
provides a useful and insightful background from which to debate the ongoing relevance of love for politics in the contemporary era.

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Seán Molloy: *Kant's International Relations: The Political Theology of Perpetual Peace*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. Pp. ix, 253.)

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Kant-inspired theories of global justice typically defend lofty moral ideas of lasting peace, the global spread of democratic institutions, universal concern for human welfare, and good will among all states and citizens. But given what experience and history consistently tell us about human nature—that we are, especially in political contexts, self-interested, tribal, power hungry, myopic, and vicious—on what basis might we *hope* to cross the divide that separates our present reality from morality's ends?

Seán Molloy's ambitious and important book studies Kant's complex answer to this question, not in order to defend it, but to demonstrate its centrality to Kant's political thought and to draw a lesson for contemporary theorists of democratic peace and cosmopolitanism. As Molloy interprets Kant, the fundamental ground of hope for moral reform is belief in a providential God whose creation secures the possibility that we may realize our moral ends (xi, 21, 64, 132). This reading is based on an expansive interdisciplinary survey of much of Kant's philosophical system, including his dualist conception of the human as both an object of scientific explanation and a free subject capable of rational thought and action; his view that a teleological picture of nature arises from the mind's reflective search for systematicity among its scientific judgments; his argument for belief in a providential world and God as "postulates" of practical reason; and his excursions into anthropology and speculative political history that depict human beings as prone to immorality while conjecturing mechanisms in nature that may nevertheless reinforce our moral efforts.

These wide-ranging discussions support Molloy's primary aim of showing that Kant's theory of international relations, especially as articulated in *Perpetual Peace*, "does not exist in an intellectual vacuum, but rather should be seen as the product of decades of wrestling with some of the most important aspects of human existence" (3). The unity of Kant's vision, Molloy suggests, poses a problem for Kant's successors in global-justice theory—he

targets Thomas Pogge, Charles Beitz, and David Held in particular—who claim Kant as their forebear but wish to detach their own moral visions from the metaphysical and theological issues that Kant thought morality implicates. While these scholars may regard Kant's metaphysics as an inappropriate foundation for political morality in our scientific and secular age, they offer no comparable substitute to justify their dogmatic faith that the gap between “is” and “ought” might be bridged (174). Molloy calls upon them to retrieve their heritage and engage with Kant's questions, if not his solutions (14, 26, 27, 167, 170–75).

While the book is billed as a critical interpretation of Kant's theory of international relations and global justice, its overwhelming focus is the philosophical conditions of hope for moral reform in general. Molloy's contention that Kant's political thought is inseparable from this broader issue is compelling and should give pause to theorists who seek Kant's benediction while aiming to insulate morality from its metaphysical suppositions. Kant did not regard political philosophy as a Rawlsian “module” that can be plucked from its philosophical roots and established without loss of meaning on more ecumenical grounds. Kant's metaphysics is, in Molloy's apt phrase, “in the very grammar” of his politics (26).

But while Molloy defends the integrity of Kant's system as a whole, he is largely critical of Kant's specific turn to hope in providential nature, intimating that it is an evasion, a “deus ex machina” (27), a “have your cake and eat it, too” (67) solution, and a “stopgap measure” that Kant desperately adopts to ease destructive tensions between his moral system and empirical reality (137). Molloy repeatedly suggests that unless Kant can provide a convincing explanation of how, given his own brutal empirical depiction of human nature and society, we might cross the gap between is and ought, then there is a serious problem with his embrace of hope and faith (97–99, 111, 114, 130). Unfortunately, however, because Molloy never directly contests, and at times apparently neglects, the key steps of Kant's argument, it is a mystery what Molloy thinks the source of the alleged problem is.

While the details of Kant's case for hope are controversial, its general structure is clear. Kant held that we are justified in hoping that we might realize morality's ends if (a) we ought, or are obligated, to pursue them; (b) it is possible to realize them; and (c) we have no reason to believe that we on our own are sufficient to realize them. If we accept these propositions, Kant maintained, then we may rationally infer that the world is structured ultimately to assist, or at least not forever to negate, our moral strivings (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6:139; *Critique of Practical Reason*, book 2, “Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason”).

Kant takes himself to have established (a) in his central writings in moral philosophy—chiefly his *Groundwork*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Metaphysics of Morals*—which aim to isolate and corroborate the supreme principle of morality (famously identified as the categorical imperative) and to derive from it a system of moral duties. Molloy neither considers nor

contests any of these arguments or the conception of global justice Kant derives in his most comprehensive work in political philosophy, his *Rechtslehre* of 1797, a text that Molloy dismisses as corrupted by Kant's advanced age and failing powers in 1797, the year it was published (177n1).

Kant infers (b) by appealing to a commonsense principle of practical rationality according to which "ought implies can," that if we think we *must* do or seek something then we should also think it *possible* for us to do or seek that thing. Since, as Kant holds, there are indeed categorical practical requirements, then, he concludes, it must be possible to realize any ends they prescribe. While Molloy periodically acknowledges this practical dimension of Kant's argument (9, 47–48, 98–99), at no point does he assess or criticize the validity of the principle it invokes or the inference Kant draws from it.

Molloy generally seems to argue that what certifies (c)—that we have no basis to regard ourselves as sufficient to effect morality's ends—is Kant's bleak empirical assessment of human beings found in his work on anthropology and history. There Kant "identifies in human beings only a source of problems," specifically, that they are a "morally compromised species that cannot serve as the foundation for its own salvation" (xi). On Molloy's reading, our "capacity to create knowledge through observation of ourselves and of what we are capable" reveals our moral insufficiency and poses the essential problem of how to reconcile us, as we in fact are, with the moral ends we ought to seek (xi). Faced with an undeniable historical record of evil, and fearful of the apparent meaninglessness of human beings' existence (18, 42, 78), Kant, says Molloy, counsels that we turn away from empirical knowledge and make the empirically unsupported "leap" to faith in a purposive nature and a wise creator (xi, 48, 64, 83, 136).

It is difficult to square this reading with Kant's essential claim, to which Molloy himself occasionally nods (9, 47, 49, 83, 158), that we can have no empirical knowledge at all of either our own insufficiency or sufficiency for morality's highest ends because these ends are not objects of possible experience. Kant defines the "highest good" for human beings as the maximal distribution of human happiness consistent with the maximal realization of human virtue (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A810/B838; *CPrR*, 5:110–11). While this end must be realized in nature (happiness, after all, is a natural state), it could never be an object of an actual experience of nature because, like our concepts of the cosmos as a whole, its first cause, and God, maximal global happiness is in Kant's technical terminology an "idea of reason" (*CPR*, A321/B378ff.; *G*, 4:409; *CPrR*, 5:108), a thought of a totally unconditioned whole that cannot be grasped in empirical cognition, which is always confined to the contingent and local deliverances of sense perception. Since we can never experience such an end, we can also never judge empirically whether there is a determinate path connecting us to it. The best we can do is work on the piecemeal project of bringing about human happiness in hope of approximating a moral idea to which we are categorically bound. Thus Kant's case for hope need not turn on his anthropological and historical

speculations. To the contrary, the moral relevance of Kant's anthropology and his teleological interpretation of human history ultimately derive from the conclusion, based on pure practical reason, that there are categorical requirements (see also *G*, 4:388–89; *MM*, 6:217).

To be sure, not all moral ends are ideas of reason. Some, such as the universal provision of HIV medicine, are determinate objects of possible experience. Contemporary Kantians who share Kant's dismal assessment of human beings and yet call on governments to realize these determinate ends must answer Molloy's rightful call to articulate a plausible route from is to ought. But Kant's most basic case for hope sponsors an optimism that Molloy's highly stimulating but gloomy interpretation conceals. If instead we follow Kant's fundamentally *moral* argument for hope, then in spite of the historical record we may yet join him in a justified faith that, somehow or other, nature is on the side of our ongoing efforts to bring the world into greater conformity with the rational idea of a just global order.

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