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William F. Drischler's Study on Immanuel Kant's Political Philosophy

William F. Drischler is a historian of the Early Modern Political Philosophy and a specialist in the German Philosophy. He is an alumnus of the Philosophy Department at Brock University in Canada. His latest work includes two publications that are worth presenting here.

Immanuel Kant and the Mastication of Poland. Leibnizian Ontology and Russian Agency in the Critical Political Philosophy, published in 2017, is the first one, in which a new approach to analysing Kant's political writing: *Theory and Practice* (1793), *The Perpetual Peace* (1795) *and the Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) can be seen. Drischler refers to *Politics in Context* (2014), a work by Reidar Maliks, and starts from re-reading Kant's political writings through contextualisation. This concept is based on a two-stage analysis. Stage 1 is named here an abstract-traditional history of political ideas – which means confronting ideas by various thinkers, stage 2, however, focuses more on an interpretation based on integrated history of the states. As the author said: "external determination of Prussian policy (primacy or foreign policy) is a far better guide to the 18th century Prussian politics than review of internal disputes".[1] Drischler starts from presenting a table summarizing the dates of Kant's writings publications and some important events that took place in Poland at that time (reference: Arsenij Gulyga, *Immanuel Kant. His Life and*

[1] William F. Drischler, *Immanuel Kant and the Mastication of Poland. Leibnizian Ontology and Russian Agency in the Critical Political Philosophy.* (Charleston: CreateSpace Publishers, 2017), ii.

Thought, 1987), which determines the interpretation method for Kant and his post-critical writings. Karl Schmitt, Karol Marx, and Hannah Arendt's concepts are presented and, on their basis, Immanuel Kant as a *Resident of Russia, Russian Subject and Russian Civil Servant* (title of the excursus) was portrayed. The analysis presented in that book shows reading Kant's political writings only with regard to events taking place in France and leading directly to the French Revolution (which is very common among historians) is not sufficient. It is much more appropriate to take Polish and Russian history contexts under consideration.

From the perspective of a Polish reader, it is particularly interesting that Drischler stresses importance of the Polish Revolution of 1792, the Second Partition of Poland of 1973, the Kosciuszko Uprising of 1794, and the final Third Division of Poland of 1795 in his study of Kant's post-critical writings. Kant mentioned Poland and Poles or referred to Polish events. His statements related to Polish issues are recalled and discussed by Drischler several times, directly or indirectly. For example, in *The Anthropology Lecture* of the 3rd of March 1792 "VL Polen" he described Poles as uneducated and "lazy nation with overtones of arrogance".[2] In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he claimed that states could not divide any other state's territory between themselves and make it disappear from the world, however, if it happened, people should accept it and stop their resistance.[3] In the last part of his book, Drischler presents Gottfried W. Leibniz's sovereignty model, relevant to his studies, and addresses it to political situation in the 18th century Europe.

Summarizing that new approach to the interpretation of Kant, Drischler highlights that the 19th century way of describing Kant as an "ideal thinker of the Prussian state" was deeply true. Kant loyalty towards the Russian-Prussian joint contribution in divisions of Poland (with his genuflection to Catherine II of Russia and his admission to the Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1794), as well as his own attitude supporting, as Drischler puts it, the mastication of Poland were a clear evidence of that.

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[2] *Anthropology lecture* of March 3, 1792 in Mirosław Żelazny. "Kant und die "polnische Frage"," in *Deutsch-polnische Ansichten zur Literatur und Kultur*, Jahrbuch des Deutschen Polen-Instituts Darmstadt, 6. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 84–93.

[3] William F. Drischler, *Immanuel Kant and the Mastication of Poland. Leibnizian Ontology and Russian Agency in the Critical Political Philosophy.* (Charleston: CreateSpace Publishers, 2017), 17–19.

Drischler's second book presenting studies of political writings by Kant, *Kant's Political Testament*, *Russo-Prussian State Oppression of the Polish People*, was published in 2018. Kant's *General Theory of Law and the State*, is investigated in this publication with consideration of Philip-Alexander Hirsch's recent studies.[4] References to works by Locke, Leibniz, Hobbes, Hegel, and Aristotle are also made in it. The further chapters of the book show the socio-political situation in Europe of those times. *Kant's Political Testament* shows, even more clearly, the necessity to include the Polish historical context into analysing Kant's political writings and underlines the role he played in Polish history. Finally, Drischler concludes that Kant, "strictly speaking, an ethnic Russo-Prussian veteran of the tsarist civil service – actively supported Russian expansion into Europe" and was the one who "contributed to Russo--Prussian state oppression of the Polish people". The evidence of Kant's acceptance of the Third Division of Poland of 1795 can be seen in *The Contest of the Faculties* of 1798, where he used *Rechtsstaat* (i.e. comprehensive rule of law state) prerogatives to call "on the citizenry to stoically bear the assimilation costs of millions of involuntary Polish immigrants".[5]

In both his writings, William F. Drischler uses the theory of contextualisation moving from stage 1 to stage 2 of that concept. By his in-depth research into the political situation in Western and particularly in Eastern Europe, Drischler shows how philosophical theories presented by individual thinkers, as Immanuel Kant in this case, were connected with the global, political situation of those times.

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[5] William F. Drischler, *Kant's Political Testament*, *Russo-Prussian state Oppression of the Polish People,* (Columbia: CreateSpace Publishers, 2018), 65.

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