Abstract

The primary focus of this dissertation is the problem of the roles of the moral and the political in political philosophy as exemplified in the philosophies of Kant and Rawls. The research question which intrigues me in the subject matter is whether and to what extent morality has a role in political philosophy. As I argue in this dissertation, while Kant’s political philosophy is grounded by his moral philosophy, Rawls holds the opposite view that a political conception of justice should not be derived from any specific moral doctrine. Their contrasting views are further complicated by the fact that Rawls is often regarded as a Kantian due to his partial assimilation of Kant in his theory of justice. A comparative study of their views on the roles of the moral and the political in philosophy is thus particularly instructive in answering the above research question. This dissertation therefore approaches the subject matter from four different angles. In the first chapter, I start with a holistic interpretive account of Kant’s moral and political philosophy that is quite different from those in the current literature. Not only do I argue that Kant’s moral philosophy is unmistakably an indispensable ground of his political philosophy, but I also argue for a positive duty in politics that is moral by nature. In the second chapter, I shift my focus to Rawls and examine his understanding of morality as reflected in his moral conception of the person in his political philosophy. I argue that the conception is the result of an intended reformulation of Kant’s notion of autonomy that is in turn based on an unintended misreading of the same. I go on to relate several weaknesses in Rawls’s theory to his understanding of morality and argue that their resolutions require an accurate understanding of the relationship between the moral and the political. The third
chapter is a Kantian appraisal of the four roles of political philosophy proposed by Rawls. It is relevant to the subject of this dissertation because the four roles are designed with a strict separation between the political and the moral in mind. If the four roles turn out to be defensible, it would amount to an important defense for such a separation. The fourth chapter offers an alternative for those who are more accustomed to the political than to the moral by proposing a new interpretive approach to Kant’s philosophy starting from the political and ending with the moral. By ending this dissertation with this alternative, I hope my research is not merely a comparative study but can also offer a new perspective for a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the moral and the political in philosophy.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**

1. Re-defining Political Philosophy: Identifying the Moral and the Political in Kant’s Philosophy  
   1. Introduction  
   2. A Brief Review of the Debate  
   3. The Basics of the New Interpretive Approach  
   4. The Moral Law as the Limiting Condition of the Freedom of Action  
   5. From the Moral Law to the Idea of a Public Will  
   6. The Concept of Public Will and the Two Kinds of Lawgiving  
   7. Positive and Negative Duties in Kant’s Political Philosophy  
   8. Closing Remarks  

2. The Covert Subversion of Kant’s Account of Practical Reason in Rawls’s Understanding of Morality  
   1. Introduction  
   2. The Foundational Role of Rawls’s Understanding of Morality  
   3. Rawls’s Misinterpretation of Kant’s Autonomy of the Will  
   4. Lawgiving or Choosing Principles?  
   5. Determination or Expression?  
   6. Three Criticisms Against Rawls  
   7. Dualism between the Right and the Good  
   8. Indefensibility of the Starting Point for Rawls’s Conception of Justice  
   9. Closing Remarks  

3. When Political Philosophy Becomes Too Applied: A Kantian Appraisal of
the Roles of Political Philosophy Proposed by Rawls

1. Introduction
2. Rawls’s Practical Role of Political Philosophy
3. Rawls’s Orientation Role of Political Philosophy
4. Rawls’s Reconciliation Role of Political Philosophy
5. The Role of Probing the Limits of Practicable Political Possibility
6. Closing Remarks

IV A Political Conception of the Human Being in Kant: An Alternative Interpretive Starting Point of Kant’s Political Philosophy from a Political Perspective

1. Introduction
2. The Third Way: To Approach the Moral from the Political
3. Controversies Surrounding Constructivist Normative Starting Point
4. Rawls’s Verdict against Kant’s Philosophy
5. A Political Conception of the Human Being in Kant
6. Lawless Freedom, the Public Will and the Principle of Right
7. From the Limiting Condition of Politics to Morality
8. Closing Remarks

Conclusion

Bibliography