

“On trade and teleology: the role of commercial relations in Kant’s philosophy of history”

Lea Ypi (London School of Economics and Political Science)

Monday 26th November, 5pm: Old Combination Room, Trinity College

The Author

Lea Ypi is a Lecturer in Political Theory in the Government Department, London School of Economics, and Adjunct Professor in Philosophy at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. Before joining the LSE, she was a Post-doctoral Prize Research Fellow at Nuffield College (Oxford) and a researcher at the European University Institute where she obtained her PhD. A native of Albania, she studied Philosophy and then Literature at the University of Rome, La Sapienza. Her research interests are in normative political theory, Enlightenment political thought (especially Kant), Marxism and critical theory, and nationalism in the intellectual history of the Balkans (especially Albania). Her work has appeared, among others, in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *The American Political Science Review*, *Kantian Review* and *The European Journal of Philosophy*. Her book “Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency” has recently been published by Oxford University Press. She is currently working on a monograph on teleology in Kant’s political writings and (with Katrin Flikschuh) editing a volume on *Kant and Colonialism* for Oxford University Press.

The Paper

The paper examines the role of commercial relations in Kant's philosophy of history. Starting with a discussion of the place of commerce in Kant's 1784 *Idea for Universal History*, and moving onto Kant's remarks on trade in the *Critique of Judgment* and later political writings, it illustrates the evolution of Kant's thought from a positive evaluation of the contribution of the commercial spirit to the development of moral dispositions to one of increasing scepticism towards the unregulated expansion of trade and the instances of colonialism that followed from it. This development, it is argued, coincides with a shift from a teleological account of nature as inherently beneficial to human beings to one in which the emphasis is placed on the conscious role played by human agents in historical transformation.

Preparatory readings

Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade : International Competition and the Nation State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Samuel Fleischacker, "Values behind the market: Kant's response to the 'Wealth of Nations'," *History of Political Thought* 17, no. 3 (1996).

Pauline Kleingeld, *Kant and cosmopolitanism: the philosophical ideal of world citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124-48.

Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Lea Ypi, "Natura Daedala Rerum? On the Justification of Historical Progress in Kant's Guarantee of Perpetual Peace," *Kantian Review* 14, no. 2 (2010).

Yirminiahu Yovel. *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).