Multicultural Dynamics and the Ends of History

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Published by University of Ottawa Press


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Kant and the Cosmopolitan Point of View

The three texts in speculative philosophy of history that are to be examined in this book are all relatively short. The first is by Immanuel Kant and was written in 1784: "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View." It is especially useful for us because it is written in the form of nine theses concerning the very idea of thinking of history as a whole, or "Universal History." Given the title that Kant gave to this piece, we should note right away that the attempt to consider the whole of history must nevertheless take place from a particular perspective or point of view. None of us is God, and we cannot examine the whole of history from on high, as it were, as a spectacle to be contemplated from a position outside history.

For Kant, a position that enables us to consider the whole of history can be found if we adopt a cosmopolitan point of view. The idea of cosmopolitanism is quite popular at the present time because it captures the sense we increasingly have of all belonging to one world, despite the diversities that the world exhibits. Kwame Anthony Appiah captures this sense quite well in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* when he identifies (p. xv):

> two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kin, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences.
Such a sense is, of course, accentuated by the fact that all kinds of people travel all over the world, in ways that would have been unimaginable not so long ago. Kant, after all, was writing at the end of the eighteenth century, when travel was not what it is today. (It was even worse than what my grandparents must have experienced when they set out from Quebec and Massachusetts to their homestead in Saskatchewan in the first decades of the twentieth century, which itself was a voyage of epic proportions. In contrast, my son had been to Europe three times before he turned two.)

It is this sense of all of us belonging to one world, which implies that we all have a stake in understanding its development as a whole, that underscores the cosmopolitan point of view. It should be said right away, however, that such a cosmopolitan point of view is difficult to articulate. Think about it: it seeks to comprehend or give some sense to developments that involve the whole world, and to do so from some particular position within those developments. By what right can such a point of view claim to be speaking for the development of the whole?

This is a criticism that many people make of cosmopolitanism and what is sometimes characterized as a claim to "world citizenship." Their criticism runs something like this. To be a citizen is to belong to a "city," to a particular locality, not to the world. It involves recognizing those around one, those one interacts with on a daily basis, not everyone or persons halfway across the planet. Yes, I can, today, in a way that I couldn't yesterday, hop on a plane—provided that I have the funds, which is no small consideration—and travel halfway across the planet, but to do so I need a passport attesting to the particular place I occupy within the world. Where do I go when I travel halfway across the planet? Are all neighborhoods open to me, or do I tend to go where tourists tend to go, stay in hotels that resemble the hotels I am familiar with, eat in restaurants of a kind that I am familiar with from home? Why do I travel halfway across the planet? To meet and discuss things with people who largely already share my concerns and habits, at conferences, for example? What is this world of the "world citizen"? Is it the world, or the particular world of airport lounges and conference rooms? Is this cosmopolitan "point of view" nothing but the "vantage point of frequent travelers, easily entering and exiting politics and social relations around the world, armed with visa-friendly passports and credit cards" (as Craig Calhoun calls it in his article, "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers")?

Such considerations lead many to abandon the attempt to articulate a cosmopolitan point of view out of a concern for the danger of misrepresenting, distorting, or ignoring other points of view. There is much to be said for such a concern. However, the fact remains that we do share a planet as human beings and that, in a very real sense, we do have a point of view on the world as a whole,
namely, that it is our world. This raises all kinds of questions whose answers appeal to this sense of belonging to one world. Cosmopolitans insist that we should “think global” (while some insist that at the same time we should “act local”), which means to think about, among other things, the exploitation and distribution of the planet’s resources, our modes of consumption and the impact they have on the environment (think, for example, of the greenhouse effect or the various threats that are posed to biodiversity), and questions of international security. Think also about poverty, the causes of warfare in different parts of the world, terrorist acts, literacy, the spread of diseases, natural disasters. Then, of course, there are questions raised by the spread of networks that span the entire globe, whether financial or humanitarian, or the circuits of migration of people, products, drugs and the internet. Can such networks be regulated? If so, by whom, and how?

I do not mean to ask these questions rhetorically. There are very serious efforts to develop a cosmopolitan point of view that responds in a complex and “layered” way to the concerns raised. The work of David Held in this regard is exemplary. While recognizing that we do live “locally,” we cannot ignore the fact that what is done locally can have effects far and wide. We should not oversimplify the problem, however, by restricting ourselves to identifying a “local” dimension and a “global” dimension to the world. In his article “Democratic Accountability and Political Effectiveness from a Cosmopolitan Perspective” Held argues for a “cosmopolitan multilateralism” that recognizes, not only that different levels of governance can respond to the different levels of problems, but also (p. 382) that the whole

must take as its starting point a world of “overlapping communities of fate.”

Recognizing the complex processes of an interconnected world, it ought to view certain issues—such as housing, education, and policing—as appropriate for spatially delimited political spheres (the city, region or state), while seeing others—such as the environment, world health and global economic regulation—as requiring new, more extensive institutions to address them.

I think that Held’s expression “overlapping communities of fate” nicely captures the sense we have of belonging to one world even while we recognize that the world is composed of very diverse communities. Whatever the diversity of all these communities, we increasingly have the sense that our fate is a shared one insofar as we share the same planet. The expression also nicely captures the sense we have that our continued coexistence is moving us in a certain direction.

Thinking about this direction is the traditional concern of the speculative philosophy of history. In fact, speculative philosophy of history, especially as classically formulated, is an attempt to think about the sense we have of
participating in a wider movement that seems to be directed to some end. It is speculative because there is no claim to know the end to which we are moving. It is philosophical because it seeks to interrogate that movement, and not merely hand it over to something like "fate," as more traditionally conceived. It speaks of history because it seeks to situate that movement within an intelligible framework, the past-present-future complex, that is, history considered as a whole.

For Kant, what does it mean to consider "history as a whole"? It means, first, that one is trying to understand it as more than the desolate spectacle it otherwise reveals itself to be. When Kant, who participated in the Enlightenment's celebration of human beings' capacity to understand the world by the use of their rational faculties, contemplates the course of world history, he is frankly puzzled. He writes in "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" (p. 12):

One cannot suppress a certain indignation when one sees men's actions on the great world-stage and finds, beside the wisdom that appears here and there among individuals, everything in the large woven together from folly, childish vanity, even from childish malice and destructiveness. In the end, one does not know what to think of the human race, so conceited in its gifts.

Kant does not rest content with this puzzlement. On the contrary—and this perhaps defines the philosopher better than anything—such puzzlement spurs him on to thought. He continues:

Since the philosopher cannot presuppose any [conscious] individual purpose among men in their great drama, there is no other expedient for him except to try to see if he can discover a natural purpose in this idiotic course of things human. In keeping with this purpose, it might be possible to have a history with a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own.

The point that needs to be emphasized here from the beginning is the idea that the rationality of the historical process is sought, not so much despite its apparent senselessness, its wars and other destructive conflicts, but precisely because of that apparent senselessness. That senselessness is apparent, which does not mean here that it is not real, literally because that is what "appears" to the observer. What happens to the appearance, however, when one attempts to think it? Well, insofar as one attempts to think the apparent senselessness, one brings (attempts to bring) sense to those appearances. This is what thinking about the historical process brings to it, or out of it: the sense that it contains, if any. Now, given that the attempt to think the sense of history itself belongs
to history—we do not stand outside history when we try to make sense of it—then there is hope and reason to think that the attempt will be rewarded, if only one knows where to look.

Kant’s idea was to look to Nature, because scientific investigation had shown that Nature could yield rational structures that were not immediately apparent. Perhaps History, too, when properly investigated, would yield such rational structures. Kant’s basic idea here was that the regularities that Nature manifests when investigated properly might also manifest themselves in History. History distinguishes itself from Nature, according to Kant, as the stage upon which human willing manifests itself, that is, History describes human actions, those things that human beings undertake willingly and willfully, and which, if observed in any particular instance, can appear quite chaotic and arbitrary. (How many times have you asked yourself: Why in the world did X do that? X, of course, can mean you yourself.) Kant wants to entertain the speculative possibility (“Idea . . .,” p. 11) that:

if we attend to the play of freedom of the human will in the large, we may be able to discern a regular movement in it, and that what seems complex and chaotic in the single individual may be seen from the standpoint of the human race as a whole to be a steady and progressive though slow evolution of its original endowment.

Thus, for Kant, the cosmopolitan point of view is the point of view or “standpoint” of the whole human race. What do things look like from that perspective? How might we articulate that perspective? Kant proposes nine speculative “theses” that seek to grasp the historical process as a whole, which Kant calls “Universal History.” There are all kinds of reasons for rejecting any individual thesis, as will quickly become evident. However, to reject them too quickly would be to fail to engage with their speculative character. What I am interested in is the light they throw on the question of where we are headed, given the increasingly multicultural character of the world considered as a whole.

The first thesis Kant states is that: “All natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end.” (Note that Kant was writing before the elaboration and general acceptance of the theory of evolution.) This is a teleological claim. It attempts to make sense of its object by referring to the presumed end to which it is directed, which is another way of saying that any particular object is related to other objects as parts within a whole. Teleology is an important mode of thinking for articulating the orientation of things within the whole. The point here, then, is that in referring to capacities—abilities to do something or other—we implicitly include a reference to the ends or goals that inhere in the doing of this or that. Given this teleological whole, the idea of
speculating about their evolution in terms of an ultimate completion does not seem to be unreasonable. For example, you may have an ear for music, which is a particular capacity. Your parents or teachers notice this and encourage you to learn how to play an instrument, which itself is an elaborate development of the human capacity to hear and make music. Depending on your particular ability and the encouragement you receive, in material terms especially, your “ear for music” will develop in a specific direction, or many different directions, but always with reference to an overall context of musical development. “Nature,” for Kant, simply means the overall context for the development of all capacities.

Now, pretty clearly, not all human capacities can be developed within the lifespan and the range of particular endowments of a single individual. Hence, Kant’s second thesis: “In man (as the only rational creature on Earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.” This is fairly straightforward and obvious. However, the point I would like to draw attention to is how “Nature” in the statement of this thesis is at the same time the introduction of history, understood as the development over time of human capacities, a connected and ongoing story of achievement, the whole of which speculative philosophy of history tries to make sense. As Kant goes on to remark:

a single man would have to live excessively long in order to learn to make full use of all his natural capacities. Since Nature has set only a short period for his life, she needs a perhaps unreckonable series of generations, each of which passes its own enlightenment to its successors in order finally to bring the seeds of enlightenment to that degree of development in our race which is completely suitable to Nature’s purpose.

Kant, importantly, adds:

This point of time must be, at least as an ideal, the goal of man’s efforts, for otherwise his natural capacities would have to be counted as for the most part vain and aimless.

Here we see the prime motivation of speculative thinking: it attempts to think the whole in order to provide some account of the direction our various efforts may be taking. If we do not try to think the whole within which we evolve as rational human beings, our lives will be merely aimless existences of more or less animated bodies governed by basic satisfactions. The concern is that our capacities and abilities will atrophy if not given the direction and scope that a speculative grasp of a developing whole is meant to provide.

Now, before delving deeper into this basic claim for the importance of speculative philosophy of history, I would like to relate these matters once again
to the context of our question of where we are headed, but now with emphasis on the observation I also identified concerning how our world is becoming increasingly multicultural. Part of what this observation affirms is that we recognize in the world many different ways of life. This, of course, has always been the case. An “increasingly multicultural” world, however, is one where these different ways of life are increasingly in contact with one another, and therefore are called upon to establish and regulate relations with one another.

This observation is not merely an empirical one. It also implies that the variety of ways of life encountered in the world, because of their increasing contact, raises problems and questions that need to be resolved. For some, such as Will Kymlicka, the observation leads to discussions concerning the “integration” of these various cultures or ways of life within a coherent and stable whole that respects the differences that these ways of life display. For others, such as Samuel P. Huntington, it raises the question of establishing and maintaining forms of “segregation,” again in the name of coherence and stability.

The question that interests me is the traditional philosophical one about whether or not there is a truly human way of life to which all human beings should aspire. The general consensus of those who make the observation that the world is becoming increasingly multicultural is surely that there is not such a way of life. The view that there is, or should be, a conception of a truly human way of life to which all human beings should aspire is called by some theorists, such as Bhikhu Parekh, “moral monism,” in contrast to “moral pluralism,” which recognizes that truly human lives can be lived in a variety of ways. Parekh believes that such an idea is “logically incoherent.” Such an idea, he says in his *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (p. 48):

notes on the naive assumption that valuable human capacities, desires, virtues and dispositions form a harmonious whole and can be combined without loss. Human capacities conflict for at least three reasons, namely intrinsically and because of the limitations of the human condition and the constraints of social life: the first, because they often call for different, even contradictory skills, attitudes and dispositions, and the development of some of them renders that of others difficult if not impossible; the second, because human energies, motivations, and resources are necessarily limited, and one can cultivate only some of the valuable human capacities; and the third, because every social order has a specific structure with its inescapable tendency to develop some capacities rather than others and allow only certain ways of combining them. Since human capacities conflict, the good they are capable of realizing also conflicts. Like human capacities, values and virtues too conflict. Justice and mercy, respect and pity, equality and excellence, love and impartiality, moral duties to mankind and to one’s kith and kin often point in different directions, and are not easily reconciled. In short, every way of life, however good it might be,
entails a loss. And since it is difficult to say which of these values are higher, both in the abstract and in specific contexts, the loss involved cannot be measured and compared, rendering unintelligible the idea of a particular way of life as representing the highest good.

Much of what Parekh says here certainly rings true, especially within the context of an increasingly multicultural world. What happens, however, if we place Parekh's considerations within the context of the speculative philosophy of history, with particular reference to Kant's claim that the unfolding of history needs to be understood as the full and complete development of human capacities?

The first thing to note is that Parekh is quite right to remind us that, when we discuss different ways of life, we are not talking about harmonious wholes that unfold without conflict and contestation, even if, to be considered as particular ways of life, they must display some cohesion and coherence to those who adopt and adapt those ways. Otherwise we would have no reason to identify them as particular ways of life. It is also good to remind ourselves that what makes a particular way of life particular is that it develops certain features or possibilities available to human beings, without exhausting all of them. This corresponds to the third point raised by Parekh, namely, that “every social order has a specific structure with its inescapable tendency to develop some capacities rather than others and allow only certain ways of combining them.”

Right off, one might question the claim that such tendencies are “inescapable.” If by that Parekh means that the development of those particular capacities is what defines a particular way of life, describing one of its salient features as a particular way of life, then it makes sense to say that such tendencies can be considered “inescapable,” within that particular way of life. However, I suspect that Parekh means “inescapable” in a stronger, more specific sense: namely, that one cannot get away from the development of those capacities, that, in a real sense, one is trapped in them insofar as one participates in that way of life. An escape from them can be accomplished only by abandoning that way of life or, perhaps more accurately, by excluding oneself from it.

Think about the capacity to read, for example. This is something that many cultures insist on and seek to develop in everyone who “belongs” to a culture. It is a particular capacity, inssofar as human beings can and do live out their lives without developing it, but it is one that is “inescapable” in many cultures, inssofar as its development is considered a requirement for full participation in that particular way of life. People who fail to develop that capacity in the required way are subject to remedial strategies meant to correct that failure. Some people who fail to develop that capacity may succeed in concealing the fact by “faking” it. However, this only underlines the “inescapability” of
the development of that capacity within that particular way of life. Such an example underscores Parekh's additional claim that any particular way of life, simply because it is particular, "entails a loss." That is, because certain capacities are developed, and not others, then any given way of life will foreclose the development of other capacities that, considered from the perspective of the development of all human capacities (which we do not have to presume to be able to identify), represents a "loss."

Again, this all sounds very reasonable, especially given our increasingly "multicultural" recognition and awareness of different ways of life. Not so long ago, the awareness of different ways of life did not provoke such attitudes of tolerant resignation, but instead fuelled missionary zeal. However, even though Parekh seems to be arguing against moral monism, which insists on only one truly human way of life, it seems to me that the language Parekh is using here in an important sense presupposes something very like the monism he wishes to combat. Specifically, why should we consider the fact that any given way of life does not develop all human capacities as indicative of a loss? A loss of what? Presumably of a way of life that, even if only ideally, did develop all human capacities. But that would be to subscribe to the view that we can imagine, or speculate about, a single way of life that we would be tempted to call a truly human life. Of course, one might want to point out here that there are many human capacities that are less than laudable, such as the capacity to kill each other, or the capacity of the strong to dominate the weak, and we might insist on not developing them. The lack of development of these particular capacities would not be seen as a "loss" either. Note, too, that Parekh himself, in the paragraph quoted above, ends up saying that "the loss involved cannot be measured and compared." If that is the case, then one might be led to wonder why the notion of loss is invoked at all. There seems to be no potential for gain or loss, only different particular ways of life and their respective development of particular capacities. Yet Parekh does invoke it in order to criticize moral monism, which, I remind the reader, means a "naïve" assumption of harmoniousness.

Now, we might ask ourselves why the assumption of "harmoniousness," as an ideal to be ultimately achieved by human beings—for some, in this world, for others, in the next—should be considered "naïve." I am always suspicious of charges of naïveté. They tend to say more about the accuser than they do about the accused, and what they say is that the accuser sees himself as disabused and hard-headed about reality, and therefore considers his outlook to be superior to the woolly and wishful thinking of the naïf. However true this may be in any particular instance—for all of us are subject to woolly and wishful thinking on occasion—contact with reality is not a function of hard-headedness. Technically, contact with reality is a function of being alive, although of course the quality of that contact varies considerably: it can be sharp or dim, concentrated or
listless, and so on. Therefore the naïf is as much in contact with reality as the
disabused critic is, although according to the latter he may be in contact with it
in a childish way.

Does this mean that when Parekh says that it is naïve to assume that “valuable
human capacities, desires, virtues and dispositions form a harmonious whole
and can be combined without loss,” he is saying that thinking this is somehow
childish? Probably. Indeed, one can imagine a child, or rather a young person,
thinking about the possibility of living a life that will combine his or her various
capacities and desires, as well as particular virtues and dispositions, in such a
way as to form “a harmonious whole.” One can even imagine such a young person
imagining that his or her life, combined with the lives of others, may also yield such a “a harmonious whole,” if only the conditions are somehow
right.

Now, to assume that all human capacities taken together—those we are
familiar with, those we can imagine and, perhaps, those we cannot—form a
harmonious whole is no doubt a mistake, if by “assume” here one means “take
as true without regard for evidence.” However, I doubt that the young person
in such a case is doing that. The harmonious whole that he or she aspires to is
not treated as already existing, but as a possibility, stemming from the fact that
the capacities in question are human and the young person sees him or herself
as human.

One sees here more clearly why the charge of “naïveté” gets raised. This
young person is inexperienced and does not (yet) know what the world does
to such aspirations. Soon enough, he or she will come to realize the kinds of
things that Parekh outlines: the constraints imposed on the development of our
capacities, their tendency to conflict, as well as their inherent limitations, all
precluding any possibility of their being combined into a harmonious whole. A
more extended experience of the world will teach all this to the young person as
he or she grows older. The person was naïve to think this in the first place, but
perhaps understandably so. To continue to think it as one grows older, however,
is to be naïve in a less acceptable way.

I am prepared to concede for the sake of the argument, and pending future
discoveries about ways of living unheard of today, that the harmonious whole
aspired to by such young persons, as well as by some not so young persons,
has so far and systematically not materialized in the different ways of life that
human beings have devised. Yet I still think that Parekh is making a mistake
in rejecting this possibility in principle. This seems to me to make the faulty
assumption that the future will necessarily resemble the past. If one places the
harmonious whole aspired to within the modal square within which our lives
unfold, then its possibility takes on a different meaning. Its possibility contrasts
with the various impossibilities of a given social order that are a function of the

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necessities that have structured its past. These are the constraints that Parekh mentions. Rather than tie them too quickly to something called the “human condition,” one should consider them within the context of the past-present-future complex, or history considered as a whole. This means taking seriously the distinct roles that the past, the present, and the future play in our thinking about this developing whole.

Of course, insofar as the future will carry on the knowledge we currently have, then in that sense the future will indeed resemble the past, as per our definitions. However, as we have seen, the future is a question of our anticipations given the way the world presents itself to us, which includes that which we claim to be knowledgeable about, that is, the past. Parekh may have excluded from his own anticipations the possibility of a harmonious whole materializing out of our various human capacities, for the reasons he gives, but I believe that he does so hastily and out of a misconception of the role that anticipations (the future) can and should play in our attempts to make sense of the world as it presents itself to us.

Although our anticipations arise out of our knowledge of the world (the past) through continued contact with it (the present), they should not be confused with, or reduced to, that knowledge. All we should be really claiming as knowledge is that the world has not, in the past, exhibited our various capacities as forming a harmonious whole. On the contrary, knowledge of the (past) world demonstrates much more forcefully the conflict-ridden ways that our capacities have developed. Far be it from me to dismiss such knowledge. However, in my contact with the (present) world, perhaps because I teach young people, this knowledge includes the expression of aspirations that include reference to the harmonious whole eschewed by Parekh. Such aspirations are perhaps relatively uninformed, because lacking in knowledge, but that does not affect them as aspirations within a particular contact with the (present) world. This demonstrates to me, contra Parekh, that the aspiration to a harmonious whole, far from being a naïve assumption, is in fact a privileged locus for trying to understand what role the future (what we anticipate) plays in the past-present-future complex.

My guess is that the rejection of any conception that would have the past-present-future complex comprise a harmonious whole, a rejection that Parekh shares with a wide spectrum of his contemporaries, is more a rejection of the idea of “wholeness” than it is of the idea of “harmoniousness”. There is an insistence in contemporary thinking on leaving things open, not closing them up into any overall scheme of things. However, this insistence is too often not sufficiently thought through and, indeed, is often contradicted in practice. Parekh is a case in point. He treats our various human capacities as impossible to combine into a harmonious whole and as always involving, in
any particular combination, a loss. In doing so he at once rejects and accepts the idea of a harmonious whole. He rejects the possibility of its actualization, but then accepts its conceptualization in order to evaluate the way in which any actual combination fails to match up to it (by characterizing it as involving a loss). Why should any particular combination of actually developing human capacities, because they do not exhaust all human capacities, be characterized as involving some kind of loss? Such a characterization depends, it seems to me, on an implicit conception of a non-particular (universal) combination of all human capacities that we never, in our particular attempts to combine our capacities, actually achieve—or to be precise, that we have never been able to achieve in the past.

However, we should not restrict ourselves to consideration of the past. Rather, like Kant, we should consider the past, the present, and the future as a whole, and we should think about how different ways of life develop within the modal square. Recall that, if I say that our knowledge belongs to the past, it is because knowledge deals with the necessities we come to recognize as structuring our world. Yet we must remember that those necessities are themselves contingently known by knowers in contact with a present reality, for any given knower might not have been and the knowledge might be lost. Thus, even the necessities that we know are not given to us once and for all, but rather are inscribed within a contingent present, which itself, as contingent, is structurally open to the possibilities of the future.

This, I believe, is what the young person senses when he or she considers the possibility of a future open to the harmonious development of his or her capacities. Because the necessities he or she knows have not been translated into practical impossibilities, he or she remains open to possibility in an anticipatory way foreclosed by those who project known necessities onto the future. The proper way to integrate known necessities into one’s projections is to recognize that possibilities actually arise against the backdrop of impossibilities, which themselves are contingently encountered.

If we bring this back to the development of human capacities, one may already know that the development of all of one’s capacities is a practical impossibility. However, against the backdrop of that practical impossibility, the possibility nevertheless remains that one might combine the development of one’s capacities in such a way that they produce a harmonious whole. It may very well be the case that such efforts fail, for any number of reasons, including the ones identified by Parekh: inherent limitations, conflicts that arise out of constraints encountered, and so on. Yet such failures remain contingencies, not necessities. On the contrary, the anticipation that fuels the effort helps define the nature of the continuing possibility against the backdrop of contingently encountered impossibilities.
Another way of putting this is that we should not be too quick to convert our sense of possibilities into one of probabilities. The calculation of probabilities takes as fixed the framework within which predictions are made. The anticipation of possibilities opens up that framework by recognizing the unknowability of the future and the contingency of the present. The point is not to devise predictions that will then be tested by actual experience, but to anticipate one's experience within that open future, given what one knows. Certainly, but recognizing the limits of that knowledge, given its place within the modal square and the past-present-future complex.

This is where the notion of a harmonious whole becomes interesting. If we focus on the “harmony” rather than the “whole”—given that the “whole,” because it is being described as a past-present-future complex, is open by definition—then the anticipation is one of a certain contingent co-presence of elements. Think of music, the harmony achieved by an orchestra as it gathers around a particular score and focuses on the conductor’s baton. The harmony is an achievement that is sustained in time through individual particular efforts. Compare that achieved “harmonious whole” that is the performance with the pre-performance disharmony of the orchestra tuning its various instruments. That disharmony actually expresses in an anticipatory fashion the harmonious whole that is being sought. Of course, the harmonious whole actually achieved in the performance differs from other performances, those of this particular orchestra and those of other orchestras performing this or some other work, just as such orchestral performances differ from other musical performances. Think of a smoky jazz club where the “harmonious whole” includes, during the performance as opposed to at its end, visceral exclamations of admiration from the audience. Not all performances achieve the kind of “harmonious whole” anticipated, yet the anticipation plays a structural role in the constitution of that whole. If a particular musician isn’t “into it,” his or her particular anticipation is lacking and the performance suffers.

What is interesting about this example is that it shows how the “harmonious whole” to which the hard-headed refuse to grant actuality is misconceived if it is thought outside of the effort to anticipate it. Indeed, it is precisely within such anticipations that the whole, conceived as harmonious or otherwise, truly finds its place. In other words, the whole is not something that we are doomed to fail to achieve, it is the speculative end of our anticipatory efforts. Our young person, who is only discovering what his true capacities are through a not-yet-discouraged knowledge of what is (im)possible—that is, what possibilities are delimited by contingent constraints—anticipates a life whose speculative end is the full and free development of those capacities in concert with others. He or she knows that such an end is speculative, but that is precisely what fuels and shapes his or her desire.
Now, if we return to Kant, he reminds us (young at heart!) that such full and free development takes time, a time longer than any contingently given human life span. The "whole" of the world as it presents itself to us and as we orient ourselves within it, developing the capacities that we are and have, is only "speculatively" present as an unfolding, which Kant calls "Universal History." It is this "Universal History" that provides the ultimate context for the full development of human capacities as these are found in each of us, the ultimate context as seen from the "cosmopolitan point of view." Contemporary attempts to reinvigorate this "cosmopolitan point of view," by insisting on a "global view" or a "global perspective," correctly assume that a view of the whole is the ultimate context for making sense of human development, but they do not sufficiently appreciate the historical dimension of this ultimate context, the simple fact that it unfolds in and through time. Indeed, we shall see in a moment that even Kant does not sufficiently appreciate this.

Now, it is important to understand that, when I say that the ultimate context within which human capacities "unfold" (develop) is historical time, I am not saying that this is a process that somehow happens automatically. One need only think of one's own capacities as one has learned to identify them, those particular things that one happens to be good at, one's particular talents and abilities, those that others have noticed and encouraged, or at least pointed out. It is quite true that one "discovers" them within oneself, with the help of others. Such capacities are in some sense there already—a musical ear, the ability to run long distances, the ability to draw. However, their development requires not only one's own concerted effort, but also a larger social context that allows and provides for that effort. (Howard Gardner calls such abilities "intelligences" and, in his *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, provides a good discussion of how such intelligences are connected both to the structures of the brain and to the wider social context.)

I am saying nothing new or original here, but I am insisting that such a context and the efforts that are structured by it need to be framed by speculative considerations that involve what Kant calls "Universal History." In other words, our familiar social contexts are insufficient to comprehend fully what is at stake in our own efforts to develop our capacities and to live full human lives. We should not be too quick to reject posing the question, "What is a full human life?" However, in order to respond to it we need to turn to a consideration of "Universal History."

Only *Universal History* can provide the context for the full development of human life. Why? Because of the peculiar nature of human life. As Kant says in his third thesis:
Nature has willed that man should, by himself, produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason.

A full human life is a life whose happiness and perfection is a result of the creative efforts of human reason, and not the mere satisfactions of animal existence. Again, nothing new or original is being said here. However, what I would like to stress is the way in which what Kant calls happiness and perfection are the result of what I am calling the "creative efforts" of reason. The point is that "reason" is not something we each possess individually and, as it were, naturally. It is constructed out of the concerted effort of human beings to live together in a way that points them towards their happiness and perfection as human beings. Again, typically human existence is not the expression of animal satisfactions guided by instinct. It is the contextual development of particular capacities. That contextual development needs to be understood not merely socially but historically, as involving reference to the past-present-future complex. That is, emphasis needs to be put on the historical context of the particular nature of human sociability. It is within this historical context that one can discern and understand the distinctive characteristic of human beings, namely, that their lives are constructed developmentally through the extension of their reasoning and reasoned capacities. At least, this is the basic claim of speculative philosophy of history.

We are apt to forget or overlook the specifically historical dimension of our human world. While everyone is prepared to recognize that human beings do not live through instinct, as other animals do, not everyone adequately recognizes the specifically historical dimension of our patterns of sociability, the way in which they are dependent on particular forms of historically motivated development. To illustrate this dependence on specifically historical context, as opposed to strictly social context, I would like to make use of a "disquieting suggestion" articulated by the philosopher Alasdair Maclntyre in his book After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (p. 1):

Imagine that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of a catastrophe. A series of environmental disasters are blamed by the general public on the scientists. Widespread riots occur, laboratories are burnt down, physicists are lynched, books and instruments are destroyed. Finally a Know-Nothings political movement takes power, and successfully abolishes science teaching in schools and universities, imprisoning and executing the remaining scientists. Later still there is a reaction against this destructive movement and enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was. But all that they possess are
fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context which gave them significance; parts of theories unrelated either to the other bits and pieces of theory which they possess or to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because torn and charred. Nonetheless, all these fragments are re-embodied in a set of practices which go under the revived names of physics, chemistry, and biology. Adults argue with each other about the respective merits of relativity theory, evolutionary theory, and phlogiston theory, although they possess only a very partial knowledge of each. Children learn by heart the surviving portions of the periodic table and recite as incantations some of the theorems of Euclid. Nobody, or almost nobody, realizes that what they are doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all. For everything that they do and say conforms to certain canons of consistency and coherence, and those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably.

Maclntyre’s point in describing this imaginary possible world is to suggest that the state of moral theory is in something like the state of the natural sciences in this imaginary world, that is, it is composed of fragments of a tradition that was once coherent, but has been largely destroyed. What we call moral theory today, according to Maclntyre, no longer makes sense, precisely because the contexts within which it did make sense no longer structure human lives, and we do not even know it, given that we go on talking about morality as though it still did make sense. Without going into the details of his argument, which is not my concern here, the reason why Maclntyre thinks that moral reasoning no longer makes sense in our real world is that we have no way of resolving moral issues in a way all can agree on, and yet we continue to argue about moral issues, which implies that we think that resolution of such matters is important and relevant.

What I would like to draw from Maclntyre’s imaginary world is the way that it graphically illustrates the idea that it is not sociability on its own that provides for the truthfulness of our experience, and yet it is only through sociability that truthfulness is made possible. The natural sciences were destroyed in Maclntyre’s imaginary world by human beings who knew what they were doing. They destroyed the conditions under which the natural sciences were conducted, the material and practical conditions that gave birth to and sustained the activities of the natural sciences. By killing or imprisoning the scientists, destroying their laboratories and burning their books, and abolishing the contexts within which what natural scientists do was taught to future natural scientists, they effectively wiped out natural science, which we can now see as less a body of knowledge than an embodied form of knowing. Those later generations that sought to revive the natural sciences could not do so, because they were effectively dead.
The animating spirit that drove the natural sciences forward had been effectively destroyed. This, of course, does not mean that in MacIntyre's imaginary world nothing like the natural sciences could be constituted in the activities of human beings as they continued to try to make sense of their world, but it would not arise out of the attempted piecing together of the bits that remain into the body of knowledge that once was. That body would remain a cadaver. Better, perhaps, to bury it and turn one's attention to the world as it presents itself, which, as we have seen, includes knowledge that needs to be confirmed within the present contact with a reality experienced (in modal terms) as the realm of possibility filtered through impossibilities.

It is this **embodied form of knowing**, this dynamic principle of achieved truthfulness through various coordinated activities and practices, that animates our sense of being in a world open to us, a sense encapsulated in the term "reason" as used by Kant and, even more so, by Hegel (as we shall see in the next Part of this book). For Kant, the world—that is, the world as experienced by human beings as something other than "the mechanical ordering of animal existence"—is that which is created through our reasoning efforts. This is the world of history, that is, it is not only a social world, but a world that is oriented towards a particular developmental end. This particular developmental end is what speculative philosophy of history calls the telos of history.

Kant gives an exceptionally clear definition of the telos of history in the eighth thesis of his "Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View":

> The history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of Nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition in which the capacities of mankind can be fully developed, and also bring forth that external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end.

Speculative philosophy of history concerns itself not only with the telos of history but also with what we are calling its **dynamics**, that which drives the historical process considered as a whole. Indeed, it is the combination of these two components, the telos of history with the dynamics of history, that not only defines speculative philosophy of history (for our purposes), but allows us to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of particular attempts at formulating speculative philosophies of history. What we are looking for in speculative philosophies of history is a way of better making sense of our world both in terms of its overall direction (its telos) and in terms of the forces that animate it (its dynamics). A speculative philosophy of history should be evaluated in terms of the ways in which it allows us to see how the overall direction that history is taking is connected to the dynamic forces that animate
history. A successful speculative philosophy of history is one that adequately articulates, in the sense of “linking up” or “connecting,” the telos and the dynamics of history.

The questions we need to ask, then, are the following. How does the telos link to the dynamics of history? Are they internally or externally related? That is, does the telos arise out of the dynamics of history, or is the telos something that governs or directs the historical process from some point outside it? One way to think about the significance of these questions is to ask how we are to conceive of the relation of the “real” and the “ideal.” That is, how does the real world relate to the ideals that we espouse? Do our ideals govern or direct our dealings in the real world? Are they illusions tossed out by what happens in the real world? If so, why toss out “ideals”? Are ideas generated in and out of our attempts to grapple with the real world? How “real” is the real world if there are no “ideals” to compare it to?

All these questions are stated in a general way but are nevertheless understandable. The particular way in which speculative philosophy of history deals with them is to consider them in terms of the relation between the telos (the ideal) and the dynamics (the real), as these manifest themselves in our attempts to make sense of the historical process considered as a whole. How, then, does Kant fare in this regard? This is what we shall examine in the next chapter.