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# Immanuel Kant — Text and Contexts

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# Immanuel Kant — Text and Contexts

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Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated Arnulf Zweig. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). 639 +xx pages. \$95.00 cloth.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 785 +xi pages. \$70.00 cloth. \$27 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by Paul Guyer, Translated by Eric Matthews. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 423 +lii pages. \$75.00 cloth. \$25.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). 642 +xlviii pages. \$100.00 cloth. \$40.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited by Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind. Translated by Peter Heath. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). 507 +xxvii pages. \$95.00 cloth. \$28.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Opus postumum (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited by Eckhart Förster. Translated by Eckhart Förster and Michael Rosen. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 303 +lviii pages. \$64.95 cloth. \$26.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by Mary Gregor. Introduction by Allen Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 668 +xxxiii pages. \$90.00 cloth. \$32.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 544 pages. \$90.00 cloth. \$32.00 paper.

Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770 (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)* Edited and translated by David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). 543 +lxxxi pages. \$130.00 cloth. \$35 paper.

Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). 544 +xxii pages. \$35.00 cloth. \$25.00 paper.

G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character: The 'Critical' Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgement*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). 377 +xxii pages. \$53.00 cloth. \$24.00 paper.

Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 351 +xiii pages. \$58.00 cloth. \$23.00 paper.

Two hundred years ago, the *Monthly Magazine's* "Retrospect of German Literature" brought its readers news of the latest philosophical developments: Schelling's star was rising, while the "venerable Kant," now in his eighties, "vegetates in retirement from the scene of action" (Vol. XV:I [1803] 667-8). Though Kant's philosophy had been attacked only a few years earlier in the pages of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* as "extremely dangerous" (V [Jan-April 1800] 339-47), it now appeared that it was well on the way to becoming passé. Indeed, even those who had been appalled by it were beginning to wonder whether it was anything more than a passing fancy. An 1801 letter to the editor of the *Anti-Jacobin Review* concluded, "I always was of the opinion that that ephemeron, Kant's Philosophy, would not outlive its author and be forgotten, when Bacon, Newton, Leibniz, &c. will continue to stand the test of ages" (VII [Sept-Jan. 1801] 507-8).

The rumors of the demise of Kant's philosophy were, of course, greatly exaggerated and, two centuries later, there are few eighteenth-century thinkers whose impact on the way in which philosophy is conducted rivals that of Kant. The major tendencies in continental philosophy, from Heidegger to Foucault, from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School to Karl Popper's critical rationalism have all been decisively shaped by encounters with Kant. Much present-day moral and political philosophy is inconceivable without Kant, thanks in large part to the impact of the work of John Rawls and those influenced by his work. Commentaries on Kant's works and

explorations of the implications of these works have proliferated to the point where it has long been impossible for anyone to keep up with them. Kant has become so much our contemporary that it is sometimes easy to forget that he belongs to the eighteenth-century — indeed, there are a number of lines of Kant interpretation which have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to do just that. The translations and studies under review here suggest some of the ways in which attempts have been made to reconnect Kant to his century and, in the process, to see his work from a somewhat different perspective.

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From almost the start, Kant has been rather well-served by translators. In 1798, the indefatigable John Richardson, a Scot who pursued studies with Kant's disciples J. S. Beck and L. H. Jakob towards the end of the 1790s, produced a two-volume edition of Kant's *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, Religious, and Various Philosophical Subjects* (London: William Richardson, 1798) that included the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, *Perpetual Peace*, along with fifteen other of Kant's essays on moral philosophy, the philosophy of history, the philosophy of religion, and natural history. He subsequently published a translation of Kant's *Logic* in 1819 and a collection entitled *The Metaphysical Works of the Celebrated Immanuel Kant*. A steady stream of translations followed, and today most of Kant's major works are available in multiple translations.

A decade ago Cambridge University Press began a projected fifteen-volume edition of Kant's works in English, under the general editorship of Paul Guyer and Allen

Wood. The goal of series, as explained in the short “General editors’ preface” that begins every volume, is to make generally available a complete English translation of Kant’s works (including such previously untranslated texts as transcripts of his lectures along with his marginalia, notes, and correspondence) in “comprehensive volumes organized both chronologically and topically” with a consistent translation of crucial technical terms. On the basis of the volumes that have appeared to date, these goals have, for the most part, been met. The rationale behind the assignment of some of Kant’s shorter essays to the different volumes may, in some cases, be a bit puzzling, particularly the distinction between the *Practical Philosophy* volume (which contains, among other essays, Kant’s famous answer to the question “What is Enlightenment?”, his essay on “The Common Saying: that may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice,” and “Toward Perpetual Peace”) and the forthcoming volume on *Anthropology, History, and Education* (which, apparently, will contain Kant’s other essays on historical questions). Readers searching for Kant’s important essay on the public use of reason, “What is Orientation in Thinking?” will, however, search of it in vain in these two volumes: it resides, instead, in the volume entitled *Religion and Rational Theology*.

According to the “General editors’ preface,” the rationale behind the organization of the volumes topically was, to “facilitate the serious study of his philosophy by English-speaking philosophers.” There is certainly an attraction in having available for classroom use a collection like the *Practical Philosophy* volume, which places in students’ hands faithful and consistent translations of the *Groundwork*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, along with such minor masterpieces as the essay on “Theory and Practice” and the uncompromising “On a supposed right to lie

from philanthropy” — an essay which, if nothing else, confirms every student’s worst fears about what Kant’s moral philosophy entails (“You mean, if a Nazi comes to the door and asks if I am hiding Jews upstairs, the categorical imperative requires that I tell the truth?!?”). But, as Allen Wood makes abundantly clear in his succinct and lucid introduction to the volume, for a clarification of some of the murkier parts of the *Groundwork* readers would be well-advised to consult *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* — which drives home the point that not all of Kant’s moral philosophy is to be found within the six-hundred some pages of *Practical Philosophy*. A “serious study” of Kant’s moral philosophy will require forays into the *Religion and Rational Theology* volume and, when it becomes available, the *Anthropology, History, and Education* volume.

This is, of course, a minor complaint and it is more than compensated for by the quality of the volumes. Each contains a short introduction and extended editorial end notes. In the cases of volumes comprised of a number of works individual works are preceded by editorial head notes sketching the history of the text. Footnotes provide (sparingly) the German terms or phrases in cases where it would be helpful to know them. Readers lacking Latin will find the Latin terms which Kant frequently employs translated at the bottom of the page as well and the translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* provides, for the first time, a translation of Kant’s marginalia from his own copy of the work. With the exception of the *Correspondence* volume (which has only an index of persons) all volumes come with indexes of both persons and subjects (sometimes merged, but more frequently separated). The quality of the subject indexes is, in general, quite good. The best designed are those in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, *Critique*

*of the Power of Judgment, Lectures on Metaphysics*, and (happily) the *Critique of Pure Reason*, a work which greatly profits from having one. The volumes devoted to Kant's *Correspondence, Lectures on Ethics* and *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* include helpful biographical sketches of the various individuals with whom Kant corresponded or whom he discussed in his writings. The margins of all but one of the volumes contain volume and page references to the Prussian Academy edition of Kant's works, the standard citation source in the secondary literature on Kant. The exception is the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which follows the long-established custom of providing the page references for the "A" (1781) and "B" (1787) editions. The cloth editions are expensive, but beautifully produced. No serious academic library can afford to be without them. The prices of the paper editions are reasonable enough to make them good choices for classroom use. Not only will students learn something about Kant; they will also see what goes into the making of a serious scholarly edition.

A brief tour of the individual volumes may suggest the wealth of material that has been assembled. *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* offers the most comprehensive collection in English of works from the period prior to the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The best-known works included in this volume are "The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God" from 1763, "Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality," his 1764 contribution to the question posed by the Berlin Academy of Sciences (for which Kant received an honorable mention, while Moses Mendelssohn received first prize), his 1770 Inaugural Dissertation, and *Dreams of Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, a remarkable work from 1766 in which Kant contrasted Swedenborg's

writings to those of metaphysicians and produced a complex and ironic essay that left Moses Mendelssohn wondering whether Kant was attempting to make “metaphysics laughable or spirit-seeing believable” [*Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* IV:2 (1767)] and led Herder to praise Kant’s style as the equal to Sterne’s [*Königsbergische Gelehrte und Politische Zeitung* (March 3, 1766)]. The *Practical Philosophy* volume contains, in addition to Kant’s three central texts on ethics — the 1785 *Groundwork*, the 1788 *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the 1797 *Metaphysics of Morals* — a number of smaller essays, ranging from a 1783 review of a work by the notorious Johann Heinrich Schulz (an unorthodox clergyman whose Spinozist tendencies led to his prosecution during the counter-enlightenment of the 1780s and whose cultivation of an unconventional style of dress earned him the nickname “Ponytail Schulz”) to a couple of essays on book publishing and the rights of authors. Unlike the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the volumes containing the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (a title which the editors offer as a more accurate translation of the work that has been long known to English readers as the *Critique of Judgment*) do not include other material. The volume containing the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* does, however, include the long — and subsequently deleted — first introduction to the work, perhaps Kant’s most important attempt to explain how his various works were supposed to fit together.

The Cambridge Edition also includes a number of volumes containing material that has either never been available in English before or has been or that has been available only in part. The edition includes the first English translation of the *Opus postumum*, an enigmatic work begun by Kant in the 1790s, initially as an attempt to



address certain issues having to do with the metaphysical foundations of the natural sciences. As Kant labored on the manuscript its scope expanded to include a moral and theological questions and, in certain passages, seems to adopt a conceptual vocabulary (e.g., his talk of “self-positing”) which resembles that of Fichte, whose approach he had rejected in a public declaration in 1799. Eckart Förster’s introduction recounts the vicissitudes of the manuscript, which was first published in full only in 1936 and 1938, and makes a case for the importance of the work, which was dismissed by Kant’s first editors as a product of his senility and excluded from early editions of his collected works. Given the state of the manuscript, any edition of the *Opus postumum* requires considerable editorial intervention and Förster’s introduction and notes clarify the assumptions that guided his edition of this puzzling work and provide a helpful orientation for readers making their way into this labyrinth for the first time.

The series will include four volumes devoted to Kant’s lectures, drawing on notes taken by students in Kant’s courses at Königsberg. To date, the *Lectures on Ethics*, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, and *Lectures on Logic* have appeared, with a volume devoted to his important *Lectures on Anthropology* promised for the future. Faculty at Prussian universities were required to teach from textbooks and, in both his lectures on ethics and his lectures on metaphysics, Kant used works by Alexander Baumgarten as the basis for his courses. Around these textbooks he constructed lectures that were reported, as J. B. Schneewind notes in his introduction to the ethics volume, to be “witty, somewhat rambling, full of life and feeling, with scattered references to current events and to books” (*Lectures on Ethics* xix). While Kant discouraged note-taking in class, students seem to have taken them anyway (it is consoling, I suppose, to learn that Kant had no

better luck in controlling what his students did in class than we do). Many of the notes that have come down to us seem, as Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon note in their introduction to the metaphysics lectures, to have been produced by poorer students who supported themselves by preparing compendia of notes from courses which were purchased by their wealthier classmates (see the fascinating discussion in *Lectures on Metaphysics* xxi-xxiii). These transcripts were recopied outside of class (a process which sometimes introduced errors into the text) and then revised in subsequent years to reflect changes in the material Kant presented. Copies of these notes seem to have circulated far beyond the immediate circle of Kant's students and, as a result, eighteenth century admirers of Kant seem to have relied on a much wider range of sources than those that we tend to see as canonical today.

A collection of material from Kant's ethics lectures was edited by the German scholar Paul Menzer, published in 1924, and translated into English by Lewis Infield six years later. Infield's translation has been reprinted a number of times (most recently, by Hackett Publishing). The version of these lectures in the Cambridge Edition, edited by Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, follows more recent editorial conventions by keeping the different sets of student notes separate, rather than merging them into a single sequence of lectures. This is of particular importance in the case of the ethics lectures, since Kant lectured on the topic nearly thirty times and, over the course of the lectures, refined his own views on the topic. Four sets of notes are translated in this volume. The first set were transcribed by the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Herder, who studied with Kant between 1762-1764. The second set, dating from 1784, come from Georg Ludwig Collins and correspond, for the most part, to the materials published by Menzer, though

Menzer himself seems to have based his edition on a different set of notes. The third set (attributed to Christian Coelestin Mrongovius) dates from 1784-1785 and contains Kant's first presentation of the arguments advanced in the *Groundwork*. The final set of lectures notes, by the lawyer Johann Friedrich Vigilantius, dates from 1793-1794. They partly coincide with the material in the Collins notes from a decade earlier, but also contain some anticipations of Kant's 1797 *Metaphysics of Morals*. While there are no real surprises in the lecture transcripts, they are helpful both in providing some insights (especially in the Herder notes) on the shape of Kant's moral theory prior to the publication of the *Groundwork* and (in the Mrongovius notes) in revealing how Kant presented his own mature system to an audience of philosophical beginners. They are also helpful in revealing the extent to which Kant, on the lectern, emphasized themes which tend to be overlooked if attention is confined only to the published versions of his moral philosophy. One finds, in particular, a stress on the importance of the cultivation of moral character, a theme which plays an important role, as we shall see shortly, in the studies of Kant by Manfred Kuehn and Felicitas Munzel.

The *Lectures on Metaphysics* have never been translated and, indeed, the edition prepared by Ameriks and Naragon corrects a number of errors that occurred in the transcription of these notes for the standard German edition of Kant's works. Until recently, these lectures have tended to be ignored in the literature on Kant. They were a rather late addition to the German edition of his works, appearing in two volumes published in 1968 and 1970, and since the publication of those volumes additional sets of lecture notes have been discovered, providing what Ameriks and Naragon characterize as "the most striking addition to Kant literature in years." Even more than in the case of the

ethics lectures, the *Lectures on Metaphysics* revise the received view of Kant as — in Mendelssohn’s famous phrase — the “all-destroying” critic of metaphysics. In these lectures, Kant tells his students that metaphysics is “the spirit of philosophy,” and stands in relation to philosophy as the *spiritus vini* does to wine: it “purifies our elementary concepts and thereby makes us capable of comprehending all sciences” and thus “is the greatest culture of the human understanding” (*Lectures on Metaphysics* 286). Kant followed the outline provided by Baumgarten, dividing his lectures into four sections — Ontology, Cosmology, Psychology (Empirical and Rational), and Theology — with an opening Prolegomena. The text assembled by Ameriks and Naragon draws on eight sets of student notes (including notes by Herder, Mrongovius, and Vigilantius) and omits the material on Theology (lectures on this topic can be found in the *Religion and Rational Theology* volume). While there is a fair amount of repetition in the different lecture sequences, an elaborate editorial apparatus (in particular, a superb index) helps sort things out. The great virtue of these lectures is that it allows the reader to see how Kant related his approach to some of the traditional concerns of the earlier generation of German metaphysics, suggesting certain continuities which, as Ameriks emphasizes in his important study *The Fate of Autonomy*, tended to be lost in the first flush of interpretations of Kant’s critical philosophy.

Arnulf Zweig’s edition of Kant’s *Correspondence* offers students of the eighteenth century a particularly rich collection of documents. Half of the letters in the collection are revised versions of the letters published in 1967 in Zweig’s well-known edition of Kant’s *Philosophical Correspondence* (University of Chicago Press). The other half appear for the first time, bringing the total number of letters in English to 216. The

edition has much more to recommend it than simply the doubling the amount of Kant's correspondence available in English. Zweig provides extensive endnotes, a compact introductory biography of Kant, and fifty pages of biographical information about Kant's correspondents. These "Biographical Sketches" would alone make this volume worth acquiring and anyone working on eighteenth century German thought will be indebted to Zweig's labors: there is no other biographical lexicon of this quality currently available in English. Zweig's judicious selection of Kant's letters makes for fascinating reading. His 1967 collection already included the better-known letters on philosophical questions — for example, Kant's correspondence with Johann Heinrich Lambert, Marcus Herz, Jacob Sigismund Beck, and Moses Mendelssohn (his correspondence with the latter includes a 1783 letter in which Kant, desperately seeking a review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* from Mendelssohn, explains what Mendelssohn might discuss in a review — thus providing a unique guide to what Kant saw as important about the work). The new collection allows us to understand far better than before the intellectual, social, and political context in which Kant worked. It includes five more letters to Kant from the remarkable Johann Georg Hamann. It also makes available more of the correspondence between Kant and various representatives of the Berlin Enlightenment, providing a vivid picture of the anxieties prompted by Friedrich Wilhelm II's campaign against the Berlin Enlightenment. As Zweig explains in his introduction, some of his choices are governed by the concerns of our own day: thus his interest in documenting Kant's complex relationship with German Jews (4-5). The inclusion of a number of previously untranslated letters to and from female correspondents offers more documentation of Kant's relationship with women, though some aspects of this relations with them —

notably the 1762 letter from Maria Charlotta Jacobi with its coy expression of hope that, on Kant's next visit, her "watch will get wound" (perhaps a ribald reference to *Tristram Shandy*?) — remain tantalizingly ambiguous. The result is a rich and multifaceted picture of Kant that will be required reading for anyone interested in Kant or the world in which he lived.

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Much the same may be said of Manfred Kuehn's *Kant: A Biography*, the most comprehensive account of Kant's life and work since Karl Vorländer's two-volume study from 1924. Biographies of Kant have, as Kuehn notes in his "Prologue", been relatively rare. The years after Kant's death saw a flurry of anecdotal accounts which mostly served to fix in the public mind the image of Kant during his last decade: a man of fixed habits whose life was almost entirely devoted to thought. This picture has had a remarkable staying power. Ernst Cassirer's 1918 study, translated into English two decades ago as *Kant's Life and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), assumed that there was nothing that could be said about Kant's life and remained content with a summary of his thought.

As Kuehn notes, biographies of philosophers "are difficult to write" since "philosophers usually did not — and do not — live exciting lives" (19). The few exceptions — e.g., Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault — prove the rule: in these cases, it tends to be something other than philosophy that drives the biography. Nietzsche has his madness, Heidegger his Nazism, Wittgenstein his closet, and Foucault his sadomasochism. All Kant seems to offer biographers is his hypochondria, which is

hardly a promising theme around which to weave an account of his life (though it has been attempted: see Hartmut and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983]). It is little wonder, then, that Kuehn's statement "Kant did have a life" (20) seems more than a bit defensive. Yet, in face of such seemingly unpromising material, Kuehn succeeds in crafting a readable, indeed engrossing and often moving biography that combines an elegance of presentation with an impressive depth of scholarship. Kuehn has achieved what would seem to be the impossible: a book in which Kant's life matters as much as his thought. Perhaps there is no more eloquent testimony to this than the book's final chapter, a moving forty-page account of the slow decline of Kant's mental powers after 1796. Kant has ceased to think, but continues to live — however miserably. I doubt that any reader who has followed Kuehn this far will be able to stop reading: against all odds, we find ourselves, at the end, caring very much about Kant's fading life and the image of the now-befuddled sage of Königsberg waiting expectantly for one of the few pleasures left him — the return of a titmouse to his garden (418)— is unforgettable.

Kant emerges from these pages as a man of the eighteenth century — interested in recent scientific achievements, curious about the new worlds that were documented in traveler's accounts, engrossed by political events, and fearless in his willingness to trace the moral and religious implications of his thought to conclusions that clearly troubled many of his contemporaries. Kuehn shows us a Kant who valued friendship and sociability, a man who — at least in the early years of his life — was (in the words of Hamann) "swept along by a whirlpool of societal diversions" (134). For more than three decades, he took his meals at a pub (unless he was attending a dinner party) eating "in the

company of men with very different backgrounds from his own, and he enjoyed it” (221). He never left his native Königsberg, though as Kuehn shows (55-60), Königsberg turns out to have been a fairly interesting place, far less provincial than Göttingen or Marburg, larger than most other university towns, and populated with enough Lithuanians, Huguenots, Mennonites, Poles, Russians, Jews, as well as Dutch and English merchants to allow Kuehn to characterize it as “multicultural” (59). It boasted a theater, where Kant and his friends attended plays by Voltaire, Molière, and Lessing and it had a number of reading societies, which Kant frequented in the 1760s (163-6). His teachers at the University of Königsberg were more diverse in their orientation than is sometimes realized. Carl Rappolt, a “declared enemy of Pietism” combined an allegiance to Christian Wolff’s philosophy with an interest in English philosophy and culture, while Martin Knutzen — though himself quite religiously orthodox — was conversant with the work of English deists (76-81). Indeed, during the 1740s, Königsberg was alive with controversies surrounding the publications of the overtly Spinozist Christian Gabriel Fischer (81-82) and disputes over the religious implications (or lack thereof) of the comet of 1744 (83-4). The occupation of the town by Russian troops between 1758 and 1762 only served to make Königsberg “a lively place,” as Russian officers filled the university’s classrooms and the town’s merchants grew rich supplying the army (112-114).

Kuehn offers an exhaustive account of the diverse friendships Kant cultivated. There are fine discussions of his peculiar relationship with Johann Georg Hamann — a relationship that seemed to thrive despite fundamental disagreements on just about everything of philosophical significance — and his friendship with his student, and later



colleague, Christian Jacob Kraus, a man who was devoted to both Kant and Hamann. Kuehn places a special emphasis on the importance of the English merchant Joseph Green in Kant's development. Green was Kant's closest friend and influenced everything from Kant's fabled punctuality (Kuehn suggests that if Königsbergers indeed could set their clocks by Kant's perambulations, it was chiefly because of Green's own obsessive punctuality forced Kant to keep to a more regular schedule [154-156]) to the writing of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant presented every sentence of the book to Green for his approval, and as Kuehn observes, the book is peppered with "the language of merchants" [240-241]). Kant's withdrawal from society began only with Green's death in 1786 — for the rest of his life, he refrained from leaving his home in the evenings, preferring to remain alone during the hours that he had previously spent with Green (322).

What is perhaps most impressive about this study is the ease with which Kuehn (also the author of an insightful book on the impact of Scottish philosophy in Germany) moves between Kant's life and his thought. The discussion of the development of Kant's mature philosophy is unfailingly lucid, clarifying what precisely it was about Hume's work that spurred Kant down the path that led to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (198-201, 472-3). The ten-page précis of the book's argument (240-250) is deft and masterful. Kuehn never loses sight of the moral and religious concerns that animated Kant's critical philosophy and emphasizes that Kant's insistence that "we cannot *know* what is beyond experience" does not mean that we are relieved of the task of trying to "think" it (see the fine discussion of the difference between "boundaries [*Grenzen*]" and "limits [*Schranken*]" on 261-2). According to Kuehn, Kant sought to show "that even in the

absence of knowledge of absolute reality, morality has a claim on us that is itself absolute and incontrovertible. It is this moral claim on us that elevates us above the beasts” (265). The concern with moral questions reach far back into Kant’s life and, in what is perhaps the book’s most audacious claim, Kuehn argues that the origins of Kant’s perspective on morality can be traced back to a reorientation in his own life that took place around the time of his fortieth birthday (1764). Drawing on Kant’s notes and lectures on anthropology, Kuehn offers a strikingly different picture of Kant’s ethical theory that gives pride of place to the concept of “character” (144-151). “Character,” Kuehn argues, “is built on maxims,” those precepts which, as any reader of Kant’s mature moral philosophy knows, must be tested by the categorical imperative. But by the time Kant got around to writing his mature moral philosophy, discussions of reason, the categorical imperative, and duty tended to crowd out any sustained discussion of the relationship of maxims and character, thus leaving readers with the impression “that character did not seem to be as important to him as it really is” (204). To live by maxims, in Kuehn’s account of Kant’s understanding of morality, “is to live in a principled way, is to live rationally;” they prevent us from “being swept away by emotions and thus acting foolishly” (145-6). As the “most basic rules of conduct and thinking” they are relatively few in number and their adoption “should be viewed as a rare and very important event in a human life,” marking a change in what Kant terms one’s *Denkungsart* — a “way of thinking” — as opposed to one’s *Sinnesart* (“way of sensing”).

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The importance of this complex of concepts for Kant's moral philosophy is the central theme of G. Felicitas Munzel's *Kant's Conception of Moral Character*, which shares with Kuehn's biography the remarkable ability to force readers to realize that there are entire dimensions of Kant's thought that everyone else appears to have missed. If recent critics of Kant have faulted him for an obsession with rules and a neglect of notions such as character or virtue, the problem may lie in the failure to recognize the crucial role played by the concept of *Denkungsart* in Kant's work. The term, as Munzel shows (39-43), is everywhere in Kant, though existing English translations have managed to conceal this fact by failing to come up with a consistent way of translating it: for instance, Norman Kemp Smith's classic translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* renders it variously as "thought," "way of thinking," "manner of thinking," "modes of thought," and translates the crucial phrase "revolution of *Denkungsart*" as "intellectual revolution," "revolution in point of view," and "changed point of view" (Munzel xv-xvi). With this much noise in the translation, it is little wonder that Kant's message has been garbled. Fortunately, the Cambridge Edition includes the term in their glossary and proposes "way of thinking" as a translation. Munzel proposes "conduct of thought," arguing that Kant used the term to designate "an *activity* of thought informed by certain principles" (xvi).

The concept spans Kant's theoretical and practical writings: the famous "Copernican Revolution" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B xxii) is, in fact, a shift in our *Denkungsart* while the "maxims of understanding" outlined in the *Critique of Judgment* §40 (*pace* the Cambridge Edition, it is unlikely that we are likely to be seeing scholars refer to this work as the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*) are rules for our "conduct of

thought.” To follow the third of these maxims and think in a way which is consistent is, in Munzel’s account, to adopt that “resolute *Denkungsart*” which makes human beings capable of morality. To live a life that is organized around principles (or, in Kant’s terms, to follow maxims) is to have effected a change in one’s *Denkungsart* — or, more precisely, it is to live the sort of life that could be said to be guided by thought. Munzel traces the emergence of this particular constellation of *Denkungsart* and “character” to the period prior to the writing of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and suggests that its emergence may be related to the “great light of 1769” (49) — Kant’s characterization of the crucial insight that inaugurated his recasting of his approach to philosophy and which culminated in the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This lends support to the emphasis in Kuehn and other scholars (notably Dieter Henrich and Richard Velkley) on primacy of moral concerns in the development of Kant’s critical philosophy.

Munzel’s book could also be seen as a contribution to the growing literature that has emphasized the importance of Kant’s lectures on anthropology (some of which were eventually collected and published in 1797 as *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*). The *Groundwork of a Metaphysic of Morals* famously sought to “work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical and that belongs only to anthropology” (*Practical Philosophy* 44). Yet, as Munzel stresses, in his actual pedagogical practice, Kant was at pains to maintain lines of communication between ethics and anthropology. Whenever he lectured on ethics, he also offered a course on anthropology, and surviving student notes indicate that Kant made efforts to ensure that the two classes did not contradict one another. The notes from the 1784-1785 lectures on ethics were emphatic on this point: “morality cannot exist

without anthropology” (*Lectures on Ethics* 42). It is a daunting task to trace the ways in which the two disciplines are interconnected in Kant, but Munzel does a brilliant job of exploring the connection. The concept of *Denkungsart* provides the key for unraveling the connections that link Kant’s moral philosophy, his anthropology, his discussions of education, his account of aesthetic judgment, and his reflections on history. Other scholars have succeeded in tracing certain of these threads, but few have been able to find the means to demonstrate the deep connections between these seemingly disparate topics.

The resolution to adopt a life that is informed by a *Denkungsart* marks, for Kant, “a ‘kind of rebirth,’ a ‘transformation’ whose moment of occurrence marks a ‘new epoch’ in the life of an individual” (160). To live such a life is to have moved beyond a life governed merely by a “*Sinnesart*” (“sensibility”). Munzel cites a particularly succinct passage from Kant’s notebooks: “To make maxims for oneself: *Denkungsart*. Otherwise, *Sinnesart*” (56). The bulk of the literature on Kant’s moral philosophy has been concerned, perhaps understandably, with the categorical imperative and the host of questions that Kant’s discussions of it raise. While it is generally recognized that the function of the categorical imperative is to test maxims, there has not been a great deal of attention to the question of how it is that moral agents come to have maxims available for testing in the first place. Certainly the *Groundwork* provides readers with little guidance: in the discussion of duty in first section of the book Kant simply assumes that subjects have them (see *Practical Philosophy* 55), but he only gets around to explaining what a maxim is in a not particularly illuminating footnote in the second section that defines it as a “subjective principle of acting” which must “be distinguished from the *objective* principle, namely the practical law” (*Practical Philosophy* 73). To make matters worse,

the footnote goes on to associate maxims with the subject's "inclinations," which may mislead readers into assuming that any individual whim, if formulated with a sufficient degree of generality (e.g., "always try the local beer") could pass muster as a maxim. By exploring the ways in which Kant handles the relationship between maxims, *Denkungsart*, and moral character in his writings on anthropology, Munzel lets us see that things are not this simple. The fashioning of maxims, indeed, the very decision to live a life that is governed by consciously formulated principles, already involves questions of considerable moral significance. Hence, discussions of Kant's moral philosophy that focus primarily on the so-called "Categorical Imperative Procedure" are missing a good part of the story. One might think of the categorical imperative as a moral equivalent of a grammar checker, analyzing moral rules to make sure that they do not violate what, for Kant, is the essential requirement of moral statements: their potential universalizability. But a study of Kant's moral philosophy that concerned itself *only* with universalization tests would be as impoverished as a theory of poetics that confined itself to the study of grammar.

Munzel's scholarship is formidable. Her command of the literature on Kant is impressive and her footnotes are a treasure-trove of insights into the state of the current debate on any number of central issues. She is sensitive to the nuances of Kant's terminology: see, for example, her insightful discussion (279-288) of Kant's distinction between *Cultur*, *Erziehung* (education), and *Bildung* (that untranslatable term that can mean either education, culture, or formation). Her examination of Kant's account of moral character ranges easily across the terrain of moral philosophy, aesthetic theory, pedagogical theory, theology, and political theory — and, in the process, has written a

book that will be essential reading for scholars in all these fields and a number of others. Among its many other virtues, Munzel's book makes a compelling case against those critics of Kant's moral philosophy who have charged that his ethical "formalism" exemplified "all that is wrong with the Enlightenment" by "failing to provide an account of character and its formation in moral and political life" (1). She helps us to see that such a picture of what Kant was about rests on an understanding of Kant's moral philosophy that fails to venture much beyond the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*.

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If Munzel's book can be seen, in part, as a response to critics of Kant's moral philosophy, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Karl Amerik's provocative study of the reception and appropriation of Kant's critical philosophy by Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, speaks to another group of Kant's more recent critics: those who view his philosophy as yet another botched exercise in metaphysical "foundationalism." Their misunderstandings about Kant turn out to have a rather complex provenance.

While present day critics of Kant's philosophy typically see it as "one more desperate attempt to construct a modern pseudo-object, a literally fabricated philosopher's world, lying in an unneeded nowhere land between the informalities of common life and the strict claims of science itself" (55), the first generation of Kant's readers were perturbed by its *lack* of systematicity. They charged that it "exacerbated rather than alleviated the challenge of skepticism" and they charged that it "divided the world, the self, and philosophy into untenable strict dualisms" (56) — hence the myriad

of systems that arose in German philosophy in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy, each of them claiming to have perfected and completed Kant's project. Kant was rather ill-disposed towards these efforts — witness his public letter disavowing any connection between his own philosophy and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, a letter in which Kant offered what he claimed was an old Italian proverb: “May God protect us especially from our friends, for we shall manage to watch out for our enemies ourselves” (*Correspondence* 559-560). Ameriks agrees: the alleged “friends” of Kant's philosophy represent, in his view, “the greatest danger to it” (5). In a wide-ranging study, he outlines the ways in which a series of “friends” of the Kantian system proceeded to develop responses to what they saw as its central problems and, in the end, provided answers that were “usually much worse than whatever Kant himself had to offer” (19). Far from being simply a historical curiosity, it is his claim that these misunderstandings of what Kant was about persist to this day and that, as a result, Kant's own project remains obscured beneath the wreckage of the various efforts that have been made at perfecting it.

As this sketch suggests, Ameriks has advanced a decidedly ambitious argument: if he is right, most of what has been written about Kant — from the earliest commentaries to the more recent work, both by those who have sought to remain true to Kant's original project (dubbed by Ameriks “pure Kantians”) and those who have sought to advance beyond him (the so-called “post-Kantians”) — has misunderstood him. As a result, *Kant and Fate of Autonomy* is even more ambitious than its subtitle would have us believe: before tracing how Kant's first readers misunderstood him, Ameriks has to sketch what he maintains Kant was actually attempting to do. Hence, the first part of the book is devoted to sketching the broad outlines of Kant's system, a system that Ameriks argues is



“remarkably modest and sophisticated in its conception of the systematic nature of philosophy . . . .” (37-8). It is also, in Ameriks’ view, as system that remained, in one important sense, incomplete (50). In an 1787 letter to his disciple Ludwig Heinrich Jakob, Kant expressed the hope that, once he completed the “critical” part of his system, he could move on to the “dogmatic” (or “doctrinal”) part. But since he was currently at work on what would eventually become the *Critique of Judgment*, he encouraged Jakob to work up “a short system of metaphysics for the time being,” noting “I don’t have time to propose a design for it right now” (*Correspondence* 262-3). Nor, Ameriks observes, did Kant ever find the time to complete the metaphysics whose sketch he had sought to subcontract out to Jakob. For the rest of his life, he lectured regularly on metaphysics — basing his lectures on the same text he had recommended to Jakob: Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*. But while the subject was, as Ameriks notes, “his favorite” and constituted “the compendium of theoretical philosophy as such,” he never produced the promised “system of metaphysics” (50). The notion that Kant should be concerned with metaphysics at all — and with a system like Baumgarten’s in particular — runs counter to views of both present-day “post Kantians” and “pure Kantians” both of whom tend to see metaphysics as “a weak and dying discipline” (11).

Ameriks argues that the success of Galileo, Descartes, and Newton in outlining mathematical “systems of the world” provided both a spur towards a greater concern with rigorous systematicity (by providing a paradigm for what a systematic account should look like) and towards a growing suspicion that metaphysics was of little real significance (since all it could do, even if successful, would be “to duplicate things with special philosophical furniture” [52-53]). In this account, the one area where philosophy

might have a role to play would be in sorting out the fate of everything that could not be fitted into the new scientific world system, including not only the central concerns of “religion, ethics, and scholastic philosophy, but also of elementary common sense and the whole range of notions developed in long-standing and prestigious disciplines that were not organized like the new fundamental and quantitative sciences” (53). Ameriks’ account of Kant’s response to this situation centers on two related issues: the relationship between our ordinary understanding of the world and the perception of the world posited by modern science and the question of the place of freedom in a world that, as modern science presents it, is ruled by a system of causal mechanisms. He sees Kant’s response as quite “modest.” Rather than seeking some sort of “privileged sphere” or set of “foundational representations” that could serve as the unique concern of a revised metaphysics, Kant’s system offered little in the way of foundations but instead was quite content to work out the relationship between our “ordinary empirical judgment and theoretical science” (43-45). In the process he laid out a set of “fairly substantive but very limited metaphysical claims about our rational essence as practical and theoretical beings” (17). What Ameriks views as an admirably modest and, indeed, still quite promising approach to metaphysics struck at least some of its first readers as both insufficient (because it failed to offer a definitive refutation of the philosophical skepticism that had emerged as one possible response to the new scientific world-view), unsystematic (since Kant had rejected the idea of starting out from a privileged foundation), and too traditional in its metaphysical commitments (his writings on religion left too much room for notions like immortality, God, and radical evil).

The relatively unknown German philosophy Karl Leonhard Reinhold looms large in Ameriks' account of how Kant's "modest" metaphysics was quickly supplanted by a series of the ever more ambitious philosophical systems associated with such more familiar figures as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. As the leading contemporary explicator of Kant's system, Reinhold had a decisive influence on the way in which Kant was understood in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. In Ameriks' view, however, Reinhold's influence reaches beyond the 1780s and, indeed, continues down to our own day. When present-day historians of philosophy such as Frederick Beiser argue that "unless philosophy after Kant could be given a genuine foundation in an absolutely certain and scientific sense, reason itself would be undermined" or when present-day critics of the Kantian legacy such as Richard Rorty argue that Kant's philosophy was "marked by a confused obsession with representationalism and the project of securing for philosophy a strict scientific status of its own," they are, without realizing it, reading Kant more or less as Reinhold read him (89-90). And, in Ameriks' view, this is to read Kant wrong.

Reinhold had come to Weimar from Vienna, where —his youthful desire to enter the priesthood thwarted by the dissolution of the Jesuits — he drifted into the Masonic movement and became a critic of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A vigorous champion of the enlightenment ideals (he was befriended by Christoph Martin Wieland and was a regular contributor to the *Teutscher Merkur*), he thought he had found in Kant's critical philosophy an approach that was simultaneously "public" (i.e., capable of being widely disseminated to a population awaiting enlightenment), "professional" (i.e., rigorously philosophical unlike the more literary form of "popular philosophy" that had dominated

German public discussion in during the latter half of the eighteenth century), strictly “bounded” to a consideration only of what was given in experience (hence free of the transcendent entities that populated traditional metaphysical systems), and as committed to the fundamental “autonomy” of the individual (which, among other things, meant that he saw Kant’s system as concerned, above all else, with moral questions). While this may appear to be a plausible summary of Kant’s philosophy, it is Ameriks’ conviction that such an impression only testifies to the degree to which we have become Reinholdians without knowing it: on each of these points, Reinhold has altered Kant’s approach.

Ameriks’ sees Reinhold’s central innovation as residing in what Ameriks terms the “short argument” to idealism. In place of the complex and (for Reinhold and especially for those who followed him) unsystematic set of considerations which make up Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, Reinhold proposed an approach which he regarded as both simpler and more rigorous. He argued that Kant had simply presupposed the notion of “representation [*Vorstellung*]” without actually analyzing it. By proceeding from the “fact of consciousness” and breaking the concept of representation down into its component parts, it would be possible to provide an alternative presentation that — at least in Reinhold’s eyes — remained true to the spirit, if not always the letter, of Kant’s system (namely, that it be “public,” “professional,” “bounded,” and “autonomous”). Ameriks, however, sees a number of problems with the “short argument,” beginning with the fact that, prior to Reinhold’s elaboration of the argument Kant had expressed misgivings towards approaches of this sort (104). Further, the approach had the consequence of barring the way to the “modest” metaphysics that Ameriks sees as central to Kant’s entire project. Reinhold held that, because the “thing in itself” was

“unrepresentable,” it was “unknowable” (127). With this interpretation, philosophy was given a clearly bounded domain to explore, secure from interference by other disciplines. But Kant insisted that while things in themselves could not be known, they can nevertheless be thought — and it was, for him, the business of metaphysics to attempt to think such things (143).

While Reinhold himself would later back away from some of the implications of the short argument— in part because of objections from his students at Jena, some of whom (such as Friedrich von Hardenberg [“Novalis”] and Friedrich Niethammer) would later play a significant role in early romanticism — Fichte constructed a philosophical system that, as Ameriks demonstrates, was even more emphatic in its attempt to ground everything on a single principle. And Hegel, despite his critique of many aspects of Fichte’s system, still wound up viewing Kant through the lenses that Fichte had borrowed from Reinhold. In these later refinements of Reinhold’s approach, Ameriks suggests that much of the practical impetus behind the “short argument” has been lost. For Reinhold, the “short argument” held out the promise of providing a surer means to enlighten a public. But as the next generation of German idealists began to explore the intricacies of consciousness and representation, the linkage to efforts at enlightenment began to loosen. In a memorable passage, Ameriks observes, “One gets the image of a magnificent eighteenth-century sailing ship out on a voyage where the crew has become fascinated simply by the rigging and has lost all sight, interest, and hope of reaching the original goal of being the philosopher kings of the modern era” (111).

*Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* can be, at times, a rather daunting book. There is a fair amount of repetition and backtracking, though — given the difficulties of the point

Ameriks is making and the pervasiveness of the misunderstandings he seeks to remedy — these periodic restatements of his thesis are welcome. The book also faces the challenge of addressing two rather different bodies of literature: the ever-increasing number of studies (many in German) documenting the historical development of Kant's philosophy and the enormous number of recent commentaries on the works of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. Ameriks has a staggering command of scholarship in both of these areas and his nimbleness in moving from one part of the literature to another is impressive (consider, for instance the discussion of the implications of Fichte's "practical turn" in which — in the space of two pages [217-218] — Ameriks effortlessly moves from Kant and Fichte to the famous disputation between Cassirer and Heidegger at Davos, offers some passing comments on unexpected commonalities between such continental theorists as Foucault, Derrida, and Habermas and American such as Quine, Chisholm, and Rawls, before settling into a brief discussion of the work of Wilfrid Sellars). But what is perhaps most challenging about Ameriks' study is that, even more than in the case of Munzel's book, one comes away from it with the sense that Kant is a rather different thinker than has been assumed.

Given the thoroughness with which he has made his case, it is hard to disagree with him. Certainly, there are few scholars working today who have as complete a mastery of Kant's lectures on metaphysics, which play a pivotal role in his argument. Nevertheless, the idea that *everyone*, from Reinhold onward, misread Kant tends to prompt some understandable skepticism. As presented by Ameriks, Kant's "modest metaphysics" would seem to be a rather attractive philosophical position, indeed — as he concludes — it may do a far better job than any other available philosophy of working

about a reconciliation between the claims of science (and the challenge that it poses to the notion of a free will) and the requirements of morality, which seems to require some conception of human autonomy (341-3). But how could such an attractive option have been ignored for so long? Was Kant so singularly incompetent in his mode of presentation that it has taken us two centuries to get his point? Ameriks offers, in passing, a tantalizing indication that perhaps Kant's message was not entirely overlooked. Even as Reinhold was popularizing an approach that, in Ameriks' view, obscured the true content of Kant's philosophy, there seems to have been a small circle of scholars at Jena, including Friedrich Niethammer, Johann Benjamin Erhard, and Franz von Herbert, who recognized that Reinhold was getting Kant wrong (64-66). This suggests that there is another history to be written, perhaps be even more complex than the one traced here, which would explore the impact of these thinkers (whose work is even less known than that of Reinhold) on Jena romanticism and beyond. Thanks to the work of Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank, we are beginning to learn something about this history, but certainly further contributions by Ameriks on these questions would be welcome.

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