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Sovereignty and freedom: Immanuel Kant's liberal internationalist 'legacy'

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Abstract. This article explores a fundamental division among contemporary liberal internationalists regarding the relationship between state sovereignty and the goal of freedom. The article suggests that, in spite of his popular status among a wide variety of contemporary liberal international theorists, Immanuel Kant's political philosophy is an extraordinarily ambiguous 'legacy' because of the dualistic doctrine of state sovereignty to which he subscribed. Kant's thought is committed to state sovereignty while providing the grounds for a profound critique of its existence. The reason that sovereignty is ambiguous in Kant's political theory is that it is justified by his bifurcated understanding of human freedom.

In the years since the end of the Cold War there has been a re-ascendency of liberal internationalist sentiment and theory in International Relations.[1] The apparent renewal of international organizations, democratic ideals, and free-market principles globally has caused scholars to consider whether the once predominant realist paradigm has been exhausted.[2] However, the re-establishment of liberal internationalism—which at one time was subsumed under the polemically-charged 'idealism'—does not actually portend an 'end of history'. Far from it, there are signs of healthy debate and division among its scholars over the meaning and implications of the very things that are supposed to promote peace, security and—the highest of liberal goals—individual freedom.

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[1] On the renaissance of liberal perspectives in International Relations see: R. A. Matthew and M. W. Zacher, 'Liberal International Theory: Common Threads, Divergent Strands', in C. W. Kegley Jr. (ed.), *Controversies in International Politics: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 107–50; P. Wilson, 'Introduction', in D. Long and P. Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 2–14; and C.W. Kegley Jr., 'The Neoliberal Challenge to Realist Theories of World Politics: An Introduction', in Kegley (ed.) *Controversies*, pp. 1–14. It must be noted that liberals do not have a monopoly on internationalist sentiment. Although a wide variety of Marxist and socialist thought claims an 'internationalist' orientation, the main concern of this article is liberal thought. Therefore, for the sake of convenience, I shall often use the term internationalism without the qualifier 'liberal'. Cf. F. Halliday, 'Three Concepts of Internationalism'. *International Affairs*, 64:2 (1988), pp. 187–98, and C. Lynch, 'The Promise and Problems of Internationalism', *Global Governance*, 5:1 (1999), pp. 83–101.

[2] See for example the debates in D. A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Kegley (ed.), *Controversies*; and M. E. Brown, S. M. Lynn-Jones and S. E. Miller (eds.), *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1996).

Within this context it is arguable that the deepest theoretical and ideological division in contemporary internationalism concerns the territorially sovereign state and its moral standing in world politics. On the one hand, there is the continued (yet qualified) support for the enduring centrality of the state. On the other, there is the vague anticipation that this political unit will, and ought to be, transcended, or at least supplemented by other forms of governance. The decisive point of contention here is whether the sovereign agency of states is ultimately compatible with the goal of individual freedom generally.[3]

Interestingly, a nearly unanimous item of agreement in recent years among liberal-minded scholars has been the importance of Immanuel Kant as a foundational source of theory. However, just as there is underlying opposition among contemporary internationalists, the actual texts of Kant do not provide as clear a theoretical guide as some might wish. It is no small wonder, therefore, that his legacy has become a question of competing Kantian *legacies*. In this article I argue that Kant's political philosophy offers an extraordinarily ambiguous foundation for contemporary internationalist theory because of the dualistic doctrine of state sovereignty to which he subscribed. Kant's thought is committed to state sovereignty while providing the grounds for a profound critique of its empirical existence. Nonetheless, all too often the contemporary advocates of 'Kantian' principles overlook just how uncertain and unclear an intellectual inheritance this so-called 'founding father' of liberal internationalism has left.[4]

This article is divided into two sections. In the first I examine the common grammar that unites contemporary liberal internationalists, and which provides a justification for claiming Kant as the key progenitor. It transpires that agreement over the importance of Kant does not translate into a common perspective on what he actually teaches us, especially on the question of the relationship between state sovereignty and human freedom. I will devote particular attention to two contemporary scholars as key interpreters of the 'Kantian' legacy: Michael W. Doyle and Andrew Linklater. In the early 1980s they published two very different and influential statements on the importance of Kant.[5] The differences between these depictions of the liberal internationalist legacy implicitly reside in contrasting assumptions about Kant's doctrine of sovereignty, neither of which are entirely consistent with the mixed and interpretively problematic posture that a close examination of his texts reveals.

The second section of the article is an analysis of Kant's doctrine of state sovereignty. Here I will argue that his view of sovereignty is ambiguous because it rests on two distinct grounds: first, an *a priori* and 'dogmatic' justification; and, second, a call to constantly reform and transform the empirical existence of all

[3] See A. Franceschet, 'The Ethical Foundations of Liberal Internationalism', *International Journal*, 54:3 (1999), pp. 463–81.

[4] See A. Hurrell, 'Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 16:3 (1990), pp. 183–205. Although Hurrell provides a useful description of Kant's uneasy commitment to both statism and cosmopolitanism, it is not rooted in a larger explanation of Kant's views on sovereignty and freedom.

[5] M. Doyle's two-part article, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs', was first published in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12:3/4 (1983), pp. 205–35, 323–53. In the present article I use the reprint in Brown et al., *Debating the Democratic Peace*, pp. 3–57. A. Linklater's early statement on Kant is in ch. 6 of his *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

sovereigns everywhere. These contrasting attitudes toward sovereignty are caused by a much more fundamental ambiguity within Kant's philosophical edifice. My interpretation of Kant's dualistic position on sovereignty examines closely the ultimate and determining ground of his moral–political philosophy and the 'keystone' of his critical system: the concept of *freedom*. It is because Kant's doctrine of sovereignty is grounded upon, and therefore justified by, a bifurcated understanding of freedom, that his legacy has been an equivocal rather than solid ground for contemporary liberal internationalist theory.

Liberal internationalism, the sovereignty/freedom problematic and Kant's 'legacy'

'Liberal internationalism' is by no means a clear scholarly division. It may include diverse assumptions, principles and moral commitments that do not always neatly agree with each other. What complicates matters is the fate that liberal internationalism suffered after World War II. E. H. Carr's incisive and complex critique of 'utopianism' is important.[6] Carr assembled a poor, naive strawman out of the diverse views held by many liberal internationalist activists, scholars and politicians during the interwar years.[7] There are problems, however, with Carr's view that liberal internationalism is simply the 'utopian' fancy that conflicting interests—particularly those of states—are necessarily or objectively harmonious.[8] This is because it is patently false that all internationalists hold this view.[9] If anything, Carr's damning appraisal of internationalism overlooks the extent to which many of its advocates view international relations as extraordinarily and inherently anarchic and dangerous rather than harmonious. This is, in fact, the starting point of any adequate description of liberal internationalism. As Richard K. Ashley notes: the anarchic nature of international politics has been especially important for liberal internationalists.[10] For unlike in the realist tradition, the anarchy symbol inspires a project or programme for the reform of the international system and its principal agents, sovereign states. A more-or-less common denominator of liberal internationalist positions is, therefore, the view that the anarchic system of sovereign states can and ought to be *domesticated* in a way that resembles, however imperfectly, the liberal vision of political society within the state. Internationalism thus employs, to use Hidemi Suganami's phrase, the 'domestic analogy' to formulate and justify its reform project.[11]

And Jens Bartelson writes:

[6] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1942).

[7] See the contributions to Long and Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis*.

[8] Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, pp. 54–80.

[9] This is especially so in the case of Kant. See P. Laberge, 'Kant on Justice and the Law of Nations' in D. R. Mapel and T. Nardin (eds.), *International Society: Diverse Ethical Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 82–102; K. N. Waltz, 'Kant, Liberalism, and War', *American Political Science Review*, 56 (1962), p. 331; cf. S. Hoffmann, 'The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism', *Foreign Policy*, 98 (1995), p. 161.

[10] R. K. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State: a Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 17:2 (1988), pp. 238, 240. See also B. C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: a Disciplinary History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998).

[11] H. Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy in World Order Proposals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 6.

> [n]ot surprisingly, internationalism turns out to be a brand of modernism insofar as it celebrates the possibility of deliberate reform of the human condition, but with the important difference that internationalist expectation does not confine itself to the domestic sphere where reformative actions already abound, but seeks to overcome this very differentiation between domestic and international.[12]

Much more pointedly, Stanley Hoffmann writes that, although '[t]he international dimension of liberalism was never an afterthought … [it was also] little more than the projection of domestic liberalism worldwide'.[13]

The common vision of reforming anarchic international relations in line with liberal conceptions of political society in general does not, however, lead to agreement on several key points. This is unsurprising given the wide variety of liberal views on fundamentals pertaining to the economy, justice, equality and freedom.[14] Rather than mechanically transforming anarchy into liberal order, the disagreements among liberals themselves have been projected internationally. Therefore, when viewed solely in terms of this common ideal of domesticating anarchy, liberal internationalism as a category of thought is rather vague.[15] An examination of two crucial divisions among internationalists clarifies its broad substantive content, and provides a possible answer to why Kant is ritually invoked.

The first area of contention is over which of the preferred 'liberal' instruments with which to pursue individual freedom in the domestic context is superior for the task of international reform. The wide variety of answers to this question exposes the complex development of liberalism. The earliest of thinkers who are retrospectively judged as internationalists are free traders such as Adam Smith and Richard Cobden.[16] Here the *laissez-faire* principles of free trade and the dispersion of global wealth and welfare are the causes of greater inter-state peace. The rejection of mercantilism and the strict limitation on state interference in private, entrepreneurial interests restricts those sovereign agents who would otherwise impose their conflicts upon the people and impede their free pursuit of happiness.

Subsequent liberal internationalists were uncertain and outright sceptical about the adequacy of free trade to the task of reform. One group, in which we could include Kant, tends to view commerce as a necessary, yet ultimately insufficient, condition. Another group—termed the 'new' liberal internationalism—views the *laissez-faire* assumptions as perilously inept at best, and dangerous at worse, in relation to the goals of peace, security and human freedom.[17] Within both of these positions is the view that other liberal institutions, organizations and legal frameworks are required for reform.

[12] J. Bartelson, 'The Trial of Judgement: A Note on Kant and the Paradoxes of Internationalism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 39:2 (1995), p. 259.
[13] Hoffmann, 'The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism', p. 161.
[14] See J. L. Richardson, 'Contending Liberalisms: Past and Present', *European Journal of International Relations*, 3:1 (1997), p. 14; cf. M. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism and Socialism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), pp. 205–13.
[15] Cf. Bartelson, 'The Trial of Judgement', p. 256.
[16] See C. N. Murphy, *International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance Since 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 13–47.
[17] See D. Long, 'Conclusion: Inter-War Idealism, Liberal Internationalism, and Contemporary International Theory,' in Long and Wilson (eds.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis*, pp. 315–6; see also D. Long, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism: the International Theory of J. A. Hobson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Some, such as Kant and Woodrow Wilson, advocate a formal, federative peace organization (such as a League of Nations) that comprises self-determining states and is supplemented by international law. Such a League operates through communication, the diplomatic resolution of disputes and—where these fail drastically—forced compliance.[18] In addition to these international mechanisms, liberals at least since Kant have argued that the domestic constitutional arrangements of sovereign states are crucial for domesticating anarchy. Here it is republican or democratic representative institutions that subdue individual sovereign states, around which the more formal international organizations and laws are able to function effectively.

On rare occasions, some internationalists, such as J. A. Hobson, have flirted with the idea of a quasi-Hobbesian global agency that functions to secure peace and enforce international law.[19] The rarity of this sentiment—even within the context of Hobson's intellectual trajectory—does not make it unimportant. This is because, although world government is certainly *not* the internationalist mechanism of choice, its mere suggestion indicates the increasing frustration and suspicion among some liberals with state sovereignty. Quite simply, the territorial state became viewed as just too recalcitrant and obstinate an agent to actually help reform the enduring condition of anarchy. The predominant internationalist mechanisms mentioned above have the flaw of ultimately relying upon the discretion of sovereign states, making the necessary transformation limited and unlikely. It is unsurprising that in this century there arose newer varieties of internationalism such as David Mitrany's functionalism. His position, and the neofunctionalist reformulation that followed, downplay the importance of formal inter-state mechanisms and legal-institutional frameworks in favour of transnational associations of legitimacy that transform human attachments to particular states.[20] The contested question of how internationalist reform is to be carried out is thus opened up to include this deep pessimism about the capacity of sovereign states to reform anarchy on their own. Internationalist alternatives thus straddle a very wide range between the undesirable extremes of acceding to the *status quo* of anarchy produced by sovereignty, and the likely despotism of a world government.

At this point a second, deeper division among liberal internationalists emerges. This is because what is ultimately at stake in the various and conflicting prescriptions regarding the mechanisms of reform is the moral *end* necessarily shared by all truly 'liberal' strains of internationalism: *freedom*. Although the question here is immensely complex, it can be stated very simply. It is whether the sovereign state ultimately enables or impedes the overarching goal of individual freedom. The tension between state sovereignty and the individual has of course always been

[18] On the roles of accommodation and coercion in internationalism see K. Goldmann, *The Logic of Internationalism: Coercion and Accommodation* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[19] See D. Long, 'J. A. Hobson and Idealism in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 17 (1991), pp. 294–5; Long, 'Conclusion', pp. 314–15; Long, *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism*, p. 155.

[20] See D. Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1966); C. Pentland, *Integration Theory and European Integration* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), pp. 70, 81; P. Taylor, 'Functionalism: The Approach of David Mitrany', in A. J. R. Groom and P. Taylor (eds.), *Frameworks for International Co-operation* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990); and the contributions to L. M. Ashworth and D. Long (eds.), *New Perspectives on International Functionalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

central to liberalism domestically. For although sovereignty provides a political and legal framework that secures the freedom of individuals from the coercion of others, its awesome power represents the constant threat of imposing arbitrary and intolerable ends on the very same individuals, thus negating entirely the aim of liberty. The various debates among liberals over the centuries about *how* to ensure that individuals consent to the laws that they must obey indicates the complexity of this tension.

Internationally, however, the tension between freedom and sovereignty is potentially even more intractable and divisive. What is commonly perceived by liberals is that the sovereign state's proclivity to make war is oriented by illiberal *purposes* and resultant in illiberal *consequences*. As regards purposes, it is typically the monarchic, aristocratic and/or rent-seeking mercantalist classes who capture the states that are likely to initiate costly wars for their narrow ends.[21] Such adventures are enabled by the closed nature of the decision-making processes preferred by non-liberal sovereign agencies. More important, however, are the consequences: such wars destroy the grounds of individual freedom by imposing high (material and other) costs on citizens—the highest of which is life itself. The fully internationalized version of liberalism's sovereignty/freedom dilemma concerns whether the sovereign state is adequate and capable as an agent of (self-)reform towards the goal of promoting and protecting individual freedom. Moreover, what is also at stake is whether the state's functional utility is profoundly limited in securing the conditions of autonomy under contemporary global conditions. On these related issues current internationalist theory is polarized between (1) a 'conservative' or *status quo* stance that seeks merely to deepen and widen the alleged domesticating effects of sovereign states based on republican or democratic representation principles and (2) a 'radical' and cosmopolitan version that envisages great limits of the statist framework for individual emancipation and the decreasing importance of state sovereignty altogether.[22] Behind the many debates over the adequacy of various liberal mechanisms for international reform lies this increasingly salient split about sovereignty and its relation to freedom.

What is remarkable in this fragmented theoretical context is the near-universal reference to Immanuel Kant's philosophy by contemporary internationalists. Since the early 1980s he has become a foundational source for many diverse attempts to explain and justify internationalist alternatives to realist orthodoxy. This recent ubiquity is curious in one sense, yet understandable in another.

It is curious because, as will become apparent below, the underlying ontological, epistemological and moral commitments that animate Kant's thought are decidedly at odds with the predominant Anglo-American versions of political liberalism. Bartelson notes that many contemporary references to Kant tend 'to neglect or distort some of his ideas by overlooking the foundations of his political philosophy, and instead merely reiterate … the problems that Kant himself sought to solve'.[23] This relative ignorance of his critical philosophy justifies R. B. J. Walker's harsh comment that it is only a 'kitsch Kantianism' which animates recent liberal theorizing and social science.[24]

[21] Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies', pp. 5–6.
[22] A. Franceschet, 'The Ethical Foundations of Liberal Internationalism', p. 481.
[23] Bartelson, 'The Trial of Judgement', pp. 256–7.
[24] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 161.

Nonetheless, the popularization of Kant makes perfect sense from another point of view. He is perhaps the only intellectual forerunner to internationalism that can, superficially at least, be used to support any of the conflicting orientations that characterize the two schisms described above. There is evidence in Kant of an economic and political libertarianism, given his view that war is entirely incompatible with commerce. There are even more ample and convincing indications of Kant's anticipation of the importance of a League of Nations; international law; international organizations; and republican constitutions. And, if read from a particular angle, Kant's philosophy supports an increasingly post-statist, cosmopolitan world order in which pacifying forms of political representation are not tied exclusively to territoriality.[25] The manifold and elastic Kantian 'legacy' can thus potentially disguise much of the ambiguity within liberal internationalism over how to achieve its reform agenda.

However, what is equally disguised is the ambiguity at the heart of Kant's philosophy as regards the second major area of internationalist contention: the sovereignty/freedom dilemma. Just as Kant's texts can bolster arguments in favour of nearly all of the mechanisms of reform, he is also a deeper philosophical source on the question of whether the sovereign state ultimately serves or stifles individual liberty in its international setting. Here we can assess two distinct readings of Kant. Since the early 1980s, Doyle and Linklater have published implicitly contrasting views on whether the sovereign state is an adequate and sufficient device for the goal of human emancipation. These authors are important in the present context for two reasons: first, they both turn to Kant's 'legacy' to support their arguments; and second, these arguments have been influential in the field, spurring differentiated Kantian 'legacies'.[26]

By far the most dominant Kantian 'legacy' in the discipline is initiated by Doyle.[27] His seminal 1983 two-part article on Kant and liberalism has the virtue of giving both a philosophical and social scientific explanation of what is, according to at least one observer, 'as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations'.[28] The 'law' in question is the absence of major wars among liberal states since the early nineteenth-century. Doyle claims there is a philosophical explanation in Kant's writings for two different liberal legacies: (1) the increased domestication of anarchy among liberal forms of sovereign states and, concurrently, (2) the persistent reality of liberal aggression towards illiberal forms of sovereignty. Doyle

[25] See for example D. Held, 'Cosmopolitan Democracy and the Global Order: Reflections on the 200th Anniversary of Kant's "Perpetual Peace"', *Alternatives*, 20 (1995), pp. 415–29; D. Archibugi, 'Immanuel Kant, Cosmopolitan Law and Peace', *European Journal of International Relations*, 1:4 (1995), pp. 429–56; and A. Franceschet, 'Popular Sovereignty or Cosmopolitan Democracy? Liberalism, Kant and International Reform', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:2 (2000), pp. 277–302.

[26] Although both authors have published recent books in which Kant reappears, they have not deviated fundamentally from their earlier depictions of in what Kant's legacy consists. See Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, pp. 252–302; A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 4–6, 220.

[27] See the work on democracy and peace in B. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*: *Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); J. M. Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace', *International Security*, 19:2 (1994), pp. 87–125; and the debate in Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller, *Debating the Democratic Peace*.

[28] J. S. Levy, 'Domestic Politics and War' in R. I. Rotberg and T. K. Rabb (eds.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 88.

looks to a singular 'legacy' of Kant for an explanation for these two related liberal traditions. He identifies the republican sovereign state as the most important cause for both liberal legacies. Essentially, an equal balancing of individual arbitrary freedom *within* states has the *external* effect argued by Kant: republican states are more likely to coordinate their wills and act on basic principles of international justice: co-existence and non-interference. As Doyle claims:

> The basic postulate of liberal international theory holds that states have the right to be free from foreign intervention. Since morally autonomous citizens hold rights to liberty, the states that democratically represent them have the right to exercise political independence. Mutual respect for these rights becomes the touchstone of international liberal theory.[29]

The absence of this coordinating mechanism between the 'inside' and the 'outside', between liberal and illiberal regimes, not only permits continued anarchy, it prompts wars of missionary liberalization by liberal states wishing to domesticate international relations.[30]

Two related points are of outstanding significance in Doyle's depiction of the Kantian 'legacy'. First, because state sovereignty—at least in its liberal form—is the crucial mechanism of international reform, its existence is a 'given' necessity. Second, the internationalist agenda as specified by this interpretation of Kant has already been largely achieved by 'actually existing' liberal regimes;[31] the only remaining task for the transcendence of anarchy is the global elaboration of extant principles of liberal sovereignty. Doyle certainly acknowledges that there are social and political problems unresolved in liberal states. Moreover, he is concerned with explaining the more limited outcome of inter-state peace rather than freedom.[32] Nonetheless, in thus truncating Kant's vision, Doyle implicitly attributes to Kant the view that individual liberty is compatible with whatever existing amount of self-reform liberal sovereign states are capable of. Thus, sovereignty is in principle fully compatible with individual freedom.

At roughly the same time that Doyle published his statist reading of Kant's internationalist legacy, Linklater's book, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (1982), appeared. Linklater does not wish merely to vindicate the conventional practices of liberal internationalism but to question its traditionally limited (that is, state-centric) assumptions as regards the means to the end of universal emancipation. In this and subsequent publications, Linklater relies upon the notion of 'critique' to illustrate the historical possibility of reform praxis in international relations.[33] He proposes that 'an alternative framework with which to

[29] Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies', p. 10.

[30] Ibid., p. 30. For a critique, see J. MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest Against the Peculiar Discourse of Inter-Liberal State Peace', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 24:3 (1995), pp. 549–62; and J. MacMillan, 'Democracies Don't Fight: A Case of the Wrong Research Agenda', *Review of International Studies*, 22:4 (1996), pp. 275–99.

[31] See C. Brown, '"Really Existing Liberalism" and International Order', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 21:3 (1992), pp. 313–28.

[32] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for comments regarding this point.

[33] A. Linklater, *Men and Citizens*, p. 11; see also A. Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1990); A. Linklater, 'The Problem of Community in International Relations', *Alternatives*, 15 (1990), pp. 135–53; and A. Linklater, 'Citizenship and Sovereignty in the Post-Westphalian State', *European Journal of International Relations*, 2:1 (1996), pp. 77–103. It might be objected that Linklater's scholarly career does not support internationalism, given his use of Hegelian and Marxist-inspired critical theory. But critical

defend the internationalist' project is 'exemplified' by Kant's legacy.[34] Human freedom can only be satisfied if we follow Kant's philosophical example and become aware 'of the possibility of human intervention in the social world in order to modify its nature'.[35] On this basis, Linklater claims that the Kantian legacy supports 'a radical transformation of the political world in the direction of that condition in which all human beings live in conformity with the imperatives grounded within their rational natures'.[36] Linklater certainly realizes that Kant places a high premium on the limited moral improvement of individuals within the framework of the state.[37] However, because sovereign states are morally subordinate to individual autonomy, they cannot be counted upon as the sole 'trustees' of international reform.[38] Kant's philosophy, as elaborated by Linklater, appears to anticipate a post-sovereign world order.[39] Linklater is thus sceptical that even republican sovereign regimes are sufficient and exhaustive of human autonomy within the context of Kant's thought.[40] Linklater's Kantian legacy is an internationalism in which the *sine qua non* demand of sovereignty as a political device for moral ends is eventually eclipsed because of its ultimately detrimental relationship to universal human freedom. This line of analysis, while less influential in mainstream scholarship than Doyle's, has had its influence in the discipline.[41]

The question that inevitably arises is how are two such fundamentally contrasting explications of Kant's internationalist legacy possible? One credible answer is provided by Bartelson. In explaining the massively divergent depictions of Kant among International Relations scholars, he claims that 'what accounts for their contradictory character is the fact that, although they start out by accepting the distinction between the concepts of nature and freedom' [in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*], 'they all conclude by giving the one concept a more privileged position than the other in their readings of his philosophy of politics …'[42] When *nature* is given priority, perpetual peace is merely a rational chimera; when *freedom* is given more weight, perpetual peace is a real goal for which to strive and achieve in history. Although Bartelson does not consider Doyle and Linklater, we can extrapolate easily from his assessment. Both of these conceptions of Kant's legacy are one-sided because they over-determine one of two radically distinct existential poles between which humans are placed. This is because when either nature or freedom is priorized

theory need not be incompatible with the essential goals of liberal internationalism. We must take Linklater's own statement of intent seriously: '[t]he specific contribution that critical theory can make to the next stage of international relations theory starts from the premise that the emancipatory project ought to be more central to the field. Critical theory presents the case for *recovering the old idealist programme*, modernized to take account of the various intellectual developments and debates which have shaped the field over the past sixty or seventy years', 'The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations: a Critical-Theoretical Point of View', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 21:1 (1992), p. 98, emphasis added.

34 Linklater, *Men and Citizens*, p. xi.

35 Ibid., p. 11.

36 Ibid., p. 99.

37 Ibid., p. 99.

38 Ibid., p. 116.

39 Ibid., p. 114; see also p. 99.

40 Ibid., pp. 115–6; see also p. 105.

41 Linklater's view that the republican sovereign state is an insufficient mechanism of internationalist reform in Kant's thought is adopted or shared by Archibugi, 'Immanuel Kant, Cosmopolitan Law and Peace', pp. 446, 448–9, 452; MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest', pp. 553–4; and Held, 'Cosmopolitan Democracy and the Global Order'.

42 Bartelson, 'The Trial of Judgement', p. 264.

within Kant's system, the solution to international anarchy rests on two substantially different visions: one statist and the other post-statist. As a result, the Kantian legacy becomes divided and contested when formulating the basis of the liberal internationalist agenda.

Nonetheless, Bartelson's astute explanation of the divergent conceptions of Kant's intellectual legacy is too general for my purposes. Certainly Doyle's statist internationalism gravitates closer to natural necessity than does Linklater's post-statism. However, this explanation is not sufficient to account for the different views they assume on the sovereign state in relation to human freedom. I propose that it is necessary go beyond the nature/freedom dualism itself and examine how this underlying ontological chasm actually animates Kant's doctrine of state sovereignty. This is because Doyle and Linklater rely on implicit and unexamined understandings of just how the sovereign state is related to the goal of freedom in Kant's political theory.

Kant's doctrine of state sovereignty and freedom: an ambiguous legacy

If contemporary liberal internationalist theory is divided over whether the sovereign state is compatible with individual freedom, it may be to some extent a *reflection* of Kant's political thought. This is because a close examination of his texts indicates a profound ambiguity on this problematic. At times Kant seems to consider state sovereignty as a *sine qua non* condition of freedom; on other occasions sovereignty is actually the greatest of threats to freedom. In this section I shall first reconstruct the main elements that shape Kant's doctrine of sovereignty and then explain them in light of the dualism that characterizes the architectonic symbol of his critical philosophy as a whole: *freedom*. It is because freedom is the ground, and therefore, the justification, for Kant on sovereignty that this mode of analysis is justified.

Kant's doctrine of sovereignty

Kant does not have a neatly articulated 'doctrine' of sovereignty in any single one of his texts.[43] Thus an effort to contrive a coherent, systematic and formally defended position on state sovereignty risks failure or, what is worse, reading *into* Kant a

[43] I shall use the following abbreviations for these translations of Kant's books: C.Pur=*Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1996); C.Pr=*Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L. W. Beck (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993); CJ=*Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1987); GMM=*Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harpertorch Books, 1964); MM=*The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). (Citations from these works refer first to the Academy pagination and then the page number of the above translations.) Other essays cited are UH='Idea for a Universal History With a Cosmopolitan Purpose'; TP='On the Common Saying: "This May be True in Theory, But it Does Not Apply in Practice"'; QE='An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"'; PP='Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch'; CF='The Contest of the Faculties', all of which are in H. Reiss (ed.) *Kant: Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

posture with which he could not possibly agree nor recognize.[44] In presenting a 'doctrine' of sovereignty in this article, I intend merely to assemble the most salient attitudes that he expresses on this subject in order to clarify their place and meaning within his overall thought. There are two very different types of statements on sovereignty in Kant's texts, each of which have different implications. One type posits an *a priori* necessity for an absolute sovereign agent that is beyond questioning; the other is a call to continuously *reform* all sovereign states everywhere in order to perfect their internal constitutions and transcend the anarchic condition among them. Remarkably, both of these elements rely on the concept of freedom for support.

In the *Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant posits the *a priori* necessity of an absolutist sovereign agent in the state.[45] This defence of sovereignty gives systematic definition to various statements in his other political writings to the effect that 'man is *an animal who needs a master*'.[46] Now, the justification for this demand for sovereignty is made from pure practical reason. What this means is that sovereignty is explained as necessary if we follow the logic of *a priori* reasoning that transcends all possible experience.[47] Man needs a 'master' because, in an external world shared by individual agents, there can be no freedom without some absolute will to ensure a legal-political framework for justice. For otherwise the individual 'certainly abuses his freedom in relation to others of his own kind'.[48] The inherent inclinations of each individual to make an exception from universal principles of justice require a sovereign enforcement agency. As Kant writes, a sovereign is needed 'to break … [our] self-will and force [each] to obey a universally valid will under which everyone can be free'.[49]

It is important to realise that Kant is not making an anthropological claim that individuals are evil and thus need a Leviathan to produce order.[50] It is instead the purely transcendental argument that in a state of nature (or anarchy) there can be no universally rightful condition. This is because, in the absence of a sovereign, 'each has its own right to do *what seems right and good to it* and not to be dependent upon another's opinion on this'.[51] Kant states that, in such an anarchic condition, freedom is impossible for one basic reason: there are no protections from the coercive imposition of one's will upon another. This situation is morally unacceptable because it logically negates our universal capacity to set and follow our own *ends* autonomously—the essence of our humanity.[52] Kant derives two unconditional duties from this realization: a duty of individuals to leave the state of nature and join civil society;[53] and a duty never to resist the sovereign.[54] Both of these require-

[44] See Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' in J. Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 34–5.
[45] MM, pp. 276/61–341/112.
[46] UH, p. 46.
[47] TP, p. 73.
[48] UH, p. 46.
[49] Ibid.
[50] MM, p. 312/89; TP, pp. 71–2. See also GMM, p. 389/57.
[51] MM, pp. 312/89–90.
[52] See MM, pp. 237/30–239/31.
[53] MM, p. 307/86; cf. TP, p. 73.
[54] MM, pp. 320/96–7; TP, p. 81. See P. Nicholson, 'Kant on the Duty Never to Resist the Sovereign', *Ethics*, 86 (1976), pp. 214–30.

ments involve the legitimate coercion of the individual in order to limit his/her freedom so that it may be made compatible with the freedom of others.[55]

What is notable about Kant's so-called 'critical' (that is, *a priori*) argument for sovereignty is its apparently dogmatic and absolutist character. Kant claims that the people must never question the historical origins nor legislative legitimacy of the sovereign's will.[56] At one point he states the 'principle that the presently existing legislative authority ought to be obeyed, whatever its origin'.[57] In addition to dogmatism, scholars have long wondered why Kant thought he had to rely on such an absolutist conception of sovereignty to underwrite his understanding of public legal justice.[58] Kant asserts that the sovereign is the highest, supreme power that is entirely *illimitable* because it is not subject to law nor bound by legal duty.[59] It is famously known that—despite his admiration for the historical meaning of the French Revolution[60]—Kant refuses the right of rebellion to all peoples, no matter how grievously abusive and authoritarian the regime.[61]

Kant does not view his apology for an absolute and illimitable sovereign as 'dogmatic' in a technical sense. Sovereignty is entirely consistent with the critical method of *a priori* reasoning and the morality of the categorical imperative.[62] There can be no coercion employed against the sovereign because it would negate entirely the transcendental framework of justice. Opposing the sovereign would only destroy that which enables an escape from anarchy. As Nicholson states, for Kant, it would be contradictory and incoherent to think that it is 'just to resist the source of justice'.[63] Additionally, just as he opposes acts of deceit or lies, Kant's objection to disobedience of the sovereign is rooted in the formal requirement of universalizability. Therefore, regardless of the consequences for which we might hope in opposing an unjust sovereign, resistence is forbidden by the moral law because it makes the coherent possibility of *any* civil constitution impossible when universalized. As Kant notes in 'Perpetual Peace,' 'any *legal* constitution, even if it is only in small measure *lawful*, is better than none at all …'.[64] This *de facto* notion of what constitutes an acceptable sovereign suggests that all empirically existing states are compatible with freedom insofar as they are a bulwark against lawlessness.

There is however another side of Kant's doctrine of sovereignty. Alongside the statements we have just seen above there is an unmistakable and sustained call for

[55] See MM, pp. 230–1/24; TP, p. 75; PP, p. 99; UH, pp. 46–7.

[56] This questioning is wrong if it undermines the sovereign, the ultimate judge of what is a threat. Of course, Kant attempts to assure his contemporary sovereigns that the public use of reason and criticism are not threats to the foundations of their political orders. See QE, pp. 54–60.

[57] MM, p. 319/95.

[58] See T. Pogge for the charge of 'dogmatism', 'Kant's Theory of Justice', *Kant-Studien*, 79:4 (1988), pp. 431–3; and T. Pogge, 'Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty', *Ethics*, 103 (1992), p. 59. As A.D. Rosen notes, there is a fundamental incompatibility between Kant's absolutist statements on sovereignty and his subsequent demand that states be republican (that is, divided constitutionally), *Kant's Theory of Justice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 143–4.

[59] MM, p. 317/94; TP, p. 75. Cf. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 313. For an argument concerning Hobbesian ideas in Kant's philosophy, see R. Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 207–25.

[60] See CF, pp. 182–3.

[61] MM, p. 371/136.

[62] See MM, p. 216/10.

[63] Nicholson, 'Kant on the Duty Never to Resist the Sovereign', p. 223.

[64] PP, p. 118n.

the transformation and continual *reform* of all sovereigns everywhere. The main reason for this seemingly contrary position is that—in spite of whatever *a priori* arguments exist in favour of sovereignty—the actual or phenomenal reality of sovereign power poses immense threats to human freedom. There is no shortage of evidence of this sentiment, but perhaps the most clear expression is in 'The Contest of the Faculties':

> In the face of the omnipotence of nature, or rather its supreme first cause which is inaccessible to us, the human being is, in his turn, but a trifle. But for the sovereigns of his own species to also consider him as such, whether by burdening him as an animal, regarding him as a mere tool of their designs, or exposing him in their conflicts with one another in order to have him massacred—this is no trifle, but a subversion of the purpose of creation itself.[65]

Here we have an explicit acknowledgment by Kant that it is not merely the lawlessness of the state of nature that is a threat to human freedom. The cure of sovereignty can be almost as bad as the disease called anarchy (although never, according to Kant, quite as bad).[66] For sovereign agents are liable to treat their subjects as mere means rather than ends, thus negating the basis of humanity altogether. Moreover, the immoral situation of lawless anarchy is now reproduced *among* the sovereign states, creating an endless incentive for war and the systematic negation of freedom that results from its outbreak. The enabling condition for justice inside the state thus produces a situation of international injustice that demands reform.

Kant's doctrine of sovereignty becomes complicated by the question of reform. The view that any empirically existing sovereign agency is a sufficient mechanism for freedom is now called into question. This is because he introduces an external *standard* for the reform of sovereignty—the 'original contract'—that is a goal so lofty that no amount of political improvement could totally satisfy its requirements.[67] This 'ideal' supports a legislator that wills *only* that which individuals would consent to, thus being entirely compatible with a society of autonomous or law-giving members. According to Kant, no empirically existing sovereign is entirely adequate or compatible with freedom when judged against this standard. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* his absolutist statements on sovereign legitimacy are closely followed by assertions on the necessity for reform towards the only constitution which can approximate the 'original contract': a republican constitution. As Kant writes:

> … the spirit of an original contract involves an obligation on the part of the constituting authority to make the *kind of government* suited to the system of an original contract. Accordingly, even if this cannot be done all at once, it is under obligation to change the kind of government gradually and continually so that it harmonizes *in its effect* with the only constitution that accords with right, that of a pure republic, in such a way that the old (empirical) statutory forms, which served merely to bring about the *submission* of the people, are replaced by the original (rational) form, the only form which makes *freedom* the principle

[65] CF, p. 185. I am using P. Riley's slightly altered translation of this paragraph, 'Elements of Kant's Practical Philosophy' in R. Beiner and W. J. Booth (eds.), *Kant and Political Philosophy: The Contemporary Legacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 20.

[66] See PP, p. 113.

[67] See MM, p. 340/112; TP, p. 79; cf. CF, p. 187.

and indeed the condition for any exercise of *coercion*, is required by a rightful constitution of a state in the strict sense of the word.[68]

The constant reform of sovereignty required by the standard of an 'original contract' is especially important for international relations because, once 'domestic' anarchy is overcome by sovereignty, it is only the reform of sovereignty that can domesticate international politics.[69] A republican constitution ensures that sovereign agency is made responsive to the ends of its citizens and is thus entirely cautious about its external conduct.

How are we to make sense of the two distinct types of statements that constitute Kant's doctrine of sovereignty? We could examine more closely how he defines a 'sovereign'. What we find, however, is not entirely helpful because there are two operative definitions. In the case of his dogmatic defence of sovereignty, Kant equates it merely with any existing *legislative* mechanism that transcends the state of nature.[70] There is no question of a constitutional division of powers within the state nor of the requirement of consent by the people.[71] The other definition of sovereignty in Kant's texts is predicated on the second, reformist element of the doctrine above. Sovereignty is that which belongs 'only to the united will of the people'.[72] Under this definition the sovereign legislative agency is only one of three elements in a constitutionally divided state (the others being the executive and judiciary branches). Sovereignty thus seems dependent here upon the restraints of popular will.[73]

The differences between the two types of statements that constitute Kant's doctrine of sovereignty are paradoxical, but not necessarily contradictory. To understand why this is so we must consider the dialectical, evolutionary and 'top-down' nature of the reform process that Kant envisages.[74] If we examine closely what he says about sovereignty it becomes clear that, true to the logic of sovereignty, all reform must be self-generated and entirely initiated by the sovereign itself: 'A change in a (defective) constitution, which may certainly be necessary at times, can … be carried out through *reform* by the sovereign itself, but not by the people. …'[75] The 'is' of actually existing sovereigns (found in first definition above) must contain the seeds of the sovereign that 'ought' to be (of the second definition). Kant's view is that, once the sovereign creates a mere lawful 'civil union' out of anarchy, it alone will have the force and legislative legitimacy to progressively recreate itself in history and to produce a 'society' based increasingly on the principles of the 'original contract'.[76] It is certainly true that Kant recommends that sovereigns consult philosophers; tolerate public debate; remain open to the 'spirit of commerce'; and move

[68] MM, p. 340/112.
[69] See especially MM, p. 345/115.
[70] In this definition the sovereign is the only a judge 'competent to render a verdict having rightful force', MM, p. 312/90.
[71] See Nicholson, 'Kant on the Duty Never to Resist the Sovereign', p. 218.
[72] MM, p. 314/91.
[73] G. Cavallar argues that Kant's absolutist vision of sovereignty is displaced by a 'new' paradigm of 'popular sovereignty', *Kant and the Theory and Practice of International Right* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 58. However, I think this displacement appears incomplete—Kant does not explicitly repudiate nor alter his dogmatic statements about sovereignty that clearly undercut the popular (or democratic) foundations of legislative authority.
[74] Ibid., p. 4.
[75] MM, pp. 321–2/98.
[76] See MM, p. 307/85.

towards a truly republican separation of powers. However, even where such a republic is approximated, Kant states that the sovereign must have ultimate discretion over to which of these influences to respond—for the 'idea' of an original contract requires only that the sovereign consider whether the united will of the people 'could have' possibly agreed to a specific law.[77]

Until now I have only described the main elements of Kant's dualistic doctrine of sovereignty and suggested how they are related to one another. I have temporarily abstracted Kant's attitudes towards sovereignty from his larger critical philosophy in order to highlight the essential dualism of his political thought. However, in order to explain this dualism, I will reconnect sovereignty to its ground and ultimate justification: the concept of *freedom*.

Kant's concept of freedom

Kant claims that the concept of freedom is the 'keystone' of his entire critical system.[78] This statement does not by itself clarify matters for two reasons. We need to understand how his concept of freedom is distinct within the context of modernity. Even more problematic, however, is the ambiguity *within* Kant's use of the concept.[79] To overcome these challenges the ensuing analysis is restricted to the following tasks. First, I examine how Kant's response to earlier modern conceptions of freedom creates an ontological split in his critical philosophy between morality and politics.[80] Second, I claim that this split produces the division in his concept of freedom between 'inner' (moral) and 'outer' (political) dimensions. The dualism of his doctrine of sovereignty is a consequence of its dependence on this bifurcation of freedom. Kant is never entirely clear about whether sovereignty is compatible with freedom because it is ultimately ambiguous whether any amount of political reform can satisfy its metaphysical requirements.

Kant realized that existing modern thought undermined human freedom after reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[81] The thinkers of early modernity claimed to liberate individuals from a dependence upon nature through radically new conceptions of science and politics. However, their 'pre-critical' assumptions actually enhanced our servitude because they deny free will. For example, an autonomous modern science negates the grounds of human agency by subordinating individuals to a prior system of natural causality over which they are ultimately powerless. An autonomous modern politics, as espoused by Niccolò Machiavelli, is equally problematic. Although the individual is depicted as a spontaneous force, political

[77] See TP, p. 79.
[78] C.Pr, p. 3/3.
[79] As H.E. Allison writes, the 'bewildering number of ways in which Kant characterizes freedom and the variety of distinctions he draws between various kinds or senses of freedom … [make it] is the most difficult aspect of his philosophy to interpret, let alone defend', *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[80] See K. Hutchings, 'The possibility of judgement: moralizing and theorizing in international relations', *Review of International Studies*, 18 (1992), pp. 51–62.
[81] See S. Shell, *The Rights of Reason: a Study of Kant's Philosophy and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 21; G.A. Kelly, *Idealism, Politics and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 99.

action still increases our dependence upon nature because it is motivated by self-interest and happiness. Hence, Kant claims that modern science and politics cannot offer a basis for free will, and, moreover, they cannot protect the individual from being conceived as merely an instrumental means rather than an end.

Kant's critical system attempts to correct these problematic assumptions of early modernity by positing an autonomous morality. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he limits the scope of natural causality by establishing the boundaries of legitimate knowledge. He claims that, because the human mind does not have access to the underlying metaphysical structure of nature, we can and ought to assume that individuals have an unconditioned free will.[82] Science is thereby made compatible with freedom when it is subordinated to the requirements of an autonomous morality.[83] In Kant's works on practical philosophy he similarly checks the influence of an autonomous politics by establishing limits on action. When practical reasoning is based on an autonomous morality, *duty for its own sake* (that is, the categorical imperative) trumps expediency. As he writes, '[a] true system of politics cannot … take a single step without first paying tribute to morality'.[84] In making pure morality the only unconditioned ground, Kant thinks he has provided an authoritative foundation for individual freedom.[85] In contrast to other expressions of liberalism, the goal of rational individuals is self-legislation rather than mere negative liberty.[86] This means that the desire for happiness and the pursuit of self-interest do not constitute freedom.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant writes that a free will is 'in a sphere entirely different from the empirical,' and that, 'the necessity which it expresses … consist[s] only in the formal conditions of [its] possibility …'.[87] Accordingly, morality must be 'cleansed of everything … empirical'.[88] It should be stressed that this peculiarly Kantian redefinition of freedom does not presume that an autonomous morality governs men and women as they 'empirically' exist. This is because he thinks that, despite our free will, finite individuals are always subject to the forces of natural desire.[89] It is for this reason that morality must exist in a sphere that is autonomous from an empirical world which is recalcitrant to virtue.[90] The autonomy of morality in Kant's thought thus implicitly recreates the separation of politics and ethics advocated by Machiavelli.[91] Although Machiavelli makes ethics a matter of private conscience that is irrelevant to statecraft, Kant's restriction of morality to a realm of pure duty strips politics of any inherent connection to morality. Politics can at best be touched by, but never truly constitutive of, ethical life. Since the motives involved in politics are invariably mixed with and corrupted by the contingency of interests, morality, for Kant too, seems to be a matter of private conscience.

[82] C.Pur, pp. Bxxvi/28, Bxxix-xxx/30–1; cf. C.Pur, pp. A709=B737/665.
[83] C.Pur, p. Bxxx/31.
[84] PP, p. 125.
[85] See GMM, pp. 437/105, 428/96.
[86] C. Taylor, 'Kant's Theory of Freedom', in Z. Pelczynski and J. Gray (eds.), *Conceptions of Liberty in Political Philosophy* (London: The Althone Press, 1984), p. 119.
[87] C.Pr, p. 34/34.
[88] GMM, p. 389/57.
[89] UH, p. 46.
[90] GMM, p. 408/75.
[91] N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 61–2.

The most important consequence, then, of Kant's response to the 'pre-critical' modern context, is the ontological chasm he opens between the moral autonomy of subjects and the political world that is devoid of moral content. It is this dualism that creates the necessity of a project to reform political relations among individuals without compromising or corrupting their sacred moral autonomy. To accomplish this Kant claims that political practice must be subordinated to the same pattern or logic of universal principles found in morality. This reform is to be accomplished through two separate yet related means. First, it requires an act of *will* on the part of individuals to submit to the *a priori* obligations of a legal order. Second, Kant relies on a teleological conception of historical progress to push humans where they are naturally averse to going, that is, into lawful constitutional relations at every level of political organization.

However, Kant's reform project depends upon his division of the concept of freedom into two separated dimensions. His distinction between the 'internal' (moral) and the 'external' (political) sides of individual freedom in the *Metaphysics of Morals* constitutes his most profound statement on the relationship between an autonomous morality and political practice. By 'internal' freedom Kant means the pure autonomy of moral causality; it is the relation of the will to itself. 'External' freedom is liberty in relation to the wills of other beings; it is freedom from the impositions of others through constitutional limits on the freedom of each. The pure morality associated with inner freedom *informs*—and thereby subordinates—the structure of outer freedom and the political reality with which it is associated.

This division Kant posits between 'internal' and 'external' freedom does not merely allow him to articulate a political reform project. It also forms the basis of an immense *limitation* on the conditions of political reform. The pure universality of the categorical imperative is 'externalized' in a public system of rights that makes every individual an unconditional legal end.[92] But the creation of external freedom is only a *surrogate* for internal freedom which is always restricted to its entirely separate sphere. Thus while internal freedom provides the *form* of politics, Kant claims that it cannot ultimately legislate *ends*. As a result, although the categorical imperative contains the requirement of respect for humanity as an end-in-itself, politics must be abstracted from the pursuit of such moral ends. Therefore, politics can only be procedural. Kant explains this distinction as the difference between 'morality' and 'legality'.[93] 'Moral' lawgiving has the inner incentive of duty alone, but 'legal' lawgiving is conditioned, and therefore ultimately 'pathological'.[94] Although the distinction between legality and morality serves to limit and restrict the legislative force of morality within the political world, such a limitation is based on Kant's firm conviction that all reform projects are doomed at best—and dangerous at worst—unless the essential *autonomy of morality* is preserved. As Otfried Höffe states, 'Kant rejects the position that the law and the state should promote the citizen's morality (virtue). Such moralizing tends toward totalitarianism'.[95]

My argument is that Kant's doctrine of state sovereignty is made dualistic and ambiguous by the restrictions and legislative limits inherent in the distinction

[92] See Rosen, *Kant's Theory of Justice*, pp. 12–13.
[93] MM, pp. 218/20 and 220/21; cf. C.Pr, p. 72/75.
[94] MM, p. 219/20.
[95] O. Höffe, *Immanuel Kant*, trans. M. Farrier (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 171.

between internal and external freedom outlined above. There are two reasons that support this view. First, it is unclear that the reformist agenda centred around the sovereign state *can* contribute to freedom at all. This is because the absolute autonomy of the moral realm appears to deny that *any* activity or institution in the political sphere can have an effect on individual autonomy. As Allen D. Rosen notes, '[t]he complete absence of external freedom would not diminish … [inner] freedom in the slightest. … The justification of external freedom cannot, consequently, be derived from the moral necessity of inner freedom'.[96] Politics cannot, it would seem, be used as an instrument for realizing the kingdom of ends on earth. However, ambiguity creeps into Kant's thought because there are clear instances in which his justifications of civil society and external freedom logically entail the moral ends of inner freedom. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant stresses that although morality cannot be enforced, the legal framework of the state provides a much needed push-start towards individual moral realization:

> Certainly it cannot be denied that in order to bring an as yet uneducated or a degraded mind into the path of the morally good, some preparatory guidance is needed to attract it by a view to its own advantage or to frighten it by fear of harm. As soon as this machinery, these leading strings, have had some effect, the pure moral motive must be brought to mind.[97]

Politics has a function, therefore, in providing the mechanism by which a 'master' or sovereign breaks the 'self-will' of each individual, forcing him 'to obey a universally valid will under which everyone can be free'.[98] As Patrick Riley states, Kant's thrust here is that the empirical world of politics and universal laws creates 'a kind of environment or context for good will by bracketing out occasions of political sin (such as others' domination) that might tempt (though never determine) people to act wrongly'.[99] Although the machinations of the sovereign can never be moral in themselves, they can serve indirectly certain moral ends by transcending the state of nature. By giving each individual a consistent domain of external liberty, and securing this domain from external coercion, the moral end of autonomy is the goal of politics for Kant.

There is a second, more profound ambiguity produced by Kant's concept of freedom. Even if it is accepted that politics has the 'moral' function of producing a stable context outside of anarchy, it is not clear whether the entirely *formal* structure of equal domains of external freedom exhausts Kant's vision of reform. This is because Kant's distinction between 'legality' and 'morality' (or between 'formal' and 'material' principles) is not always rigidly maintained in his texts. Is Kant's politics merely *formal* or does it also contain a *material* principle that promotes the idea of treating each individual as an end? Moreover, do moral ends act as mere *regulative* ideals for reform or is there a material basis for their realization in politics? These questions are important because they have led to immense controversy over the nature of Kant's liberalism. They can also be traced as the central point of contention between the two separate liberal internationalist legacies that I identified in the first section. As I have argued elsewhere, Kant's legacy is rendered either more

[96] Rosen, *Kant's Theory of Justice*, p. 43.
[97] C.Pr, p. 152/158.
[98] UH, p. 46.
[99] Riley, 'Elements of Kant's Practical Philosophy', p. 20.

'conservative' or more 'radical' by interpreting differently these deep-seated ambiguities at the core of his political and international thought.[100]

The conservative response to this ambiguity—both interpretively and politically—is that the kingdom of ends is merely a regulative ideal, and therefore something that is only in the *service* of experience. Although all ends must be abstracted from politics, Kant suggests frequently that the systematic harmony of purposes that motivates our inner freedom serves merely as a symbolic device when we organize external relations.[101] In this case, 'the *idea* of an ethical commonwealth generated by the good will serves as a kind of utopia that earthly politics can legally approximate through peacefulness, both internal and international'.[102] But, in this reading, the mere regulative or symbolic application of moral ends to politics is limited. Such goals are still ontologically alienated from the political world, and their practical legislation onto reality is always *formal*. This interpretation is consistent with Michael Doyle's depiction of Kant's liberal internationalism because the existing sovereign state—albeit only one reformed towards republicanism—is entirely sufficient for external freedom and thus effectively terminates progressive political reform. All that is needed is the diffusion of formally republican principles of sovereignty.

A more radical response to Kant's ambiguity emerges if we focus on his concept of Enlightenment. Thomas W. Pogge suggests that Kant's Enlightenment means that the material purpose or end of the categorical imperative is projected into politics as well.[103] And there is evidence, both in terms of the texts and logical implication, that Kant considered his politics to have a material dimension or deeper moral purpose, too. This possibility emerges only when we consider that Kant's concepts of history and teleological judgement serve to bridge the sharp chasm between nature and moral freedom that he first posits.[104] Enlightenment hence gives political reform a potent moral incentive that appeared to be initially restricted or disallowed by the terms of Kant's distinction between inner and outer freedom. The moral incentive of a kingdom of ends justifies political action, reform, and institutional change (under the strict condition that the formal mechanisms initially guaranteed by the sovereign are not destroyed by revolutionary upheaval). For reform and change are part of a slow process:

> [a]ll man's talents are now gradually developed, his taste cultivated, and by a continual process of enlightenment, a beginning is made towards establishing a way of thinking that can with time transform the primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles; and thus a *pathologically* enforced social union is transformed into a *moral whole*.[105]

Thus the (material) purposes of politics emerge in an ambiguous fashion in Kant's thought. The aim is to condition individuals to act in such a way that a kingdom of ends is possible; but this conditioning cannot teach virtue directly.

[100] A. Franceschet, 'Popular Sovereignty or Cosmopolitan Democracy?'.
[101] C.Pr, pp. 70–1/74.
[102] Riley, 'Elements of Kant's Practical Philosophy', p. 11.
[103] Pogge, 'Kant's Theory of Justice'.
[104] See CJ, passim; H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Bartelson, 'The Possibility of Judgement'.
[105] UH, pp. 44–5.

Andrew Linklater's reading of Kant's legacy clearly takes up this more radical interpretation. The cosmopolitan kingdom of ends is viewed as a real goal that cannot be met merely through the agency of the (republican) sovereign state. Moreover, the division of humanity into exclusive territorial spheres governed by sovereign agents is only of transient significance to the realization of this moral goal.[106] As a result, Linklater drops Kant's dogmatic justification of sovereignty and embraces the possibility of alternative, post-statist frameworks for the promotion of individual autonomy.

Conclusion

Kant's doctrine of state sovereignty is an ambiguous foundation for liberal internationalist theory. On the one hand, he suggests that any existing form of sovereignty is adequate to the goal of freedom. On the other, he claims that all existing sovereigns must submit to reform because they are incompatible with freedom in light of the transcendental standard of the 'original contract'. Kant hopes that this ambivalence shall be resolved progressively through a teleological history in which sovereigns are compelled to undergo self-reform. Nonetheless, it is ultimately unclear whether even the much desired republican states generated by history are sufficient instruments of individual autonomy in its most profound sense. This ambiguity has created the possibility of two distinct Kantian 'legacies' in International Relations discourse that are exemplified by Michael Doyle and Andrew Linklater. Nonetheless, the aim of this article has been less to judge which 'Kant' is the correct one than to explain why his texts are so difficult to interpret unequivocally.

The autonomy of morality that grounds Kant's thought is what makes his philosophy incompatible with the main strands of Anglo-American liberal internationalism. However, the unresolved tension I have explored between state sovereignty and individual freedom in his texts is central to other expressions of liberal internationalism too. If Kant is invoked by contemporary scholars attempting to resolve this problem, great care should be made not to render him too strong a partisan. This is because it is unclear just how wedded Kant is to the sovereign state in light of his bifurcated concept of freedom. Rather than glossing over this ambiguity in Kant's thought in order to conceal the contemporary divisions among liberals, it would be more honest if we *started* an intellectual debate from the place where Kant grounds his political project: a conviction that the public use of reason and open debate will gradually lead us away from an initial preoccupation with anarchy and coercion. This conviction is essential to Enlightenment and the recognition that the moral foundations of sovereignty are ultimately contingent upon the progress they allow in creating increased autonomy and the space for reflection. Kant's true legacy is simply that of giving us a distinctive and provocative conceptual vocabulary with which to continue an important debate on sovereignty and freedom that is not exhausted by proclamations of the 'end of history'.

[106] See Linklater, *The Transformation of Community*, p. 220.