

“understructure”—the set of physical, social, and cultural assets that we inherit collectively from previous generations—in explaining what any given person is able to achieve. The idea here is that if some individual claims credit for an innovation—a new design of vacuum cleaner, let’s say—this advance was only made possible by the centuries-long development of all the ideas, techniques, and so forth that make production of the new machine feasible. So, the understructure, not the inventor, should be given nearly all the credit. But this misunderstands the kind of desert claim that our inventor might make. It is a comparative claim made in relation to others who share the same background infrastructure. She, and she alone, saw that all the intellectual and physical resources she (undeservedly) shared with her contemporaries could be put to this new, slightly different, use.

Toward the end of the book, Malleon provides a sketch of the society he seeks to create. It proves to be less radically egalitarian than one might have expected based on the arguments he advanced earlier in the book. It could be described as strong social democracy: still a recognizably capitalist society but with high marginal rates of taxation on income and wealth used to fund a generous welfare state and an income guarantee to provide everyone with “sufficiency.” Inequality persists because work incentives are needed, but the ratio between top and bottom incomes should be reduced to between 10 and 20 to 1. It is not then clear how, from a theoretical perspective, Malleon departs from John Rawls’s “difference principle,” which holds that economic inequalities can be justified only if they work to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged by acting as incentives to productivity. Malleon says that “Rawls is insufficiently attentive to the existence of the superrich” (p. 256), but this is true only in the sense that Rawls does not identify the superrich as a separate class. His principle scoops them in: if, as Malleon believes, no disincentive effects would follow from taxing very high incomes at up to 100%, then that is what the difference principle would mandate.

It would be churlish to end this review by suggesting that Malleon is just Rawls réchauffé, because his level of engagement with public policy is far deeper than the latter’s. Anyone looking to explore the range of feasible policy options available to egalitarians in capitalist societies today will learn much from his clear, thoroughly researched, and generally balanced overview.

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It is hard to say what is most surprising about this astonishing, impressive, and original work on Kant’s

political philosophy by Jeffrey Church. It could be that there were still important new lessons to be gleaned from the rarely read parts of the Kantian canon (i.e., the precritical works and lectures). It could be that these lessons can be read as completing rather than competing with the critical system (even as important tensions remain). It could be that this new reading of the whole sweep of Kant’s work—from early speculation about the nature of alien life to the late forays into academic disciplinary disputes—produces a robust, even worldly point of view that is itself alien to the austere Kantianism commonly espoused in the academy. Or the most surprising thing could be that Church’s Kantian liberalism and its disarmingly frank attention to the problem of the meaning of life provide his readers not only with political theoretic wisdom but also with wisdom in general.

The book begins by directing our attention to Kant’s precritical work, especially the lectures on anthropology. Church builds on the recent wave of editorial work and commentary on this material: although Kant’s final anthropology textbook was published during his lifetime (1798), the lecture notes from his earlier courses were published in the twenty-fifth volume of the standard German Akademie edition in 1997 and appeared in the standard English Cambridge edition only in 2012. Scholars have now linked this material to arguments about colonialism, racism, gender, and cosmopolitanism, among other topics (see Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi, *Kant and Colonialism*, and Alix Cohen, *Kant’s Lectures on Anthropology*, both published in 2014, among many others). Although these lines of research raised crucial questions for our understanding of Kant and of ourselves as human beings, they did not offer comprehensive new perspectives on Kant’s work as a whole, as Church has.

The book is organized to vindicate this comprehensive ambition, with the first part devoted to uncovering themes in these neglected sources, the second to connecting those themes with the better-known parts of Kant’s work, and the third to encounters between this new version of Kantian liberalism and competing points of view, plus applications to present-day moral-political challenges. In this last section, Church’s Kantian liberalism contrasts fruitfully with Rawlsian political liberalism and with liberal perfectionism (262). Kantian liberalism, according to Church, is both more richly contextual and also more general and “thinner” than Rawlsian political liberalism. How is this possible? Church’s deeply Kantian answer is rooted in the formal/material distinction. Formally, Church’s Kantian liberalism is about solving the problem of meaning in human life by offering us a multigenerational liberal project of achieving independence. Yet the material expression of this project will vary by circumstance. People exercising sovereignty determine

themselves how to contribute to the task of facilitating human independence.

The material in the early lectures can be frustrating to readers used to the sublimity of the critical Kant. In Kant's precritical themes, we hear arguments about why we ought to keep "stanches" and prostitution off the public streets (155–58), why "our competitive natures drive civilization's progress by spreading us to the four corners of the earth" (45), and how "humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race" (107). To his credit, Church does not flinch from addressing this racism. He analyzes it from a Kantian point of view that is neither anachronistic nor imported from the later critical theory but instead is internal to the anthropology itself. Church's Rousseauian-genealogical approach to the Kantian perspective addresses racial patterns as social rather than biological effects, even as Kant himself offered both styles of explanation and sometimes voiced a biological racism that mars his legacy.

The material that Church retrieves in the first part of his book grounds his argument for reading Kant's entire corpus as a response to the threat of meaninglessness in human life. We see Kant identifying the human being as the only creature whose natural ends (of perfection and wholeness) conflict with each other; thus, the human being must embrace the vocation of contributing to the multigenerational, whole-species task of realizing human independence. Rather than seeking resolution at the level of the individual, "the meaning of life for Kant is intelligible only by locating oneself within the ongoing history of humanity" (217). From concrete, anthropological facts of embodied humanity, Church's Kant draws the "sublime" conclusion that we must think of ourselves as links in a chain that connects us with everyone in the world and with our common story (185–86).

Of course, there are tensions in Church's account of Kantian liberalism, as there will be in any such account and indeed in Kant's original expositions of his views. The new reading that finds meaning in participation in the multigenerational project of liberal independence seems at first to solve a problem for the conventional reading of Kant on property rights, for example; however, it may in the end only push that problem further out.

To summarize a complicated problem too briefly: Kant cannot endorse a natural right to property because such a view is incompatible with his fundamental ideas that (1) rights claims are claims about relations among autonomous persons and (2) the only innate right is the right to be independent of the arbitrary choice of others. Because a claim to property amounts to the imposition of a duty on everyone else, and because it is not possible to ask everyone else before making such a claim, the only way to avoid imposing an arbitrary choice on everyone one asks to respect one's property is to make the imposition less arbitrary by aligning it with what everyone could have

approved had they been asked. The conventional reading introduces the rule of law at this point as a proxy for missing omnilateral assent. But this leaves underspecified critical questions about the reality of human independence: if external rights like the right to property are fully determinable by practical reason, how could participation in sovereignty vindicate human independence, our supposedly self-legislating vocation?

The solution Church offers is that reason's legislation requires actual self-legislating human beings to provide context-specific content: "right itself changes from community to community, and is constituted through political activity" (180). Church's Kant argues that "reason's legislation of justice is incomplete in the state of nature, and can only be brought to fulfillment through the decision-making of a sovereign" (179). This presents an attractive solution to the problem of Kant's navigation between Lockean natural right and Hobbesian positivism in social contract theory. However, it remains in tension with the other main contribution that Church retrieves from Kant's anthropology lectures: the discovery of meaning as part of the story of all of humanity's (not just one community's) achievement of independence.

The fact that Church's Kant struggles with some of the same tensions that the mainstream reading of Kant's political theory does is not a reason to reject this new reading. Although it cannot diffuse the traditional tension between Kantian cosmopolitanism and Kant's location of sovereign right in the national sphere, Church's Kant offers numerous insights and potentially fruitful avenues for future research. To mention just one of those, Church's description of Kantian liberalism as providing meaning to the lives of those who participate in multigenerational projects resonates with Indigenous accounts of meaningful history as encompassing many generations backward and forward, while it is in potentially productive tension with the conventional liberal linear account of progress toward a presumably Eurocentric ideal.

Church's retrieval of Kant's early anthropology and his use of its themes to identify a new Kantian liberalism achieve something of the sublimity of the familiar, critical Kant: "Kant revives this traditionalist lesson [of a time horizon that includes our ancestors, our present, and our descendants] for modern life, and is thereby able to address our fear of death. After all, what is of fundamental value in human life is not our interests, our capacities, or our experiences, all of which fade away upon death. Of fundamental value is our free activity, which need not fade away if we make a contribution to the enduring story of humanity" (220). Ultimately, Church's account provides something that many of us would not have thought possible: a robust new version of Kantian liberalism.