



The Metaphysics of Moral Subjectivity Theory without Practice

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Abstract

This thesis offers a theory of moral subjectivity of the state that aims to explain, in an analytically sound way, what is required for theorising about states as moral subjects within a system of very different types of state-units. The argument that is presented has two levels. The first level consists of two theoretical claims about exploring the moral subjectivity of the state in International Relations. The first claim is that in order to argue meaningfully about the moral agency of the state one has to take seriously the state's being-in-the world qua state. By relying on Immanuel Kant's political philosophy and practical metaphysics, the thesis offers an account that helps to conceptualise the state as an autonomous entity in its own right, and, subsequently, allows one to argue that all states, despite their different prudential and contingent differences and characteristics, are moral agents. The second theoretical claim is that the moral personhood of the state is not in and of itself merely metaphysical – that it is, in fact, something purely intrinsic to the agent. Here the thesis departs from Kant's original idea of essentialist moral personality of the state, and, in contrast to Kant, argues that the moral subjectivity of the state is always reciprocal. Moral subjectivity, it is argued, cannot be studied without the concept of moral standing, the agent's positioning among other similar entities. Moral subjectivity proper is thus constituted by recognition of other similar subjects who consider themselves as moral subjects. The second level of the argument maintains that when one then studies practices of moral subjectivity of the state – that is, states vis-à-vis each other in international society – it is the recognition of subjectivity that plays a central role in identifying states as moral agents in world affairs. While every state, in theory, qualifies as a moral person, their moral standing as fully-fledged moral subjects is constantly challenged due to their empirical differences in practice. crisis management and lays out research questions that emerge from this research.



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Bio Milla Vaha joined the EUI in 2007. Prior to the EUI, she obtained MSc degrees in Political Theory from London School of Economics and in International Relations from University of Turku, where she currently holds a Lectureship in International Relations. In 2010 she was a visiting PhD Fellow at the Department of International Politics, Aberyswyth University. Her research includes a wide range topics in International Political Theory, including global justice, just war theory, ethical reasoning in IR, and theories of states.