which Kant calls 'moral anthropology'. Kant is quite emphatic in *Groundwork* that 'a completely isolated metaphysics of morals, mixed with no anthropology' is an 'indispensable underlying support for all theoretical and precisely defined knowledge of duties' (*GMS*, 4:410; see also *GMS*, 4:388, 4:389, 4:390, 4:412). He carries the distinction between a rational metaphysics of morals and an empirically influenced 'anthropology' into *Metaphysics of Morals*, maintaining that the book, true to its title, is basically all a part of the rational system of duties derived from the categorical imperative and that further application of the duties to empirically known circumstances is work for a later 'anthropology'. He tells his readers this near the beginning of the book, saying that the work is 'a metaphysics of morals', or a 'system of *a priori* cognition from rational concepts alone' and that this metaphysics of morals 'cannot be based upon anthropology but can still be applied to it' (*MS*, 6:217). He reiterates this position near the end of the book, saying that the work has laid out only 'principles of obligation for human beings as such toward one another', or 'the metaphysical first principles' of morality 'which must proceed *a priori* from a rational concept' (*MS*, 6:468–9). In contrast, 'applying the pure principles of duty to cases of experience', meaning to take into account empirically observed differences among humans, such as differences in age, education, moral character or the like, 'cannot be presented as sections of ethics and members of the division of the system, but can only be appended to the system' (*MS*, 6:468–9).

The entire metaphysics of morals, then, is purely rational and so is part of what is nowadays called 'ideal theory'. The reason a duty of perfecting humankind does not receive prominent discussion in *Groundwork* or in *Metaphysics of Morals* is that the only way we can know that humankind currently falls short of rational and moral perfection is through empirical observation, which is excluded from a purely rational metaphysics of morals. If such a duty appears somewhere in Kant's system, it can only appear in a later moral anthropology, as a duty to bring imperfect humankind

closer to the rational idea of perfected humanity. And Kant in fact does describe such a duty as part of moral anthropology. The comment is brief, as may be expected given that Kant never develops any full-fledged moral anthropology. He says in *Metaphysics of Morals* that:

> moral anthropology … would deal only with the subjective conditions in human nature that hinder people or help them in fulfilling the laws of a metaphysics of morals. It would deal with the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles (in education in schools and in popular instruction), and with other similar teachings and precepts based on experience. (*MS*, 6:217)

Since the progress toward perfection of currently imperfect humankind cannot be part of a purely rational metaphysics of morals, the discussions of the duty to contribute to such moral progress are to be found in exactly the places we might expect to find them in Kant's works. In *Metaphysics of Morals*, such discussions appear only in an appendix on teaching ethics (*MS*, 6:477–84) and in the brief comments in the book about what moral anthropology would be concerned with (*MS*, 6:217, 6:469). But in Kant's lectures on education, the duty of promoting moral improvement receives much more attention (*Päd*, 9:441–50), and, in some of Kant's essays on politics and history, the duty seems to be assumed.[13]

Notes

[1] All translations of Kant's works (except for occasional brief comments of my own) are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Writings of Immanuel Kant* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992–), except the following: Kant, I., 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent' [*IaG*]; 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' [*WA*]; 'Speculative Beginning to Human History' [*MAM*]; 'On the Proverb: That May Be True in Theory, but Is of No Practical Use' [*TP*]; 'The End of All Things' [*EaD*]; 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' [*ZeF*], in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983); Kant, I., *Critique of Judgment* [*KU*], trans. W. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987); Kant, I. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [*GMS*], trans. Arnulf Zweig and ed. Thomas E. Hill, Jr and Arnulf Zweig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[2] Also see *KU*, 5:220, 5:360–1, 5:387–8, 5:411, 5:429. Kant also maintains something like this view in several of his essays on politics and history. See, e.g., *ZeF*, 8:361–2.

[3] This point is important, since I will argue that we ought to regard the final purpose of nature as equivalent to the end in itself.

[4] Kant seems to have in mind that humanity's rational perfection more generally, not just moral perfection, is part of the final end of nature. Presumably, perfecting non-moral aspects of humanity would include obeying the hypothetical imperative in ordering one's ends, and pursuing effective theoretical reasoning. But Kant says very little about these aspects of perfected rationality, compared to his persistent emphasis on moral perfection. (A possible exception to this is his discussion of duties of natural self-perfection, *MS*, 6:444–5; also *GMS*, 4:430.)

[5] In *KU*, 5:449, Kant maintains that the final end is just man under moral law, rather than man acting in accordance with moral law, and he emphasises the point in a long footnote. But this point seems inconsistent not only with Kant's emphasis on moral perfection as the final end in the texts cited in this paragraph, but also with his statement from earlier in the third *Critique*, that what makes humankind the final end of nature is 'the value that he can only give himself, and that consists in what he does, how and on what principles he acts … I mean a good will' (*KU*, 5:443). It also does not fit with the overall point of the moral proof of the existence of God in *KU*, 5:446–50. The point is that we have a moral need to posit the existence of God, in order to unite our end of personal happiness with obedience to moral law, so that we do not think the highest good (of happiness in proportion to virtue) is unachievable (see also *KpV*, 124–6). It also does not fit with taking the rationally produced idea of humanity to be the final end of nature, since, as I argue below, the rationally produced idea of humanity must be a concept of morally perfected humanity.

[6] As explained below in section 3, this is a part of moral anthropology, rather than part of a metaphysics of morals proper.

[7] For previous, more thorough, discussions of this point, see Wood 1999, pp. 314–17; Formosa 2012, pp. 171–4.

[8] An obvious possible concern about this reading of the humanity formulation is that it will leave all or most actual humans outside the scope of moral concern – since we are imperfect, we need not be treated as ends in ourselves. The core idea of a response to this concern, which is briefly discussed in the final paragraph of this chapter, is that Kant's overall moral system is best taken as what is now called 'ideal theory', in that it develops a system of duties for idealised humans, and largely leaves aside questions of application to real humans, with all their imperfections.

[9] See also *MS*, 6:384 on 'the state of health proper to a human being', and *KrV*, A574–6/B602–4 for a discussion of how reason can tell us only what has 'reality', and cannot tell us of 'negations'.

[10] The passages where Kant uses '*überhaupt*' to speak of 'humanity in general' include *MS* 6:386, 6:395, 6:451, 6:466, 6:468. Mary Gregor's Cambridge edition of *Groundwork* translates both '*als solcher*' and '*überhaupt*' by the English 'as such', when describing humanity, but '*überhaupt*' has a connotation of 'generally' that '*als solcher*' lacks.

[11] The phrase '*nicht der Mensch*' appears in the first edition of the book, with which Kant was most directly involved, and in the *Akademie* edition, but is omitted from the second edition and some translations.

[12] The duty that is not discussed much in Kant's main moral writings is a duty to contribute to the perfection of humankind overall. Of course, Kant does explicitly describe a duty that each individual has to perfect herself (*MS*, 6:444–7). But I think this duty depends, in the strictest sense, on living up to the standard of perfection given by the rationally produced idea of humanity, rather than on correcting one's empirically observed imperfections, so the duty of self-perfection can in fact be part of a purely rational metaphysics of morals.

[13] See *WA*, *TP*, *EaD* and *ZeF*.

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