A Symposium on Kant Studies: Preface

Kant's works have received growing academic attention in recent years from political scientists and members of philosophy departments. Excellent new editions and translations have encouraged this work. Similar growth is visible in studies of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

Some of this new attention has found its way, for good or ill, into the arguments of judges and students of public policy. It is nonetheless fair to say that no thinker old or new enjoys today the broad and lasting social and intellectual importance that Americans saw as recently as during the ascendancy of John Dewey. The expansion in Kant-studies may be occasioned largely by the contraction of philosophy into one academic discipline among equals with the attendant need of publication-challenged scholars to reconquer old worlds when new ones no longer are visible.

Whether these renewed academic studies will some day inspire increased respect for serious thought about important matters, or whether philosophy will continue to become only a specialist's plaything remains to be seen. It would dishonor Kant to allow our fear of the worst to overcome our hope for the best.

The articles we have collected are intended to induce among students and scholars of political thought reflection on issues of political-philosophical interest in a wide sense by focusing our attention on writings and topics in Kant that we often overlook. The essays, at least those of my fellow contributors, also succeed as contributions to Kant scholarship, offering new analyses of Kant's early work on beauty, the third antinomy of his first Critique, and his
significant late work on religion. My own paper seeks less to explicate than in certain respects to question Kant's moral and political understanding.

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