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Nominations and self-nominations for symposium reviews should be submitted to the symposium editor, Lydia Moland.

For any other questions or inquiries, please contact us at sgircommittee@gmail.com.

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**Dilek Huseyinzadegan, *Kant's Nonideal Theory of Politics***

Northwestern University Press, 2019, 216 pp., $34.95, ISBN 978-0-8101-3987-9

Reviewed by Jennifer Mensch, Western Sydney University

In Dilek Huseyinzadegan's analysis of Kant's "impure" politics, what we have is a startling, innovative, and ultimately convincing portrait of Kant's systematic attention to the material conditions underlying the everyday world of political subjects.

Much as theorists have sought to enrich scholarly discussions of Kant's moral philosophy by way of attention to Kant's "practical anthropology"—the empirical counterpart to an *a priori* formal account of morals—in this book Huseyinzadegan provides us with a parallel look at Kant's "political anthropology." By paying close attention to Kant's systematic appeal to a teleological, heuristic, and regulative approach to the nonideal political conditions faced by political subjects, what we discover is not just a robust counterpart to his better-known ideal theory, but indeed a set of orientational tools or maps by which we might hope to better navigate the transition from politics to morals. Teleology provides reason with a "compass," as Huseyinzadegan puts it, ready to guide us as we set out on our political adventure.

Huseyinzadegan's investigation has three parts to it, with specific attention to Kant's discussion of political history, culture, and geography. There are, however, throughlines across the whole when it comes to the largest points the author is trying to make. The first of these is directed toward the specialist community of political theorists who take Kant's ideal theory as their point of departure. Regarding this set of interpreters, the author is at pains to demonstrate again and again not only the importance and centrality of nonideal considerations for understanding Kant's system, but, and in particular, to show that it is these material conditions, rather than the categorical imperative or some other form of ideal moral reasoning, that are the real-life drivers behind much of Kant's political analysis.

A separate track to follow across the contours of the book is the one that stops at each of the sites where Kant's own location becomes clear: Kant's is not a view from nowhere, in other words, and his historical context, his gender, class, and race, and especially his perspective as a European, are the nonideal conditions driving Kant's

theory. To those focused on the ideal theory to the exclusion of empirical considerations the author says: "History, culture, and geography matter to Kant." However, the proof for this lies not only in the many careful readings assembled across the course of Huseyinzadegan's investigation, but in the revelation that Kant was himself entirely beholden to his own nonideal point of view. This line of argumentation in the book was convincing and the textual evidence irrefutable. Less convincing was the positive project meant to emerge in the wake of it.

That is to say that although Huseyinzadegan is continually optimistic regarding the options opened up for politics once we acknowledge and set aside Kant's Eurocentrism—a new political space wherein multiple histories, cultures, and political points of view would be nonhierarchically counted and heard—it is hard to recognize much of Kant anywhere in this revamped version of his theory. If the takeaway here is to see that the tools that built the master's house: the "compass" provided by a teleology of progress, the universal history that requires us to adopt Europe's "culture of skill" for the moral advancement of mankind, the hospitality that demands Europe's right to trade with the global South, and so on—if these now need to be discarded for the Eurocentric perspectives they entail, then it is not at all clear what is left to be retrofitted for better purpose. Indeed, the sense that we might just need to discard this part of Kant's position while hanging on to the ideal theory might be one, albeit unintended, conclusion to draw from this well-documented account.

Of course, this type of conclusion introduces its own problems, since it invites the demand from Charles Mills and others that we plausibly defend any criteria used for determining hard boundaries between ideal and nonideal positions in Kant, while ensuring also that no cross-contamination from the so-called "tainted" parts has taken place—a demand that Kantians have so far been unable to meet, with determinate boundaries replaced instead by arbitrarily imposed lines suggested between the Critical/Precritical, Early/Late, Real/Incidental, and Published/Unpublished writings by Kant. With the easy identification of Kant's dismissive attitude toward lazy islanders on display in central works such as 1785's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* or even just the casual racism at work in his discussion of humor in the third *Critique* (5:333), a body of evidence has demonstrated that the infection has indeed spread to even

the best of Kant's works. This research has generated a new boundary, now said to hold between the racist, pro-colonialism Kant of the 1780s and the cosmopolitan Kant who shows up in the works published at the end of his career in 1795's *Perpetual Peace* and 1797's *Metaphysics of Morals*. Without repeating any part of the well-known debate between Bernasconi and Kleingeld regarding this "death-bed conversion scene," one might still justifiably wonder how even a late change of heart, while perhaps exonerating Kant-the-person, is supposed to retroactively safeguard readers from any of the now-identified racist works of the Critical period. As Kantians reflect on these matters, it should not be forgotten that while the full tally of published comments by Kant is one thing, reflecting the fact that he held these attitudes year-in and year-out over forty years of teaching—views recorded forever in the lecture notes from his courses on "Physical Geography" and "Anthropology"—this production of generations of students armed with such "knowledge of the world" is another thing altogether.

From this perspective the most valuable service offered up by Huseyinzadegan's investigation might be the negative reminder that Kant was and remains today one of the leading thinkers responsible for our inherited sense of mankind's inevitable if slow progress toward the good, of self-perfection as a task or vocation for mankind, and of faith in reason and the rationality of faith, and that these notions define the Western political imaginary to so great an extent as to have become invisible to the naked eye. We are surprised when the weight of history and hope are not enough to replace dictatorships with democracy, we are shocked when the outcome of elections reveal theocrats to be the people's choice, and we are caught off guard when universalist policies are rejected by people whose lives bear witness to just how narrowly conceived the "universal" project really is. What Huseyinzadegan's meticulously argued text brings into view for us, in other words, is the genealogy of such views and an explanation thereby for some large part of what is happening in the tumult of political discourse today.

That said, Huseyinzadegan insists that there is still positive use to be made of Kant's theory: "It is not an error to hope for such a truly cosmopolitan vision if we take Kant's political history, anthropology, and geography seriously, understanding their limits and faults so that we do not replicate their Eurocentric construction.... Such a theory of human difference and diversity, if elaborated in a nonhierarchical way and with the bottom-up methodology of nonideal theory, would allow for richer and more nuanced

political philosophies than a one-size-fits-all ideal theory could" (168). As Huseyinzadegan sees it, the key here is to use the methodological approach offered up by teleology, both for recovering Kant's own nonideal theory of politics and imagining new ones.

Demonstrating Kant's ongoing appeal to teleological principles in his philosophy thus marks the last of Huseyinzadegan's large goals for this project, and it is the description of these principles at work in Kant's account that in fact makes up the core of the book. These close, exegetical analyses of Kant's texts are extremely valuable and well done, and they make the book worth reading even if one is ultimately a bit less interested in questions of what to do with Kant's Eurocentrism.

Part 1 of Huseyinzadegan's account of Kant's employment of a teleological approach is focused on his reading of history. Here attention is on a trio of passages: the Appendix from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the 1784 essay on "The Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Aim," and Kant's 1786 response to the Pantheism Controversy, "What is Orientation in Thinking." As she reads these texts, Huseyinzadegan identifies for readers the manner in which teleology functions like a compass, one capable of providing guidelines for reason amidst a wealth of empirical data (29). Political subjects make historical analysis difficult without this tool, since the gap between what is natural and what is free in the human being is precisely that space where politics and history appear (45). While Huseyinzadegan is clear that Kant's own view of history is Eurocentric, the positive conclusion she draws from these discussions is the importance of historical awareness and context, and the value provided by a purposive view of history—understood explicitly as a heuristic device—when it comes to developing a realistic political agenda (60). One is, however, left wondering precisely how a plurality of historical narratives, ones pointing to different political goals, are to be negotiated, particularly when the ends sought after by various political actors might be entirely incompatible. Surely this is where we need to appeal to ideal theory and the principle of *Recht* in particular to make sense of disputes.

Part 2 of the project is devoted to "nature, culture, and politics" and brings together a number of texts not normally included in an account of Kant's appeal to teleology. The link between the texts discussed in chapter 3—the *Critique of Judgment,* the 1784 essay

"What is Enlightenment," and 1797's "Doctrine of Right" in the *Metaphysics of Morals*—is provided by Kant's appeal to organic vocabulary when it comes to thinking about the state (68). In these pages Huseyinzadegan leads readers from Kant's distinction between the mechanical "hand mill" of a despotic regime and the organic unity of wills in a Republic (74) to the difference between a State working deliberately on its slow reform, or "metamorphosis," and one who chooses violent rebirth, or the "palingenesis" of revolution, instead (80). Huseyinzadegan includes here a novel interpretation of Kant's well-known division between the public and private use of reason, aligning the latter with the mechanical functioning of the state and the former with the organic one (77). Chapter 4 returns us to historical questions and the central role played by inequality and war when it comes to nature's pathological enforcement of these means for human advancement. Huseyinzadegan is clear-eyed in her assessment of Kant's emphasis on work and skill as inherently moral in comparison to the rusted talents on view in the case of non-Europeans (103ff), but she ultimately draws comfort from the recognition thereby that culture must be included when determining one's future political path (109). This happy takeaway felt unconvincing, in no small part because the arguments and textual evidence marshalled by Huseyinzadegan in her indictment of Kant's Eurocentrism left little behind to be saved.

The book closes with Part 3 devoted to Kant's attention to the role played by geography for politics. Here one finds a careful account of the importance of the spherical nature of earth: a finite space separated by sand and sea, and one demanding, therefore, a realistic means of navigating global political exchanges. In chapter 5 the focus is on the Supplement to Kant's famous 1795 essay *Toward Perpetual Peace* since Huseyinzadegan sees it as a nonideal companion or rearticulation of the three ideal articles for peace: Republican government, a league of nations, and a limited right to hospitality for the purposes of commercial trade (127). Teleological method is key to this analysis so far as it allows us to think, for example, of war as a necessary part of historical progress. As she puts it: "It is not the case that we know that nature's law is war, but we hypothesize it so that we can begin where we are" (129). The last chapter of the book brings together many of the running points made against theorists who position ethics as opposed to *Recht* at the heart of Kant's political theory. By way of a careful reading of what Kant actually says about cosmopolitanism, Huseyinzadegan shows us that it means a number of things for Kant depending upon context, but nowhere is it positioned as a moral or egalitarian ideal

(164).

Overall this is a rich and engaging account of Kant's political views, and it is to Huseyinzadegan's great credit that even scholars long familiar with the contours of Kant's works—both ideal and impure—will find much to learn from this book.