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FROM BIOLOGY TO ETHICS: THE FUTURE OF EVOLUTION AS HUMANITY'S PATH TO JUSTICE

SUMMARY: The future evolution of the human might not be marked so much by his physical change, as by his moral development. I will offer three arguments in favor of the thesis that humanity is gradually moving in the direction of superior moral relations, i.e. the configuration of individuals and societies with an expanded inclination toward justice. The first argument is Kant's, the second Doyle's (which is in fact an indirect argument), while the third one is my own contribution to the discussion. All three arguments I will not only present, but also explain how they relate to each other. I will conclude that the thesis about the gradual development of humanity in the direction of social relations with a stronger foundation in justice can be cogently substantiated.

KEYWORDS: evolution, justice, freedom, history, Kant, Doyle.

1.

One dilemma of evolutionary theory relates to the alleged absence of a link between the apelike human and the humane, moral human. Morality, namely, by which humans are marked, cannot be discovered in other species. An appealing question is how the human acquired it. Multifarious theories exist, the exploration of which would exceed the aims of this paper. It is possible, however, to find a solution to the above raised dilemma by asserting that it is we who are the missing link. In other words, contemporary humans are at a phase of their development that has surpassed the apelike human, but that has yet to reach the morally more developed, truly humane human being. That would imply that the future evolution of the human shall not be based so much on physiological changes that adaptation mechanisms cause, but on moral progress.

If the projected development of humanity is indeed primarily based on moral growth, we might look forward to a world which, becoming ever more just as humans become increasingly moral, will gradually approach a stage at which we are going to see a disappearance of the discrepancy between how we act and how we believe we ought to act. And a world in which there is a congruence between
the is and the ought of our behavior, is nothing less than a just world\(^1\). But is our future indubitably in the development of justice? Is history truly approaching such a condition?

In this paper I will present three arguments that make such an assertion, either directly or indirectly. The first one is Kant’s assumption that the “ethical commonwealth” and “perpetual peace” (two essential pillars of a just world) are coming nearer, because it is our duty to assume it. The second is based on Michael Doyle’s cogently evidenced finding that in the last 200 years the number of liberal states has been gradually increasing, while such states are moreover unlikely to wage wars against each other\(^2\). If the finding that the number of liberal states is on the increase implies that there are ever more free individuals, it is possible to conclude that there are more and more individuals in this world who have the potential to act intentionally in a just manner. This is so because it is only the free human who has the opportunity to act morally because he wills so and not because he is forced to. The third argument I will present is my case in favor of the conception that history is approaching justice, presented in the piece History and Future of Justice (hereafter HFJ).

2.

What do Kant’s concepts of perpetual peace and the ethical commonwealth imply? For an understanding of perpetual peace, most instructive is Zum ewigen Frieden (hereafter ZeF)\(^3\), while Kant elaborates broadly on the ethical commonwealth in his Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft (hereafter RGBV)\(^4\). Let us first turn to perpetual peace.

Kant’s position in ZEF is that perpetual peace is a condition that will arise as a consequence of our acknowledgment of duty. If we act in line with the moral law (prescribed by our duty), justice and perpetual peace will eventually come to us - with the aid of Providence. Hence, our main concern ought not to be to seek ends

\(^1\) For my extended argumentation in favor of this idea, see Vojin Rakic, History and Future of Justice (Belgrade: Faculty of Organizational Sciences and VVMZ, 2004).

\(^2\) Michael W. Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs (parts I ands II)”, Philosophy and Public Affairs 12-3 (1983): 205-35 (I) and 12-4: 323-53 (II) – further in the text “KLLFA”. Michael Doyle is of course not the only proponent of the idea that the number of liberal states is gradually increasing and that they are in peaceful mutual relations. His findings in the cited article, however, were buttressed with credible empirical evidence and can thus be considered as pivotal. My concentration on Doyle’s article is primarily due to this.

\(^3\) Toward Perpetual Peace.

\(^4\) Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason.
(our advantage), but to act from duty. Since the fulfillment of our duty harmonizes us with the whole, a situation in which everyone acts from duty would imply that we inhabit an ideally harmonized moral world. Further in this section we will see that such a world fits Kant’s conception of the ethical commonwealth. It is a just world and one of its features is self-perpetuating peace.

The fact that the attainment of perpetual peace is based on our duty to assume such a state of affairs as a gradually upcoming condition, provides a useful link of this line of reasoning to Kant’s postulations on the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. Kant derives the postulate on the immortality of the soul from his understanding that the highest good can only be achieved in eternity. Consequently, we have a moral duty to assume the immortality of the soul. Concerning the existence of God, Kant gives an interrelated argument: it is our obligation that makes us postulate God’s existence, because the achievement of the highest good is not possible without God. In Kant’s own words: “Now, it was a duty for us to promote the highest good; hence, there is in us not merely the warrant but also the necessity, as a need connected with duty, to presuppose the possibility of this highest good, which, since it is possible only under the condition of the existence of God, connects the presupposition of the existence of God inseparably with duty; that is, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God”. And: “…the moral law leads through the concept of the highest good, as the object and final end of pure practical reason, to religion, that is, to the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions…but as essential laws of every free will in itself…”

There is, however, an important caveat in the previous comparison. Our duty, namely, to assume perpetual peace and justice (the ethical commonwealth) on the one hand, and our duty to assume the immortality of the soul and the existence of God on the other hand, are obligations with quite different outcomes. In the first case, the fulfillment of our duty (our execution of the moral law through the presupposition that perpetual peace will be accomplished in the future) will ultimately result in perpetual peace, while our moral duty to assume the immortality of the soul and God’s existence will not result in these assumptions becoming reality. In spite of this caveat, Kant’s argument is not undermined here. What might bring his argumentation into question, however, is the very concept of duty.

5 See The Critique of Practical Philosophy, (edition of the Prussian Academy) Ak. 5:122 and 5:123.
6 Ibid., Ak. 5: 124.
7 Ibid., Ak. 5:125.
8 Ibid., Ak. 5:129
As has been pointed out, Kant presupposes that God exists, believing that in that manner he is executing his duty to the moral law. Obligation to the moral law, however, is that of which God is the author. Hence, the author of our obligation to the moral law appears to be invented by the moral law himself. In other words, the creator of our obligation to the moral law is a product of the moral law. That is evidently impossible and Kant’s argument can thus be criticized for being circular. On top of that, it is a central argument in Kant’s thought and has ramifications for some essential notions of his practical philosophy. Moreover, this critique might be added to Hegel’s indictment of the categorical imperative as being “empty”. A further elaboration of this issue is not within the intended scope of this paper. It is mentioned, however, in order to direct the reader’s attention to a crucial point of reference for a critique of Kant’s argumentation related to his view of duty as the justification of our assumption that perpetual peace and the ethical commonwealth are gradually coming nearer.

Let us turn now to the ethical commonwealth. For Kant, perpetual peace depends on our moral progress. If we presuppose perpetual peace and a just world in the (far) future, because we fulfill our moral duty, it is unavoidable that humanity will not act contrary to its assumptions about the future. Consequently, justice and peace will by necessity be instituted at some point in time, as has been indicated before. Moral progress, however, is linked to political progress. In fact, they converge on the same objective. This objective is the ethical commonwealth – a community of morally and politically advanced humans.

In RGBV, Kant points to his view of Christianity as a call for the unity of humankind. The ultimate aim of humanity’s progress is, according to Kant, that “man ought to leave his ethical state of nature in order to become a member of an ethical commonwealth”. This commonwealth he defines in RGBV as “a union of men under merely moral laws which have a special and unique principle of union (virtue).” It is a community of morally (and thus also politically) perfected humans that has its origin in Christianity’s call for the unity of humankind.

The idea of the ethical commonwealth is already foreseen in Die Grundlage zur Metaphysik der Sitten (GMS) and Die Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft

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9 For an elaboration of the argument that God is not the author of the moral law, but of our obligation to the moral law, see the paper Kant's Moral Constructivism and his Conception of Legislation, presented by Patrick Paul Kain at the 1998 20th World Congress of Philosophy in Boston (retrieved from http://www.bu.edu/wcp/MainTEth.htm).

10 RGBV (first edition of 1793), 126.

11 Ibid., 121.

12 Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.
In both works, Kant refers to the *summum bonum* - the highest good. He believes that it can become reality, but only in a faultless association of human beings. In *KPV* Kant articulates the attainment of the “highest good in the world” as the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. In *GMS*, he employs the term “Kingdom of ends” to describe a community of humans who are unflawed in a moral sense\(^{14}\).

Emphasizing the moral+political component of the ethical commonwealth, Kant also describes it as “a world republic under the laws of virtue”\(^{15}\). Furthermore, he clearly points to the universal character of such a commonwealth: a “world republic” transcends any type of particularism or communitarianism. Moreover, it is not a federation of states (which Kant advocates in *ZEF* as an intermediate stage in the development of humanity) but one global state. Although the ethical commonwealth might appear as a somewhat utopian concept, it is Providence that will guide us to its realization – provided that we “apply ourselves wholeheartedly to the task of moral improvement”\(^{16}\).

Since it is duty that makes us assume the inevitability of perpetual peace and the ethical commonwealth (i.e., a just world), the question arises what will happen if we do not fulfill our duty. The answer is not obvious: will we never live in a just and peaceful world or is Providence still going to intervene, irrespective of our wickedness? To put it differently: what degree of disobedience (with regard to our duties) will be tolerated in order not to be denied participation in a just and peaceful world? Hence, on top of the apparent circularity in Kant’s argumentation we pointed to in the preceding paragraphs, we now see that another problem is added to his position.

But do we have to *assume* that humanity will become (and is becoming) better, or are there ways to *prove* it? In the following sections, two such proofs will be considered. The first is an indirect proof, the second an attempt to introduce direct substantiation. In that context, Michael Doyle’s argument in favor of the thesis that the number of liberal states is gradually increasing over the last two hundred years will be presented. The focus will be on his already referenced pivotal article. Subsequently, attention will be devoted to my *HFJ* for a statement in favor of the position that an overall increase of freedom (Doyle’s finding - if extended from states to individuals) implies an augmentation of the opportunity of intended justice (my development of the argument).

\(^{13}\) The Critique of Practical Philosophy.

\(^{14}\) *GMS* (first edition of 1785), 75.

\(^{15}\) *RGBV*, 132; my emphasis.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 133.
3.

Doyle’s argumentation in “KLLFA” begins with the author’s definition of liberalism – a definition with clearly Kantian underpinnings: “Liberalism has been identified with an essential principle – the importance of the freedom of the individual. Above all, this is a belief in the importance of moral freedom, of the right to be treated and a duty to treat others as ethical subjects, and not as objects or means only”17. According to Doyle, liberalism incorporates a dedication to the following rights:

- Freedom from arbitrary authority (“negative freedom”), which includes freedom of conscience, a free press and free speech, equality under the law, and the right to hold and to exchange property without the fear of arbitrary seizure.
- Rights that are necessary to protect and to promote the capacity and opportunity for freedom (“positive freedoms”), which include social and economic rights such as equality of opportunity in education and rights to health care and employment.
- The right to democratic participation and representation – necessary to guarantee the previous two freedoms18.

Liberalism’s predicament is, Doyle argues, how to merge these three sets of rights. He asserts, however, that a reconciliation has already taken place in the form of a political order that is acknowledged both by laissez-fare and social welfare liberals. The domestic accomplishment of such an order, Doyle believes, was never more obvious than today: “Never have so many people been included in, and accepted the domestic hegemony of, the liberal order; never have so many of the world’s leading states been liberal, whether as republics or as constitutional monarchies. Indeed, the success of liberalism as an answer to the problem of masterless men in modern society is reflected in the growth in the number of liberal regimes from the three that existed when Kant wrote to the more than forty that exist today”19.

Doyle provides empirical evidence for his assertion by counting the number of liberal states over the last two hundred years. His findings are the following:

- in the 18th century three liberal regimes;
- between 1800 and 1850 eight;
- between 1850 and 1900 thirteen;
- between 1900 and 1945 twenty nine;

17 Doyle, “KLLFA”, 206 (emphasis added).
18 Ibid., 206 and 207.
19 Ibid., 209.
after 1945 forty nine\textsuperscript{20} It is relevant to emphasize that Doyle’s article was published in 1983, i.e. before the breakdown of state-socialism in Central and Eastern Europe. As we know, this breakdown was followed by a further increase in number of liberal states.

Doyle’s article undoubtedly offers swaying evidence for the unremitting increase in number of liberal regimes over the last two centuries. Doyle does not make an effort to answer the question why that is so, shifting his attention instead to “liberalism’s foreign record”\textsuperscript{21}. This “foreign record” he addresses in light of his verification of the hypothesis that liberal states have not waged wars among each other. An explanation for this “liberal pacification” Doyle develops along the lines of Kant’s \textit{ZEF}. Kant, namely, argues there that perpetual peace will be guaranteed by the ever-widening acceptance of three “definitive articles” of peace. These articles enclose states with a “republican” constitution, i.e. one which combines principles of moral autonomy, individualism and social order. Such states establish a “pacific union” that progressively comes into being as a treaty among them, and which operates in conjunction with cosmopolitan law (limited, however, to “conditions of universal hospitality”)\textsuperscript{22}. Being liberal, they tend to treat each other in good faith and their citizens, being decently informed, are aware that they are those who will have to bear the various costs of war. Consequently, wars of liberal states against each other are unlikely\textsuperscript{23}.

It deserves mention that none of these three articles alone is sufficient as an explanation of liberal pacification. Only in combination with each other, they join the characteristics of liberal states with a lasting peace in the international realm. In Doyle’s own formulation: “...the effects of international anarchy have been tamed in the relations among states of a similarly liberal character. Alliances of purely mutual strategic interest among liberal and nonliberal states have been broken, economic ties between liberal and nonliberal states have proven fragile, but the political bond of liberal rights and interests have proven a remarkably firm foundation for mutual non-aggression. \textit{A separate peace exists among liberal states}”\textsuperscript{24}.

Doyle’s article has accomplished the following:
- it has succeeded in providing a forceful empirical verification of the view that the number of liberal states is increasing over the years;
- it has succeeded to provide a convincing empirical verification of the thesis that liberal states apparently do not engage in wars against each other;

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 212.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 226, 227. The three articles in Doyle’s interpretation are an appropriate reference to Kant’s corresponding statements in \textit{ZEF} (Ak. 8).
\textsuperscript{22} This is an abbreviated version of Doyle’s argument, developed to illustrate only its key features.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 232 (emphasis added).
it has presented an explanation for the latter verification that is based on Kant’s three definitive articles from *ZEF*.

Evidently, Doyle offered an explanation for his second finding only. The issue he failed to address is why liberal states are steadily increasing in number. Kant *supposed* the gradual establishment of a just world (the perpetually peaceful ethical commonwealth), but he did not go further than to found such an assumption on his moral duty. The question is now what the relationship is between Doyle’s first finding and Kant’s supposition, which comes down the relationship between freedom and justice. For that let us turn to *HFJ*.

4.

As I have already pointed out, freedom is the precondition for us acting *intentionally* in a just manner. If one is deprived of his freedom, he is at the same time deprived of his capability to act justly because he wills so. A truly just act, on the other hand, is executed on the basis of our free will. Justice is thus intertwined with freedom. In fact, it is founded in our free will.

I have already pointed to the “discrepancy between the *is* and the *ought*”. We have an understanding of how we *ought* to act, but we do not always proceed according to this understanding. And we *know* we do not proceed in accord with it. Hence, human beings know that they ought to act differently than they do in reality. But is there any hint that this discrepancy is becoming smaller? In other words, do we behave more in agreement with justice throughout history? Although there might not seem to be a regularity in that regard, my position is that the discrepancy is indeed becoming smaller, i.e. that humanity is acting more justly with the passing of time. I believe that there are four key arguments for that:

(1) History is marked by an ever greater freedom of humankind. This trend is to be observed not only in the last two hundred years (Doyle), but over a much larger historical span. Agrarian societies, for instance, were characterized by division of labor and social organization based on fixed ranks. Such societies were highly unegalitarian, with serfs being obviously deprived of their freedom. Industrial societies witness huge economic growth and social mobility as its consequence. They are more egalitarian than agrarian societies, and are in that sense marked by an expansion of freedom. Thus, the historical development from agrarian to industrial societies manifests itself as a long, trans-epochal period in which ever greater portions of humanity are becoming free. That means that in that period ever greater segments of humankind acquired the opportunity of acting intentionally in accordance with justice, i.e. the opportunity of rightful behavior - of behaving as they believed they *ought* to behave. Furthermore, slavery, once a standard ingredi-
ent of many social orders, can nowadays only be uncovered in criminal social surroundings. In that regard, it appears indeed warranted to describe much of the history of humanity as the history of the expansion of freedom, i.e. the development of the opportunity of justice.

(2) Modern history shows that the opportunity of justice was not only an opportunity, but that this opportunity is gradually being realized. Unjust regime types (authoritarian and totalitarian regimes\textsuperscript{25}) are obviously on the defensive. In the previous century humankind did indeed experience an unprecedented desolation by some powerful and wicked totalitarian regimes, but they have been defeated in Europe, either in war or by their own collapse. Moreover, there is an obvious expansion of willingly accepted just regime types (“democracies”, as defined in \textit{HFJ}\textsuperscript{26}) in the entire world. Plainly, this argument can serve as an extension of Doyle’s finding concerning the ever increasing number of liberal regimes in modern history.

(3) Ever larger portions of humanity becoming free, means that not only the concept of freedom will be enacted into laws, but also the concept of equality of all individuals (slaves or serfs were obviously not equal to free citizens, whereas all citizens in true democracies are equal). Since freedom is the pre-condition for intentional just actions, and since the concept of justice as the “one thinking in terms of all” is inseparable from the postulate of equality of all individuals\textsuperscript{27}, it is justice that is being increasingly present in the legal systems of our world. Consequently, ever larger portions of humanity will acquire the “habit of justice”\textsuperscript{28}, which will have its impact on education, media and other components of communication conducive to a just, truly democratic (political) culture. This is another argument for the conception of history as the development of justice, and not only as the development of freedom.

(4) Apart from the foregoing two historical arguments (1 and 2) and the one argument from the domain of political philosophy (3), it is also possible to support our thesis \textit{logically} in the following manner. Since we do not act as we know how we ought to act, history will necessarily reach a point at which this discrepancy will disappear. It is unimaginable, namely, that human beings will \textit{never} reach a stage at which they will act as they believe they ought to. Hence, if we presuppose that history will last sufficiently long, even if that implies the assumption of eternity, human beings will at one point in time act in agreement with their true intentions.

\textsuperscript{25} For my definition of various regime types, see Rakic, HFJ, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 19-20.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 13-15.
\textsuperscript{28} For an explanation of the formulation “habit of justice” see ibid., 33.
In that sense, justice can also be regarded as the end of history\textsuperscript{29}. It is a stage at which we will act in accordance with justice on the basis of our free will. As a matter of fact, we will use our freedom with justice as its purpose.

It appears that my argumentation from this section links Doyle and Kant, i.e. their concepts of freedom and justice respectively: freedom is coming nearer (Doyle’s extended proof\textsuperscript{30}), as is justice (Kant’s assumption), while my attempt is to prove Kant’s assumption on the basis of both Doyle’s and my own reasoning. Doyle, however, did not explain why the number of liberal states is gradually increasing and he also did not establish a link between freedom and justice. My primary intention here was to elaborate precisely on that link.

5.

It can be concluded that the expansion of freedom we are witnessing and the accompanying augmentation of the opportunity of humans to act intentionally in a just manner, is indeed evidence buttressing the idea that humanity is experiencing a moral evolution. This evolution appears to be directed toward a morally more developed humanity, inhabiting a world that is becoming increasingly just. If we assume history will last sufficiently long, we will then by necessity reach at some point a stage of perfect justice, a morally flawless society – Kant’s ethical commonwealth. The future evolution of humanity might thus indeed be expected to be more in the domain of moral than of physiological evolution. In that case, the extension of Darwin would not to be so much in the area of biology, but of ethics. Accordingly, the spirited thesis that has been brought up at the beginning of this paper seems to be bolstered: the contemporary human might actually be the missing link between his apelike predecessor and his truly moral and humane descendent.

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\textsuperscript{29} Unless: 1) history ends forcefully before; 2) history is reversed; 3) history comes to a standstill. The second possibility is only theoretical, because the long history of the expansion of freedom is accompanied by a corresponding history of human thought. This history cannot be reversed. The stage that the idea of freedom has reached cannot be passed in reverse. The third possibility is also unrealistic, because a standstill of history means that nothing is happening, i.e. that a specific intermediate stage of the development of freedom and justice becomes, for some inexplicable reason, the final stage. Thus, the only possibility that history does not reach justice is apparently in its untimely end.

\textsuperscript{30} “Doyle’s extended proof”: if an increase in number of liberal states implies an increase in number of free individuals.
Buduća evolucija ljudskog roda možda neće biti obeležena toliko fizičkim koliko moralnim razvojem. Navešću tri argumenta u prilog teze da se čovečanstvo postepeno kreće u smeru kvalitetnijih moralnih odnosa, tj. oblikovanje pravednije orijentisanih individua i na odgovarajući način usaglašene organizacije društava. Prvi je argument Kantov, drugi (koji je zapravo indirektan) Dojlov, dok će u trećem izneti vlastiti prilog diskusiji. Sva tri argumenta posebno će razmotriti, ali i zadržati se na objašnjenju njihovog međusobnog odnosa. Na kraju će zaključiti da se teza o postepenom razvoju čovečanstva u smislu porasta društvene pravednosti može uvedljivo braniti.

KLJUČNE REČI: evolucija, pravda, sloboda, istorija, Kant, Dojl.