

With a narrative of this breadth and complexity, all manner of specialists can chip in with their critiques of Kahan's arguments against their favorite theorists or approach, just as they can challenge the history that underlies the ideological narrative. I would have been more generous than Kahan is to John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Milton Friedman, as he does not give sufficient attention to disciplinary boundaries when it comes to explaining the absence of a serious discussion of the economy in Rawls or morality and ethics in Friedman. Philosophers in their professional capacity do philosophy, and economists do economics. Perhaps more on these thinkers' theoretical contexts would be important with both of these examples. I also disagree with Kahan's view that Bernard Williams is a perfectionist, although I can see some route to that claim. But a lack of space can excuse some disputes, and the generosity of readers will overlook other more nuanced observations in favor of the main narrative in this magnificent work.

Where I am most skeptical is with the claim that Liberalism 3.0 has come to an end and that populism requires a Liberalism 4.0. Populism is undoubtedly an issue, but is it as pressing as Kahan presents it? Many post-liberal theorists like Patrick Deneen, John Milbank, or Adrian Pabst draw on populist politics to reinforce their original communitarianism and common-good politics. It is too simple to dust off Rawls to confront these post-liberal critiques, but it is also not obvious that the post-war theory of Liberalism 3.0 does not have the philosophical resources to deal with populism as a theoretical challenge, even if the "philosophers" are light on social theory. The risk of state overreach and authoritarianism today is certainly an issue that takes us back to the liberalism of fear of Judith Shklar. What remains a challenge for all variants of liberalism is the reconciliation of liberalism as a political theory with substantive moral commitments to the good life. In Kahan's book, the debate continues between political liberals, comprehensive liberals, and perfectionist liberals, and he concludes by advocating a return to perfectionism. In this, Kahan joins Samuel Moyn, among others. But my money remains on the side of political liberalism and the hope for a convergence on a thin conception of the good that can be shared by those of differing values.

After Kant: The Romans, the Germans, and the Moderns in the History of Political Thought. By Michael Sonenscher.

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The title of Michael Sonenscher's book, *After Kant*, denotes a temporal period—the era of post-Kantian

political thought that sought to comprehend the novel socio-political, economic, and cultural order emerging in "the period that straddles the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution" (xv). At the same time, it refers to the reactions to and ramifications of Kant's Copernican turn for theorizing a set of perennial problems, questions, or tensions, such as temporal-eternal, particular-universal, immanent-transcendent, mind-world. Central to Kant's philosophic legacy and Sonenscher's account of European political thought from the 1780s to the decades following the 1848 revolutions is the thesis that the "underlying engine of human history" is humanity's "unsocial sociability"—humanity's intrinsic propensity to enter into society combined with a resistance to society that threatens to undermine society (6). For Sonenscher, Kant's concept of unsocial sociability and the "grim philosophy of history implied by Kant's concept" is a kind of synecdoche for the monumental effects and continuing ramifications of Kant's philosophical revolution (312). As *After Kant* amply illustrates, modern political thought has been decisively shaped by the effort to overcome or bridge "the gap that Kant had opened up between the noumenal and the phenomenal, the ideal and the real, the spiritual and the physical, and, ultimately, individual lives and human history" (273).

Drawing upon the work of thinkers as diverse as the Swiss-French émigré Madame de Stael, the German philosophic-historian Johann Gottfried Herder, and the Russian agrarian-socialist Nicholas Chernyshevsky, Sonenscher reconstructs a multifaceted conversation that sought to understand the rapidly changing present in order to find an adequate orientation toward the emerging future. Sonenscher offers a novel perspective on this conversation by weaving together a "contextually oriented story about the unintended consequences of Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim'" with an account of how "narrowly technical philosophical and theological arguments" that were originally formulated as criticisms of Rousseau and Kant converged with "the broader body of moral and political debate generated by the events of the French Revolution" (455). Sonenscher's exploration of nineteenth century political thought is thus a deeply historical inquiry into the advent of a new form of historical and historicized thinking, wherein a range of socio-political, ethical, and religious questions came to be seen as inextricably interwoven with the meaning, purpose, or logic of history.

Sonenscher's turn to intellectual history, however, is not motivated by mere antiquarian interest; for just as the authors Sonenscher investigates probe the past in search of the historical origins of contemporary political ideas and institutions as well as for models, examples, and analogies by which to understand the present, so too does Sonenscher practice a form of intellectual history that is simultaneously a form of thinking about politics today.

As he persuasively argues, many familiar “political ideologies”—the array of ‘ism’s which structure contemporary political discourse, from nationalism, communism, and liberalism to republicanism, environmentalism, and feminism—have their origins in “the long sequence of discussions generated by Kant’s moral and historical vision” (25–26). Yet, if Sonenscher practices a form of political theory whereby the study of the past can inform the political present by reminding us of the alternative ways of formulating and framing political questions, he is equally cognizant of the truth of L.P. Hartley’s quip that “the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” His genealogical inquiry into the roots of the political present avoids anachronistic or facile false equivalence—eschewing the temptation to treat the past as a repository of ready-to-hand answers to our own most urgent political questions.

While space precludes even a cursory overview of the multiple topics, authors, contexts, and genres explored in this wide-ranging and erudite work—which touches upon everything from the historiographical significance of the concept of palingenesis to the idea of esthetic education as reconciling moral autonomy with social harmony—there is nonetheless an overarching and unifying theme concerning, on the one hand, the relation of morality to history, and, on the other, new ways of conceptualizing the temporal condition of the human being. Sonenscher details the role that such novel forms of historical self-consciousness played and continue to play in the formation of the sociopolitical identity of modern European nations. There are three principal touchstones to Sonenscher’s inquiry into the advent of such historically self-conscious political debates: (1) a sustained examination of the Roman legacy after the French Revolution—both in terms of Roman political thought and of the image or idea of Rome—that intersects with ideas about republicanism, classicism, and individual rights; (2) the interest in uncovering an alternative to this Roman legacy, denoted as the “Germanic legacy” but encompassing the medieval, feudal, and Christian counterparts to the political heritage of antiquity; and (3) the way in which the dualisms afflicting modernity—in particular, the tension between the individual will and the general will—might be ameliorated by a new understanding of history and the transfiguration of *Heilsgeschichte* (theological salvation history) into *Weltgeschichte* (an immanent account of humanity’s development).

Sonenscher’s book is structured around the interplay of these three topics. Following an elaboration in the opening two chapters of the multifaceted theoretical legacy bequeathed by Kant, especially the reasons for “Kant’s disturbing claim that any historical justification of political legitimacy was likely to be arbitrary, while any moral justification was likely to be viable only when history had run its course” (xiii), Sonenscher excavates in chapters

3–5 the “largely forgotten” “hostility toward Rome and Roman law that developed in early nineteenth-century Europe” and the concomitant pan-European “interest in developments in German-language moral and political thought, notably in the close and alarming relationship that came to be seen between Kant’s concept of autonomy and the idea of the death of God” (26–27). The subsequent responses to and repercussions of the apprehension about the tension between human freedom and the ground of human values are then explored in chapters 6–7, with particular attention given to the development of theories of intersubjective recognition and the relation between civil society and the state. Against this backdrop of the various attempts to integrate Kantian notions of rational agency within a stable cultural, juridical, and economic framework through the appropriation of the Germanic political heritage, Sonenscher reconstructs the debate between Romanticism and Classicism that was simultaneously an extension of the seventeenth and eighteenth century *querelle des anciens et des modernes* and a radical transformation of that earlier debate insofar as the development of a novel understanding of the relation between human historicity and normativity challenged the validity of the presuppositions operative in such trans-historical comparisons of art, literature, philosophy, and politics. As chapters 8–9 illustrate, the belief that ethical, political, and esthetic standards of evaluation were relative to a particular epoch called into question the very idea of historical progress and undermined the hope for a future historical reconciliation of the dualities afflicting modernity.

Exploring the revival of the Roman legacy in the years that preceded and followed the revolutions of 1848, Sonenscher then shows how far the pendulum had swung in the opposite direction: rather than seeing “the arrangements and institutions of modern Europe [as] Germanic in origin,” Roman models of political and constitutional order took center stage (28). The final three chapters then explore the repercussions of this revival of the Roman legacy, showing how a series of contested dualisms that continue to structure political thought—such as individualism and collectivism, autonomy and democracy, *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*—were debated with reference to an ever-shifting and kaleidoscopic series of reinterpretations of the dual origins of modernity. From this perspective, Sonenscher shows that Kant’s postulated historical teleology was not so much a solution for, but a reflection of the fact that “modern politics were both Roman and German and, as a result, that modern politics were, in fact, the politics of unsocial sociability” (452).

Sonenscher’s inquiry combines remarkable breadth and a penetrating depth in a comprehensive study that immerses the reader in a wide-ranging conversation that spans all literary genres and cuts across disciplinary boundaries. *After Kant* is intellectual history at its finest; for it

enables us to be privy to the discussion and thereby the wisdom of the past, inviting us to become interlocutors with thinkers of former epochs, and thus to engage them as dialogical partners in our own philosophic thinking. Students and scholars alike should be grateful to Sonenscher for making the past so vividly present.

Democracy for Busy People. By Kevin J. Elliott. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023. 256p. \$35.00 paper.
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When I first saw the title of Kevin J. Elliott's new book, I thought that it might be a handbook or instruction manual for harried American citizens who need all the help they can get in navigating contemporary politics. Rather than a primer for busy people, the book is instead a deep examination of a key challenge faced by Americans (and really, citizens of any democracy): their busyness. The book then argues that we should take seriously the busyness of its citizenry when making institutional choices.

It is altogether too easy for engaged citizens, especially those with specialized training in the field of political science, to ignore the costs in time and attention that are needed to be truly informed. Or, perhaps worse, for those who are highly engaged to dismiss our fellow citizens as simply being unwilling to partake of understanding.

But, of course, the reality is that even the most highly engaged of citizens often find themselves inadequately informed given the finite time that even political professions can devote to understanding government and politics at all levels in the United States. How many of even the most focused political scientists can truly say they are sufficiently knowledgeable about every office or candidate on America's often very, very long ballots? As *Democracy for Busy People* notes, we are all making choices about how much of our time and attention we are willing to allocate to the moral economy of democratic citizenship.

At a bare minimum, Elliott's work is to be commended for making a very strong case for taking into consideration the costs just in time alone associated with being an engaged citizen. And, more importantly, drawing attention to the notion that these costs ought to be part of the conversation about when institutional design choices are made.

Key to his position is that he views "democratic citizenship...as an office—an institutional position with formal and informal powers, burdens, demands, and expectations" (17). He differentiates this from seeing citizenships simply as a status. If busyness can detract from the ability of ordinary citizens to adequately fulfill their

obligations as citizens, then the system should be reformed to better allow for such participation.

The book is divided into two parts. The first makes a series of arguments about democratic citizenship. This section makes an important contribution to the democratic theory literature by raising the issue of time and attention and noting that "busyness is often the *currency* of disadvantage" (5). Some of us have more time than others to be engaged with politics, and that fact needs to be taken seriously when evaluating the quality of democracy. Inherent in this observation is the acknowledgment that the distribution of time and attention is not equal, and therefore addressing these inequities is a matter of justice.

The second part moves to institutional questions, looking specifically at term length and the role of political parties. It also directly addresses the deliberative democracy literature.

If, as the first section of the book argues, it is true that the system ought to take seriously the unequal distribution of time and attention, the design of the system ought to take this into account. For example, automatic or same-day voter registration would be two ways that would diminish time costs. Likewise, being mindful of the timing and number of elections.

Elliott's most controversial recommendation in this area is one-year terms of office, so as to induce more interest in the population. "Shorter terms make representatives more dependent upon their constituents by cutting down the slack that can grow within the representative relationship" (145). On the one hand, the notion of a more consistent feedback loop makes sense in terms of incentivizing citizens to pay attention. On the other, it does raise questions about the demands of time of constant campaigns and elections.

Elliott is quite correct in suggesting that political parties could do more to act as signaling devices to help busy citizens make choices. As he notes, parties provide a signaling device that helps busy citizens make better choices. Parties enable "citizens to both efficiently and effectively monitor what is happening in politics and to step in when they understand their interests are at stake, or when political need requires it" (169). Parties are, therefore, a time-saving device in representative democracy because they link candidates, issues, and interests with identifiable labels that make it quicker and easier for voters to make choices.

The comparative look at multiparty versus two-party democracy is a timely one given US polarization at the moment. Elliott notes that empirically citizens in multiparty democracies have both higher turnout and higher political knowledge. So while having two parties might seem efficient because there are only two choices, the differentiation of politics into multiple parties provides for better signaling to citizens and increases engagement.

I do think one of the underdeveloped opportunities in the book is a more explicit examination of the long ballot