

In spite of doubts about the influence of context on the final form of Kant's political philosophy I strongly recommend *Kant's Politics in Context*. I learned much from it, and so should anyone interested in Kant's intellectual context, the development of Kant's political philosophy, the early appropriations of Kant's ethics for political purposes or the reception of *Theory and Practice*.

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Scott R. Stroud, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*  
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Over the last thirty years, scholars have paid increasing attention both to the ways Kant's critical project aims to contribute to humanity's moral progress and to Kant's emphasis on the moral, social and political significance of the public use of reason. This welcome trend in the scholarship has not only clarified the premises, unity and purpose of Kant's philosophy; it has also unearthed important questions about Kant's thought. If the public use of reason is to play a central role in humanity's moral progress, how ought we to reason in public? How ought we to address others? How should we respond to those who address us? How ought we to communicate with one another?

Such questions have received too little attention. And to the extent that scholars have addressed Kant's understanding of communication, they have tended to depict an austere Kant, devoted to a technical vocabulary and committed to rigorous but dry logical argumentation – a Kant who is unconcerned with or opposed to the employment of persuasive and poetic speech. Thankfully, Scott R. Stroud's *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric* presents a decisive refutation of this image of Kant. Stroud demonstrates that Kant's explicit criticisms of rhetoric leave room for a positive account of the forms of communication befitting humans as rational, moral beings and that Kant's moral philosophy both grounds and requires distinctive and dynamic forms of communication in order to achieve its *telos* as a practical philosophy that is active and effective in the world.

The starting point of Stroud's argument is Kant's criticism of rhetoric in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (CPJ). Here Kant characterizes rhetoric as 'the art of persuasion, i.e., of deceiving by means of beautiful

illusion' and suggests that rhetoric's primary aim is 'to win minds over to the advantage of the speaker before they can judge and to rob them of their freedom' (Kant 2000: 205; *CPJ*, 5: 327). Thus rhetoric comes to light as an inherently deceptive form of communication that works to undermine the autonomy of its audience. For this reason, Kant seems to condemn rhetoric as such and banish it from the realm of public discourse. Stroud rightly sees that *CPJ*'s negative evaluation of rhetoric has inspired a scholarly consensus that the notion of a Kantian rhetoric is a contradiction in terms.

Despite this popular image of an anti-rhetorical Kant, Stroud demonstrates that *CPJ*'s criticism of rhetoric is itself rhetorical – Kant is not criticizing rhetoric as such, but only one kind of rhetoric, i.e. 'manipulative' rhetoric (p. 36). Stroud traces Kant's concern with the problem of manipulative rhetoric to his interaction with Christian Garve and his criticism of the *Popularphilosophie* movement in the 1880s (chapter 1). He then argues (chapter 2) that a proper appreciation of Kant's awareness of 'the complexity of the phenomena of human communication and the range of terms' Kant uses to describe such communication reveals his commitment to a broad conception of rhetoric as 'the persuasive use of language in community with others' (p. 43). Stroud shows that Kant's broad conception of human communication leaves open conceptual space for a Kantian account of a salutary, non-manipulative rhetoric, and it is the central task of Stroud's book to reconstruct this account.

As Stroud emphasizes, the defining feature of manipulative rhetoric is that it treats its audience members as means rather than ends and therefore fails to respect the autonomy of other rational agents. In light of Kant's moral philosophy, then, manipulative rhetoric is inherently immoral. But Kant argues that all humans qua rational, moral beings are called to contribute to the actualization of a moral world. Thus Stroud argues (chapter 3) that a genuinely Kantian rhetoric must contribute to humanity's moral progress – Kantian rhetoric must be a moralized rhetoric. Further, since humanity's moral progress depends on the cultivation of moral individuals, Stroud argues that Kantian rhetoric is always 'educative rhetoric' – 'the use of speech and symbolic means to create or instantiate the sort of change desired in' individual human beings (p. 110). But Stroud also recognizes Kant's commitment to the view that an individual's moral cultivation ultimately only depends on that individual's self-motivated self-reorientation. Education, in other words, must always preserve its pupils' autonomy. But how can one person contribute to another person's self-transformation without manipulating that person? How is morally educative rhetoric possible?

Central to Stroud's answer to these questions are two notions – that of 'rhetorical experience' and that of an 'end-instantiating logic' (pp. 8, 118). To summarize, Stroud envisions a mode of communication that utilizes rhetorical devices that enable its audience members to become aware of their moral calling

and capacity for moral autonomy. In this way, each audience member's experience of rhetoric (their rhetorical experience) realizes the goal that this rhetoric was deployed to achieve without resorting to manipulation (thereby instantiating the end this rhetoric attempts to promote). For the rhetorical experience of moral autonomy is only possible for individuals if they give voice to their own moral vocation and adopt a moral orientation for themselves. Thus Stroud concludes that morally educative rhetoric is only possible if it grounds a rhetorical experience in and through which its audience members transform themselves.

While it is elegant, this account of the conditions of morally educative rhetoric is incomplete; for, though it identifies the necessary conditions of morally educative rhetoric, it does not yet explain how these conditions can be met. What specific forms does morally educative rhetoric take? What rhetorical devices can it use in order to ground a rhetorical experience with an end-instantiating logic? How can we employ a non-manipulative, Kantian morally educative rhetoric in our lives today?

Stroud proposes three distinct but interrelated answers. First, he describes what he calls 'pedagogical educative rhetoric' (chapter 4), which refers to the mode of communication that teachers ought to employ in order to contribute to the moral cultivation of their pupils. The rhetorical device that allows teachers to communicate in a non-manipulative, truly educative manner is the example. With significant support from Kant's own explicit statements, Stroud shows how presenting and discussing the right sorts of examples can help teachers contribute to their pupils' moral development without manipulating them. Second, Stroud elucidates what he calls 'religious educative rhetoric' (chapter 5), which refers to ways of speaking in a religious context that allow religion to contribute to the moral cultivation of its adherents. The rhetorical devices that make such communication possible include religious symbols and narratives (which operate in much the same way as examples) and traditional rituals, like prayer, that allow individuals to perform a sort of self-reorientation in community with others. Third and finally, Stroud explores what he calls 'critical educative rhetoric' (chapter 6), which describes the mode of communication involved in the public use of reason, as such – i.e. the mode of communication that conditions meaningful, rational, public discourse. Stroud's discussion of critical educative rhetoric is primarily concerned with the dispositions or mind-sets characteristic of the various participants in rational discourse. Most generally, critical rhetoric demands that all participants respect the autonomy and rational agency of everyone participating in the communicative process. More specifically, it requires a certain detachment from one's own opinions. Far from passionate and partisan self-assertion, critical discourse involves distancing ourselves from our own views, releasing these views into the public sphere to be tested and evaluated by others, opening ourselves to the possibility that our views will be shown to be mistaken, and committing ourselves to the results of shared inquiry.

Having reviewed Stroud's arguments, I want to pursue two lines of critical questioning before offering a final statement on his valuable contribution to Kant scholarship. A first question concerns Kant's understanding of pedagogical educative rhetoric. Is a successful pedagogical educative rhetoric a necessary condition of the success of the other two forms of educative rhetoric Stroud describes? Is some minimal amount of moral cultivation a necessary condition of an individual's receptivity to and participation in religious and critical educative rhetoric? If so, this highlights the special importance of the moral education of children. That said, Stroud acknowledges that adults often stand in as much need of moral education as children. But Kant knows that misguided moral theories can distort our understanding of morality (see *Groundwork* I). Would such distortion render one resistant to the pedagogical rhetoric Stroud describes? If so, how is it possible to prepare human beings for pedagogical educative rhetoric in the first place? Pedagogical educative rhetoric cannot accomplish this task itself, since the lack of receptivity to such rhetoric is precisely the problem. Is Kant's moralized, pedagogical educative rhetoric impotent in the face of rival moral theories? Kant might address this limitation of pedagogical educative rhetoric by highlighting the importance of the polemical refutation of misguided moral theories. But how is Kantian polemic related to Kantian rhetoric? It seems possible that polemic may find its place in the realm of the critical educative rhetoric that Stroud describes in chapter 6, but how does polemic, which seems inherently partisan, cohere with the forms of respect and detachment characteristic of critical rhetoric? How does polemic fit into Stroud's account of Kantian rhetoric?

A second question concerns Stroud's account of religious educative rhetoric. Is religious educative rhetoric necessary for the moral education of all individuals, at all times? On one hand, Stroud stresses the importance of the communal aspect of religious educative rhetoric and seems to suggest that such rhetoric is vital to cultivation and preservation of a moral community. On the other hand, though, he acknowledges that Kant asserts the historical contingency of traditional forms of religion and praises traditional religion only insofar as it serves as a vehicle for the presentation and cultivation of rational morality. Furthermore, Stroud explains that Kantian religious rhetoric must emphasize the moral content of traditional religion over and against the truth of traditional religious doctrines. It seems likely that such an approach to traditional religion will contribute to the gradual erosion of the authority of traditional religious doctrines in and for human life – indeed, it seems likely that Kant intended to contribute to some form of secularization. But if religious educative rhetoric contributes to the secularization of society, does it not undermine the conditions of its own efficacy? Can either pedagogical or critical educative rhetoric offer an effective substitute for religious

pedagogical rhetoric's role in the cultivation of moral community? If not, how will an increasingly secular society promote moral community? Kant might respond by appealing to aesthetic culture. Can art replace religion? Does Kant envision an aesthetic educative rhetoric? The exploration of this possibility would constitute a helpful supplement to Stroud's work.

Though Stroud's book does not answer all of the questions one could ask about Kant's understanding of communication, it is not for that reason a failure. Indeed, Stroud's way of opening up hitherto unexplored questions is one of his book's greatest virtues. That said, I conclude by noting another great virtue of Stroud's book, namely, its way of putting Kant's philosophy into conversation with contemporary communication studies. Stroud not only introduces those from other fields to relevant debates in communication theory in a clear and helpful manner; more importantly, he demonstrates that (and how) Kant can further our thinking about these debates. It is a rare and significant accomplishment to discuss Kant's philosophy in a way that gives voice to the inherent energy and abiding relevance of his thinking, and Stroud's book realizes this goal in an exemplary way. Indeed, his reconstruction of Kantian rhetoric offers an image of communication that we would do well to promote in today's world – a form of communication that stresses the necessity of respect for others without rejecting the possibility and meaning of critical discourse and rational debate.

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### Reference

Kant, Immanuel (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas C. Vinci, *Space, Geometry, and Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*

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Key questions concerning Kant's Transcendental Deduction are: what is the method of proof? and why are two arguments needed? Karl Ameriks's (1978) is the seminal work on the former, as is Dieter Henrich's (1969) on the latter.