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## AUTONOMY, DIGNITY AND HISTORY IN CARANTI'S KANT'S POLITICAL LEGACY

### ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss some relevant theses of Caranti's *Kant's Political Legacy*, whose aim is to provide a consistent account of how we could develop Kant's political thought and see to what extent Kant's insights can help us to critically understand the 21<sup>st</sup> century's political world. First, I will focus on autonomy as the ground of dignity and discuss Caranti's arguments against the exclusiveness of the Categorical Imperative as the sole principle of true moral agency. Second, I will take into account Caranti's views on history and consider whether human rational nature can be regarded as containing teleological – though non-biological – elements, thereby questioning Caranti's Separability Thesis.

### KEYWORDS

Autonomy, dignity,  
moral agency,  
teleology, history,  
human nature.

### Prologue

Our world, in our time, is marked by the always increasing urgency to find good solutions to very relevant political problems. In 2018, mankind has at its disposal enough technology to plan a voyage to Mars, but still no satisfactory remedies for poverty, terrorist attacks and plenty of social and juridical issues which it is impossible to mention exhaustively: from the thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean sea to rape cases in India; from labor exploitation in Asia, Africa and South America to the recent challenges to the free market, without forgetting Brexit, the Middle-East crisis and so on.

Everybody will agree that the answer to these political problems has to be political as well, either in terms of single states or by involving supranational institutions. In turn, this leads politicians to search for strategies and intervention-hypotheses. But again, this raises further questions. Plenty of political scientists, sociologists and political philosophers thus investigate the sense and meaning of individual laws or jurisdictional controversies, as well as of socio-economical themes. Consider, as an example, the range of the discussion on human rights, transnational justice and, more recently, environment protection. In order to discuss these issues, one should have – in the first place – an idea of what would be the essential feature of every single political move (extremely broadly conceived), namely what makes these issues *political*. This sort of theoretical regression would reach its final step by asking: *what is* politics, after all? How should we understand the fact that

even the most tribal communities still have some kind of political organization? If one wants to pursue this line of thought beyond this step, he or she will reach the point where the issue is simply: *what is man?* Or, who are we? To answer this question means to understand how politics is essential to philosophical investigations. After all, Plato already taught us that the city and the soul are tied to each other (see Fussi 2012).

We do not want here to move beyond the specific question of politics. Instead, we think it is relevant to understand why we cannot avoid going back to the political philosopher Kant when searching for answers concerning the contemporary political world.

For an example, as Paul Guyer stated,

there has been much more extensive discussion of Kant's views about perpetual peace, world government, and cosmopolitanism since the 1990s, especially 1995 (200 years after the publication of *Perpetual Peace*), and up to a brand-new book called *Kant's Embedded Cosmopolitanism* by Georg Cavallar. Then its topics of world peace, world government, cosmopolitanism, international justice, etc. were very extensively discussed, much more than they were discussed before. Now, is that just because of the contingent fact that it happened to be the two-hundredth anniversary of *Perpetual Peace* 20 years ago? I do not think so. It is because of globalization, it is because of the issues about international justice, global justice and so on, that are generally more pressing issues now than they were earlier; and that impacts what seems important in scholarly studies. Similarly, there has been an explosion of non-Kantian literature on global justice in the Anglo-American philosophy in the last twenty years. So, that has become a major topic in Kant scholarship as well. I can imagine that, as democratic forms of government come under increasing pressure, even in the long-established democracies, as they have been in recent years from issues of immigration, from inequality, from resentment, all the ways in which governments and long established democracies in Europe and even in the United States are under pressure, that then people may turn back to Kant's political philosophy, which sometimes seems to people to be old fashioned and boring, because it is a profound defense of the primacy of freedom and of the need for limits to paternalistic government or worse. Kant's views about what he calls republican government, the equal standing of the individual before the law, the separation of powers etc. etc., become urgent and important, just as the discussion of the international issues became in the last twenty years (Guyer 2017: 22–23).

Two important points emerge: 1) Kant has left a huge legacy of political concepts and reflections; 2) this legacy is no dead letter. In a few words, these are the basic premises of Caranti's *Kant's Political Legacy*, which belongs to a very valuable series of researches into Kant's political philosophy<sup>1</sup>. A third premise would be our initial consideration, namely the very fact that we feel the increasing urgency to find good solutions to our political problems. Our political world can find in Kant's thought a very valuable instrument to understand what is happening, why it is happening, and how to manage a change towards what should happen. Obviously, one could ask: *why* Kant? The philosopher of Königsberg was not the sole thinker who dedicated his time to political themes. For a good answer, Caranti's reader can refer to

1 Let me just quote – besides the already mentioned Cavallar 2015 – Kleingeld 2011 and Krasnoff, Sánchez Madrid, Satne 2018.

the first lines of page 2 of *Kant's Political Legacy*. Kant cannot offer any ready-for-use political solutions, but only a direction for our efforts. Let me just clarify that this direction is of the greatest importance. As I said before, our political world is extremely fragmented. Its problems thus require a systematic approach.

Though it could seem superfluous to say that a globalized environment needs worldwide perspectives, it is precisely with Kant's political philosophy that we see how the direction we are seeking has to be of the widest range. For a simple fact, namely because the question *what is man?* is a Kantian question. And again, the extent of Kant's thought shares with Plato what we could call the unavoidability of politics. It is impossible to avoid developing a political reflection when philosophizing on man. As I said, our political world is fragmented; not only because we are facing very heterogeneous problems, but also because the very status of each political issue is not clearly determined. Human rights, peace, progress have a single meaning only within the pages of a dictionary. The concrete forms these ideas assume do not display any uniformity. Rather, these forms represent the reason why it is necessary to include political reflection in every philosophical inquiry of man. In these terms, Kant's critical philosophy is a valuable resource.

Now, it is worth noticing that Caranti's book is not simply a book on Kant's political philosophy. The title of Caranti's book has to be taken very seriously. Caranti is not simply interested in discussing what Kant has left us. Instead, this book represents a clear example of how a great philosophical legacy can contribute not only to the comprehension of the contemporary world, but also to the definition of new thought-paradigms and, why not, even intervention strategies at a more general level (guidelines, analysis, etc.). Caranti's book tells us what to do with Kant's thought, given that this thought, as I said, provides us with a direction for our efforts. In this sense, one can easily understand why Caranti has chosen to focus on human rights, peace and progress. The political challenges of our world precisely require us to say what has to be understood as a human right, and for which reasons. In addition, peace and progress cannot just represent the essential features of a benevolent person. Again, a political philosopher has at least the duty to understand what peace and progress mean, why they should be pursued and, eventually, how they could be reached. Obviously, this is beyond a critical discussion of Kant's texts. Our world is not Kant's. Nonetheless, Kant seems to have at least tried to discuss themes whose urgency in his time was surely lesser than in ours. This is what we should call the greatness of a philosopher. The fact that Caranti has not only recognized it, but also tried to make valuable political perspectives out of it, represents one of the major merits of *Kant's Political Legacy*. Though much can be said of *Kant's Political Legacy*, in what follows I will focus on two specific topics in order to both discuss Caranti's interpretation of Kant and make some critical reflections on Caranti's theoretical proposals.

## 1. Autonomy and Dignity

My first concern is that of autonomy as the ground of dignity. In the third chapter of his book, after having discussed Kant's ground for the normativity of human rights, Caranti develops an alternative view:

We start from the premise that we are autonomous beings, a view that is not only at the centre of Kant's philosophy but also – as we will show – of (a) common sense and (b) all major cultural traditions and revealed religions, at least when reasonably interpreted. Autonomy is not to be understood merely as the ability to choose one's path in life, or as the ability to be rational in the sense of purposive agents. With Kant, we refer to a capacity distinct from and 'higher' than practical freedom. We have in mind the ability to act under self-imposed moral constraints. This capacity – it will be argued – shows us as worthy creatures, and reveals the deepest and most stable layer of human value. Reflecting on our autonomy, we turn out to be beings with this fascinating feature: being able to silence all natural impulses, even the strongest instincts of survival, and act from our conception of duty (Caranti 2017: 57).

The core of the proposed interpretation lies in the following arguments. As a first point, Caranti wants to detach the concept of autonomy from the exclusiveness of the Categorical Imperative. This hypothesis can be considered as Kantian in form, though the content radically diverges from Kant's account. According to Caranti, autonomous agency does not need to exclusively follow the moral law, since following other available rules (the Golden Rule for example) would still mean to act autonomously. In a few words, differently from Kant, true autonomy does not require a morality grounded on the Categorical Imperative. Recalling Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Caranti focuses on the concept of self-determination. According to Pico, human dignity lies in the capacity to become whatever one decides to be. However, Caranti's account moves one step further, for he wants to distinguish between autonomy intended as mere self-determination and autonomy intended as the capacity for moral agency<sup>2</sup>. If the question is *why do human beings possess dignity?*, Caranti's answer would be: *because they are autonomous, namely free to act under self-imposed moral constraints*. As I said, these constraints are plural, and the moral law loses its exclusivity.

We see again why Caranti's move is Kantian only according to the form. Caranti indeed holds that the moral constraints have to be categorical in kind, though this does not require one of the formulas of the Categorical Imperative. The difference from Kant on this point could be summed up in this way: while Kant stated that an agent is truly autonomous when consciously self-constrained according to the moral law, Caranti instead claims that, given the capacity to act under self-imposed constraints, an agent is autonomous by the very fact of acting in this way, no matter what the constraints properly consist in, nor how successful the action is. Thus, duty and Categorical Imperative no longer go together. Another point Caranti insists upon is the independence from contingent sensuous motives. Acting according to duties involves a rejection of whatever could conflict with the same duties, given that such obstacles, however, influence the will. Since they are attractive and powerful, resisting them thus requires a self-constriction.

The reasons why Caranti differentiates his account from Kant's are mainly two. On the one hand, an account of autonomy which does not depend on the Categorical

2 See Caranti 2017: 61: "The distinction between the common-sense notion of autonomy (self-determination) and the one at work here (capacity for moral agency) is important in understanding the way in which our approach links the possession of a faculty to the intrinsic worth that entitles humans to the protections of human rights. In fact, why should the sheer possession of a capacity ground any worth?"

Imperative is transcultural. Several different cultural traditions, and even religions, share something similar to the Golden Rule or, at least, a principle for autonomous agency which always requires self-constriction and resistance to sensuous motives. Through this, Caranti thinks it is possible to outline a Kantian perspective which could be accepted outside the orthodoxy of Kantian interpreters. On the other hand, by renouncing the Categorical Imperative, Caranti's account of autonomy both disregards any metaphysical assumptions and demands to be compatible with common sense. To sum up, once we sever autonomy from the exclusiveness of the Categorical Imperative, we obtain a wider, transcultural, but still universally valid account of autonomy whose recognition grounds the dignity of human beings.

The thesis is agreeable and thorough. Caranti's arguments demand that we 1) develop Kant's political legacy without emulating it; 2) provide a transcultural account of autonomy; and 3) allow the latter to ground the concept of human dignity. This said, given that a book is interesting when it raises questions, let me now ask mine. The first: is this account of autonomy strong enough to satisfy Caranti's demands? For sure, Caranti's notion of autonomy seems more promising than Kant's, but one could wonder whether Kant's notion of the Categorical Imperative as the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom has still something to say. Caranti carefully distinguishes between practical freedom and autonomy (pp. 24–33) in this way: while the former concerns the capacity of setting ends for oneself without being influenced by sensuous inclinations, with the latter an agent sets his or her own end independently of any empirical motive. In the first case the inclinations are necessary, but not exhaustive, conditions for the will's choice; in the second, they play no role. Though this distinction is clear, it could be reframed by focusing on the ground of an action. For example, I am practically free to recycle in order to protect the environment or not to be fined. What grounds my choice here is an end that is external to the object of the action.

Very far from here is the choice of jumping into the water, at my own risk, to save the life of someone endangered. The object of my action and the ground of the choice are in this case one and the same. It must be noticed here that the causality of freedom does not deal with cognition, but with actuality. Indeed, for Kant,

[...] the moral law is not concerned with cognition of the constitution of objects that may be given to reason from elsewhere but rather with a cognition insofar as it can itself become the ground of the existence of objects and insofar as reason, by this cognition, has causality in a rational being, that is, pure reason, which can be regarded as a faculty immediately determining the will (*KpV*, 5: 46 (177)).<sup>3</sup>

According to this picture, a truly autonomous agent ought to take the grounds of existence of his or her moral action as the sole end of his or her will. Obviously, this does not mean to know with certainty that the action is truly from duty, for according to Kant there can be no experience of freedom<sup>4</sup>. However, if the grounds

3 *KpV*, 5: 46 (177). See Ferrarin 2015: 128–136.

4 As already mentioned, consider someone who jumps into the water to rescue someone endangered. He or she recognizes the duty to help a castaway, for his or her action comes from the self-imposed constraint to risk his or her own life for the action to be successful. The command of the moral law makes the subjective maxim of our rescuer a universal law. Therefore, the moral action of the rescuer is one of those objects whose ground of existence

of existence of the object of the action were not the end of my action, this would certainly compromise the morality of the same action, for my agency would be driven by heteronomous motives and towards external ends.

This brings us back to the question whether Caranti's account of autonomy is enough. For sure, Kant's account seems to satisfy at least demands 2)<sup>5</sup> and 3), but then we should ask Caranti why he thinks he can do without the Categorical Imperative when Kant's notion of autonomy already did the job (precisely resting on the Categorical Imperative). For sure, a first answer could be that demand 1)<sup>6</sup> would otherwise remain unsatisfied. On this point I think Caranti's approach is extremely valuable, for it tries to make the best possible use of a huge legacy, moving many steps beyond mere interpretative work. For what concerns the other two issues, I think it could be useful to specify that the Categorical Imperative is not properly a law, but rather the mere form of a law (see Longuenesse 2005: 246–264). I would not say that, according to Kant, one must subjugate his or her maxim to one of the formulations (see Caranti 2017: 63–64) of the Categorical Imperative. Rather, I think that the law according to which I determine my maxim has to be the (only) one through which my maxim itself becomes a law. For this to happen, the moral law legislates the mere form of an action, whatever its content may be.

If I have understood Caranti correctly, I think he holds that autonomous agency does still need a principle, though he refuses Kant's claim that only the Categorical Imperative is entitled to be the principle at stake. What I suggest here is to consider the Categorical Imperative as the mere form of a law, and not as a principle which commands what to do. This would be, in my humble opinion, the reason why Kant thought that freedom in the proper sense (namely autonomy, not mere practical freedom intended as rational agency) is achievable only through the Categorical Imperative. Compared to the Golden Rule (which, as Caranti correctly claims, belongs to several cultural and religious traditions), the Categorical Imperative displays two main distinctive features. First, it does not say what to do, but only how to act. The moral law is no precept. Rather, since it merely provides us with the form of a law, it makes us responsible of what ought to be done<sup>7</sup>. Second, the key word of the moral law is *act*, not *will*. The action at stake, to be a mark of true autonomy, has to be legislative. In turn, to this end, the action must conform to nothing but the Categorical Imperative.

It is true that the Golden Rule can boast a wider recognition across different cultures. However, I think that an account of autonomy built on this principle,

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is the moral law. Thus, while in the speculative synthesis the matter is always given in intuition, in the practical case we regard the moral law as a kind of performative cognition, for acting according to the categorical imperative makes objects real in the first place.

5 I take here *universality* as wider than *transculturality*. The universal validity of the moral law does not follow from its content, but from the formal element of the imperative. Thus, the moral law radically diverges from other formulas, for I think the imperative cannot be regarded as a formula. Put succinctly, the moral law does not provide us with universally valid maxims or precepts, but only with a formal principle according to which – exclusively – our subjective maxims can be regarded as universal laws. For one of the most clear and precise readings of Kant's account of the moral law see Kleingeld 2017.

6 That is to develop Kant's political legacy without emulating it.

7 On Kant on responsibility see Blöser 2015, Willaschek 2003.

though legitimate, is weaker than the one Kant tried to provide. Put succinctly, if it is correct to claim that human dignity rests on autonomy, I think that true autonomy requires more than acting according to self-imposed duties. As Kant claimed, autonomy requires us to act as if our subjective maxims could be regarded as universal laws. Autonomy does not merely mean to give a law to oneself, for it also requires me to give laws by myself. This means that autonomous agency does not merely require us to act under self-imposed constraints, that is according to a law, for it also makes of my subjective maxims the type (see Ferrarin 2004: 148–156) of a universal law. In a few words, in this case the will is not merely self-legislated but, more properly, it is legislating by itself (see Kleingeld 2018: 71).

Here is where the Golden Rule account misses a crucial point the Categorical Imperative can provide. However, this is not meant to disregard the distinction between developing and emulating a legacy. On the contrary, my point concerns what to do *now* with the Categorical Imperative, namely how should we understand the relationships between the supreme principle of morality and the ground of human dignity.

When I ask Caranti whether autonomy is enough, I do not pose a rhetorical question. On the contrary, I think the question is really open and in need of satisfactory answers. Credit is due to Caranti for having contended with one of the most significant elements of Kant's political legacy.

## 2. Teleology and History

The second topic I will discuss here concerns the relationship between teleology, nature and history. In chapters 7–9, Caranti develops his Kantian view of progress. As he already stated in the case of autonomy, this interpretive perspective is also Kantian in terms of method and form, though it does not entail any mere acritical description of what Kant said. Thus, again, it is Kantian, but not Kant's. Caranti takes into account three texts: the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), *The Contest of the Faculties* (1798) and *To Perpetual Peace* (1795). By focusing on *Idea*, Caranti introduces one of the main theses of Part III, namely the *Separability Thesis*:

the theory of 'natural dispositions' and the theory that spells out the consequences of social unsociability are separable and independent. One can believe in social unsociability (proposition 4) as well as accept the account that spells out the predictable institutional repercussions of such a mechanism (propositions 5–9) without endorsing the 'natural dispositions talk' in which they are embedded. Not accidentally, Kant himself will introduce the concept of unsocial sociability in the First Supplement of *To Perpetual Peace* after an account of nature completely different from the one introduced by the first three propositions (Caranti 2017: 214).

Let us clarify Caranti's aim. The first three propositions of *Idea* hold a problematic view that is incompatible with Darwinian evolutionary theory. According to Kant, the natural dispositions of all creatures are destined to develop both fully and completely. Moreover, human's natural disposition to reason, best develops only within the space of a society. Caranti thinks that Kant's natural dispositions correspond to what contemporary science calls *genetic materials*, whose main feature is

to be subjected to mutation and natural selection. In other words, there is no stable natural disposition to count on. Finally, Caranti also notes that Darwinian biology overcomes Kant's idea that mere mechanical laws (without any teleological orientation) cannot account for the production of any natural feature. The contemporary scientific paradigm indeed excludes any intentionality in nature, resting instead exclusively on mechanical explanations (which are in turn consistent with mutation and natural selection). In order to solve the problem, Caranti then focuses on the remaining six propositions. Though Kant here connects (fourth proposition) the mechanism of social unsociability to natural dispositions – for nature employs antagonism as a means to fully develop human nature – nonetheless Caranti claims that the mechanism of social unsociability occurs independently of any natural disposition. Therefore, one can abandon the teleology of natural dispositions and, at the same time, retain the mechanism of social unsociability.

Now, this thesis is part of a wider project, that is grounding a progressive view of history. Once this step has been completed, Caranti addresses three further explanatory issues. First, the teleological development of history has to be understood without any natural purpose; second, the validation of such teleology rests exclusively on a natural mechanism (there is no need to unify an alleged lawless aggregate of events); third, our teleology does not play a mere regulative role, since it has to be shown that progress (though non-linear) will occur more likely than regress or stagnation. To be fair, Caranti's project is even wider. In chapter 8 he discusses the Guarantee Thesis, according to which nature has a plan towards the achievement of perpetual peace. The link between Caranti's Separability Thesis and Kant's Guarantee Thesis lies in the fact that neither play a mere regulative role. In Caranti's words,

there is nothing a priori wrong or dogmatic in focusing on certain fairly stable human inclinations (such as the pursuit of happiness or self-love), as well as on certain very general and uncontroversial empirical facts about the world, to infer from them a thesis about the likelihood of a certain evolution of human affairs (Caranti 2017: 233–234).

Caranti would here borrow the scientific paradigm of *unintended consequences*: our free choices, through consequences we are not always able to master, outline the shape of our political world. Thus, Caranti thinks that through these steps it is possible to argue for an actual development of human political agency towards a condition of perpetual peace, though the latter does not represent a pre-fixed end of nature.

Two things are very remarkable. First, by insisting on the fact that neither the Separability Thesis nor the Guarantee Thesis play a mere regulative role, Caranti proves how seriously he takes the necessity to develop Kant's political thought. Caranti's moves can be easily considered as attempts towards new political paradigms which, in turn, would improve our understanding of the political environment surrounding us. Moreover, though he does not explicitly say that the two theses are *constitutive*, I think they at least outline a coherent political view through which we are not merely able to explain the past but, most importantly, through which we can intervene in our political present. After all, in chapter 9, Caranti masterfully synthesizes the steps of his philosophical research by outlining the figure of



a 21<sup>st</sup> century moral politician, which is first of all required to understand how his or her own political reality is developing in history and, consequently, to find new political concepts through which another reality can be made actual. Therefore, the reader is strongly recommended to read pp. 246–255.

This said, there is still a question we can ask Caranti. What does he precisely mean when he speaks, more or less explicitly, of humans' natural dispositions? If these dispositions are one and the same with the *genetic materials* Caranti refers to, there is obviously no room for an objection to the Darwinian view. However, one could wonder whether Kant thinks that reason properly belongs to human nature or if instead it represents what is beyond nature. The dichotomy is of the greatest importance. On the one hand, as Caranti correctly puts it, assuming a hidden plan of nature in order to ground a progressive view of history is not a legitimate move. On the other, in his *Idea* (first proposition) Kant also says that

Reason in a creature is a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects. But reason itself does not operate instinctively, but rather needs attempts, practice and instruction in order gradually to progress from one stage of insight to another (*IaG*, 8: 18–19 (109)).

Had Kant meant that reason is a natural disposition among others, we would then face the problem of having a natural disposition which disregards and even conflicts with other natural dispositions. The other available option is to think of reason as something (in nature) which – at the same time – also transcends nature. In both cases, the problem is that of making nature and reason consistent with each other. I think it could be misleading not to insist on the fact that the natural disposition called reason is only partially natural. This is not meant to be a criticism of Caranti's objections to the first three propositions of *Idea* but, more modestly, a further deepening of Caranti's use of the distinction between *homo phaenomenon* and *homo noumenon* (pp. 27–28). The question is: *how many natures does a human being possess?* Insofar as it belongs to both the kingdom of nature and to that of reason, a human being seems to have two natures, not merely one.

Now, on the one hand, these two natures can be regarded as separated. In this regard, human beings are either part of natural causal chains (which also include instinct) or rational agents which set ends for themselves. This is only part of the story, however. I would suggest that the duplicity mentioned above does not entail any strong dualism. The very fact that human beings are subjected to instinct *and* are capable of rational agency is not enough to argue for a dualism of human nature. What is instead possible is to think of autonomy (or freedom in the proper sense<sup>8</sup>, not merely practical freedom) as another nature or, in other words, a purposive nature. It is true that autonomy means to act under self-imposed moral constraints and independently of any heteronomous sensuous (in these terms, natural) motives; however, the action of jumping into the water, at my own risk, to save someone endangered is still something which cannot disregard the (natural) laws of fluid dynamics or the principles of human anatomy.

<sup>8</sup> See *KpV*, 5: 47 (178), the moral law is “a law of causality through freedom and hence a law of the possibility of a supersensible nature”.

Autonomous agency still disregards heteronomous sensuous motives, though it does not disregard nature *in toto*, since all autonomous actions take place in the realm of the natural world. As it is very well known, Kant's point was to find what unifies the two causal chains of nature and freedom. Beyond instinct and rational agency, which could be regarded as mere natural dispositions (though it is not easy to think of rational agency as a *genetic material*), autonomous agency thus seems to display another nature. When Kant says that reason knows no boundaries to its projects, he is first of all stating that reason does have projects.

What if one of these projects is that of providing reality, i.e. actuality, in the natural world, to the faculty of *homo noumenon*, that is autonomy? If that were the case, there is no need to abandon the first three propositions of *Idea*, though it is clear they are not enough. Nor is the progressive view of history<sup>9</sup> endangered. Kant is not saying that human nature is biologically destined to perpetual peace but, rather, that, given that nature could always represent an obstacle to reason's projects, reason needs something more than practical freedom to achieve its end. What is then required? Three things, mainly. First, autonomy as the faculty of acting according to self-imposed moral constraints and independently of any sensuous motives. Second, a civil and rightful constitution as the guarantee of external freedom. Third, moral politicians as agents within the gap between the first two requirements, namely agents whose main task is to plan and develop all the necessary means to the end of perpetual peace. If reason is 1) part of our nature and 2) the faculty to determine our (second) nature as autonomous agents, there is no need to exclude the development of our natural dispositions (propositions 1-3) from the steps through which we achieve perpetual peace. To sum up, the development of our natural dispositions is not merely natural, for reason brings our nature far beyond instinct and sensuous inclinations, either by resisting or completely disregarding them.

Let me conclude by saying some words on the last page of *Kant's Political Legacy*, for it raises a significant issue. Here we read that the distinctive marks of a moral politician are not easy to find. As Caranti puts it,

she must have assigned primacy to the moral law over self-love. This secures a firm adherence to the principles of right, an adherence 'for the right reasons', as Rawls would put it. She must have acquired solid and wide knowledge of the empirical laws relevant to her decisions, that is potentially all those of the social sciences plus history. She must be endowed by nature with a talent to know how and when scientific and moral norms of various kinds are to be applied. And she must have strengthened and refined this talent through practice. Not a little thing. Actually, a thing for very few (Caranti 2017: 255).

Unfortunately, this picture is tragically true. In fact, the political problems we mentioned also result from the inefficiency of those – the few – who were expected to provide a solution. However, it is also true that political agency does not coincide with political leadership. What I recognize as one of the major legacies of Kant's political thought is precisely this shift from politics intended as the activity of a few specialists, to politics as a co-responsibility. This would also highlight the link Kant saw between morality and politics (see Fonnesu 2017), that is, between

<sup>9</sup> On teleology and history see Wilkins 1966, Allison 2012, Ciatello 2016. See also Yovel 1980: 125-198.

internal and external law. Our autonomy, as the ground of our dignity, is one of the most relevant human capacities. What I think Kant teaches us, is that this capacity leads us to political responsibilities. By this I mean that being – *in esse*, not merely *in potentia* – truly autonomous agents, requires us to shape safe and rightful political environments. Thus, our autonomy is displayed not only when we decide to save someone's life, but also when we pay our taxes, excel at our job, make some sacrifices to provide the best education to our sons and daughters, and even when we make of our moral consciousness a bulwark against unfair laws. This is also why Kant thought that history is concerned with the narration of human actions intended as the appearances of freedom (*IaG*, 8:17 (108)). To one of these appearances – the French Revolution – Kant once seems to have dedicated the following words: “God, let your servant die in peace, for I have already lived this memorable day!” (Ypi 2014: 265). After all, that was a thing for more than just a few.

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Luidi Filijeri

### Autonomija, dostojanstvo i istorija u Karantijevoj knjizi *Kantovo političko nasleđe*

#### Apstrakt

U radu razmatram neke važne teze Karantijeve knjige *Kantovo političko nasleđe*, čiji je cilj da ponudi konzistentni uvid u to kako možemo razvijati Kantovu političku misao i da odgovori do koje nam mere Kantovi zaključci mogu pomoći da kritički razumemo politički svet 21. veka. Prvo se usredsređujem na autonomiju kao osnovu dostojanstva i raspravljam o Karantijevim argumentima koji u pitanje dovode ekskluzivnost kategoričkog imperativa kao jedinog načela istinskog moralnog delovanja. Zatim, razmatram Karantijeve poglede na istoriju i postavljam pitanje da li se može prihvatiti da racionalna priroda ljudi sadrži teleološke – iako ne-biološke – elemente, dovodeći na na taj način u pitanje Karantijevu tezu o razdvajanju.

Ključne reči: autonomija, dostojanstvo, moralno delovanje, svrhovitost, istorija, ljudska priroda