

Another contribution comes from pieces that harvest theoretical insights into the religion/secular debates from particular social locations. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd seeks to “politicize” the “secular/religious binary” by focusing on the discursive production of the category “religion.” While Hurd is not always clear enough about what “politicization” means methodologically, she writes compellingly about academic work on these problems and how it “reinforces particular kinds of limits on political practice” (p. 168). Cecilia Lynch’s study of the challenges of religious humanitarianism to extant categories is similarly compelling in documenting how the religious and the secular “rework each other constantly” in ways that elude conventional formulations (p. 205).

One of the most powerful yet frustrating pieces is Mark Juergensmeyer’s “Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence.” Juergensmeyer notes that violent activists are “parts of communities that perceive themselves to be fragile, vulnerable, and under siege from a hostile secular world” (p. 185). One wishes that he would theorize the modalities of perception themselves, as this seems integral to his subsequent and excellent point that “religion” is not necessarily the cause of religious violence so much as “the way that activists and their foes have come to think about religion” (p. 186). R. Scott Appleby’s “Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age” pursues the related notion that fundamentalists are opposed not to modernity as such but to the perceived marginalization of religion (p. 230); to him, fundamentalism is “a mode of late-modern religiosity informed, decisively, by secularity” (p. 244).

Talal Asad clarifies some of the broader implications of the collection. Examining blasphemy claims that uncover the modes by which public discourse about religious freedom circulates, he deftly shows how understandings of citizenship and state power partly contribute to constructions of “religion” that pull in different directions, just as religions contribute to forms of political power that undermine them. Thus, Asad sees in debates about political religions an ambivalence about politics itself and “a pathological sense of danger whose final elimination is never possible” (p. 294). His coupling of affective intensities and religious defenses against secular critique is suggestive, and seems to gesture toward a next phase of conversation about the secular: the study of technologies of circulation and their emotional impact.

These essays explain and historicize the fuzzy religion/secular distinction, but more valuably engage in comparative studies that challenge conventional thinking about these key terms. Alongside important work being done in religious studies, history, and comparative law, *Rethinking Secularism* challenges readers to think in fresh ways about the interpretive “work” that taken-for-granted categories do (in shaping assumptions about religion and public life) and how these categories fit poorly in our attempts to

make sense of secularism’s challenges. While there is an occasional imprecision about the scope and quality of the political, beyond being simply an indeterminate context for these debates, this collection is essential for anyone interested in these and related subjects.

Kant’s Political Theory: Interpretations and Applications. Edited by Elisabeth Ellis. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012. 264p. \$64.95.
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— Nicholas Tampio, *Fordham University*

How do we create a world where every human being is treated with dignity? In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant calls such a world *a realm of ends*, a place where everybody, in their roles as citizens and moral persons, legislates and honors universal laws. Kant’s idealistic vision has inspired liberals, democrats, human rights activists, socialists, and others for more than two centuries. Yet realists persistently criticize idealists for ignoring the fact that politics is about acquiring power; sometimes, as in the case of warfare or competition for scarce resources, politics requires treating other people as things rather than as ends in themselves. How can Kantians respond to the realist critique? More importantly, how can Kantians bring the world closer to a realm of ends? To address these questions, Elisabeth Ellis has assembled an all-star lineup of Kant scholars to mine his political writings for insights. Here are several of the book’s more remarkable findings:

Revolutions can do more harm than good. Kant’s moral philosophy lays out and grounds categorical imperatives, moral laws that rational beings ought to make their principle of volition regardless of the consequences. Kant’s deontological morality seems to command resisting, with arms if necessary, tyrants. Although he was an enthusiastic spectator of the French Revolution, Kant counseled against armed insurrection. On principle, revolution is not universalizable, because insurrectionists want to acquire power outside of legal means and deny this option to their opponents. Kant also adduces an anthropological (or empirical) observation: As Ellis explains in her introduction, “quick transitions cannot effect the substantive social changes that are required to make progress toward genuine republicanism” (p. 13). Revolutions do not necessarily produce a true reform in thinking and thus leave the door open for old patterns of despotism to reestablish themselves.

Free intellectual exchange in the public sphere is the best, and perhaps only, way to make political, and thereby moral, progress. Kant was a political republican who publicly praised a monarch, Frederick the Great. In a brilliant reading of Kant’s 1784 essay on Enlightenment, Robert S. Taylor explicates the metaphor that enlightened absolutism provides a hard shell [*Hülle*] in which the seed [*Keim*] of thinking germinates: eventually, the seed will break the shell. In the short term, the monarch benefits from the

material prosperity generated by a free intellectual, scientific, and economic culture; in the long term, people want to use their mental freedom to govern themselves. Kant shows “how republicanism might emerge from absolute monarchy in a manner wholly consistent with both justice and the short-run interests of the regent himself” (p. 148). Free speech is one good that Enlightenment partisans need to hold sacred; without it, there is little hope that a people can improve their condition.

You attract more bees with honey than vinegar. Kant’s Copernican revolution empowers human beings to think for themselves without the guidance of God or his representatives. Moral and political philosophers are still thinking through the repercussions of his thesis. A surprising feature of Kant’s political writings, though, is the moderation of his recommendations and rhetoric. In an essay on his lectures on pedagogy, Mika LaVaque-Manty shows that Kant draws simple and persuasive analogies between teaching children to walk without the aid of a walking cart and the moral value of autonomy: “[A]rtificial aids are bad, self-direction—even when it means clumsiness and stumbling—is good” (p. 218). In his essay, John Christian Laursen shows that Kant intervened in a debate about book piracy to make a case obliquely for freedom of the press: Kant “thought it best to persuade rather than berate, insinuate rather than demand, and bring out the implications of what everyone could accept rather than harangue people” (p. 232).

Every essay in this volume extols Kant’s political writings, except one: Ian Hunter’s. Building upon his groundbreaking book on Kant and his context, *Rival Enlightenments* (2001), Hunter contends that intellectual historians ought to investigate what Kant was actually doing in his time and place, rather than simply accepting his claim to be making a priori arguments. Kant’s audience was the “north-German *Bildungsbürgertum*—the stratum of Protestant university-educated theologians, pastors, bureaucrats, jurists, and professors—who communicated via journalism, sermonizing, and academic disputations and through interlinking memberships of university faculties, Protestant congregations, Masonic lodges, and private clubs and debating societies” (p. 170). Kant was not merely a pure scholar who charmingly went for a walk every day at the same time. He was a fierce opponent of the civil Enlightenment—whose leading figures included Hobbes, Thomasius, and Pufendorf—that tried to desecralize politics after the European wars of religion. Following in the footsteps of Leibniz and Wolff, Kant was a militant for and modernizer of the metaphysical Enlightenment that views human beings as pure intelligences trapped in physical bodies. His ideal is not a world where each person is appreciated for his or her singularity, but rather a community of wills (*Gemeinschaft der Willkühr*) modeled on a congregation of angels.

Multiple authors in this volume—including Onora O’Neill (p. 41), Arthur Ripstein (p. 68), and Thomas Pogge (p. 95)—write the same endnote: “For a different view, see Hunter, chapter 7 of this volume.” It is a shame that these authors do not dwell upon the problems that Hunter raises. What should contemporary political theorists do with the fact that Kant’s writings contain so much angelology? How do we proceed in political climates that are so different from eighteenth-century Prussia? How do we preserve Kant’s moral intuitions in deeply pluralistic societies? How do we construct Kantian political theories that do not unwittingly take up the tradition of medieval *Schulmetaphysik*—as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas (p. 181) apparently do?

The most pressing assignment facing contemporary Kantian political theorists, I think, is to translate his key insights into other vernaculars. Kant’s observations about the dangers of revolutions, the need for free speech, and the importance of rhetoric all seem important in order to make sense of, and potentially steer, political developments in countries such as China, Turkey, and Russia. Rather than ask political actors and theorists in those countries to read Kant—for whom there is “a fierce learning curve” (p. 5)—might we take on the responsibility of translating Kantian intuitions into Confucian, Islamic, or Orthodox terms? This type of scholarship would mean relaxing the “rigor” of Kant scholarship that proceeds in an a priori fashion—see, for instance, Louis-Philippe Hodgson’s Kantian argument for a world state that overlooks criticisms of this ideal going back at least to Herder (pp. 101–34)—but it might make Kant’s political insights more timely. Free speech in the public sphere should be “the driving force that moves regimes from despotism to freedom” (pp. 11–12). How can we most effectively present this idea to different linguistic communities today? To bring about a world where everyone’s dignity is respected, we need to make as many alliances as we can.

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In spite of endless obituaries, totalitarianism remains a major analytical tool in our efforts to understand modern political experiments inspired by ideological schemes meant to transform not only society but human nature as well. In the 1930s, antitotalitarian thought (liberal democrats, social democrats, conservatives, Christian democrats) was concerned with the rise of the charismatic mass movements and their possible catastrophic consequences. Among those who understood the mystical, or even magical, underlying components of the totalitarian project were Russian thinkers (Mensheviks, but also Christian existentialists like