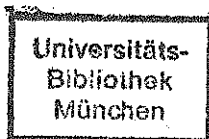


**KANT
AND
HIS INFLUENCE**

Edited by
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and
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INTRODUCTION

George MacDonald Ross and Tony McWalter

The papers in this volume were originally delivered at a conference held at the University of Leeds in April 1990. The conference was organized by the British Society for the History of Philosophy, one of the aims of which is to promote a broader and more scholarly approach to the study of the history of philosophy than has generally been characteristic of philosophers in the analytic tradition. In particular, it was felt that, at least in England, too little attention was being paid to Kant and the post-Kantian philosophy of the nineteenth century; and it is no accident that nearly all the contributors are from Scotland or abroad.

The first four papers are primarily concerned with the interpretation of various aspects of Kant's philosophy, but setting him firmly in a historical context. The order in which they appear represents a gradual shift in emphasis from his connections with earlier thinkers to comparisons with subsequent developments.

Roger M. White's paper, "Ought" implies "Can": Kant and Luther, a Contrast', is untypical of the collection as a whole, in as much as his stance on this particular issue is unrepentantly anti-Kantian. White argues that although Kant does not explicitly mention Luther, he must have been aware of the opposition between his own position and Luther's *a debere ad posse*

non valet consequentia ('ought' does not imply 'can') – but to have made this explicit would have brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities. White provides a detailed and critical analysis of what Kant may have meant by 'Ought' implies 'Can', and of how he might have argued for his position. He lays particular stress on the paradoxical consequences of Kant's complete divorce between the absolutely free rational will, and the causally determined empirical self. He then compares Kant's approach with that of Luther, and concludes that Kant, like Erasmus before him, made the mistake of putting the question of praise or blame before that of the nature of the good life and how, if at all, it can be attained.

Two authors concerned with Kant's metaphysics have focused on his relations with Leibniz. If it was Hume who awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, it was Leibniz who provided the main starting-point for his critical philosophy. Catherine Wilson's paper, 'Confused Perceptions, Darkened Concepts: Some Features of Kant's Leibniz-critique', will prove a useful corrective for those in the Anglo-American tradition who think of the Leibnizian strains in Kant's work as an embarrassment or an unnecessary encumbrance. It helps us to ascertain how ambivalent Kant's position was, and how crucial it is for us to recognize this ambivalence if we are to understand the critical philosophy properly. Wilson focuses on Kant's criticisms of Leibniz's notion of confused perception. She maintains that it is by no means clear that Leibniz saw concepts and perceptions as differing only in degree (the former being 'distinct', the latter 'confused'), and that it is paradoxical to accuse him of failing to distinguish phenomena and noumena – although some of his followers were indeed guilty of such confusions. In his later writings, Kant acknowledged the possibility of a

Platonic interpretation of Leibniz, in which phenomena and noumena are sharply distinguished; and Wilson suggests that Kant himself was troubled by the claims of noumena to be over or behind the appearances in some way.

In 'Thought and Sensibility in Leibniz, Kant and Bradley', Guy Stock starts out from Whitehead's dictum that 'Kant, in his final metaphysics, must either retreat to Leibniz, or advance to Bradley'. He concentrates on the connected problems of the relation between thought and individual reality, and of the distinction between the actual and the merely possible. Leibniz resolved the former through his privative account of sensibility and his doctrine of the individual as an *infima species*, but he failed to distinguish adequately between the actual and merely possible worlds. Kant, on the other hand, made a sharp separation between thought and sensibility, and maintained that the actual world is the one which is given in empirical intuition. Bradley rejected both Leibniz's account of sensibility, and Kant's epistemological dualism, together with the consequential doctrine of the thing-in-itself. However, the resultant metaphysical system was closer to Leibniz's than to Kant's.

Peter Lewis's paper, "Original Nonsense": Art and Genius in Kant's Aesthetic', aims to identify what Kant means by 'original nonsense' in the context of his discussion of art and genius in *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Lewis argues that Kant's great insight is that works of artistic genius, in virtue of being original and exemplary, are essentially embedded in traditions constituted by works of art. Works of genius provide rules to be followed in the work of non-genius, and set standards of excellence for the work of future genius. In the course of the paper, Lewis draws attention to significant similarities between the views of Kant and Wittgenstein on genius and taste in art.

The remainder of the papers in the volume are concerned more historically with Kant's direct influence on subsequent thinkers in various disciplines and countries – first, with his early influence in Germany. Eckart Förster is currently preparing an English edition of Kant's *Opus postumum*, a much-neglected work in which Kant deals with the transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics. In 'Fichte, Beck and Schelling in Kant's *Opus postumum*', Förster describes the aim and content of the work, and argues that it constitutes a significant revision of Kant's critical position. In the *Opus postumum* there are references to Fichte, Beck and Schelling, who were all followers of Kant. Some scholars have claimed that the changes in Kant's position were due to their influence. After examining the evidence, Förster concludes that Kant may have been influenced by Schelling and Beck (though not by Fichte), but that his thoughts were in any case going in much the same direction as theirs.

In his paper, 'Imagination as a Connecting Middle in Schelling's Reconstruction of Kant', John Llewelyn concentrates on Schelling's development of the Kantian concept of imagination as the 'connecting middle' between theory and practice. After describing Kant's account of imagination, Llewelyn analyses the difference made to Kant's critical idealism by Schelling's claim that we have non-discursive intellectual constructive intuition as well as empirical intuition. The focus shifts from the relationship between philosophy and mathematics to that between philosophy and art; and Schelling is seen as the connecting middle between Kant and Heidegger.

To turn to Britain, it is remarkable how small a role Kant's thought has played in the intellectual life of the English-speaking philosophical world. The last three papers tell part of the story of this neglect.

However, any discussion of the history of philosophical thought in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain needs to preserve a sharp distinction between England and Scotland. In England, philosophy was virtually extinct as an academic discipline, returning only gradually during the second half of the nineteenth century. Such philosophical debate as there was existed largely outside the university world, in literary clubs and journals. In Scotland, by contrast, philosophical discussion among the educated laity was underpinned by a university curriculum which had philosophy at its very core (see Davie, *The Democratic Intellect*).

In his exhaustive study, 'The Early Reception of Kant's Thought in England 1785–1805', Giuseppe Micheli has had to rely mainly on reviews and articles in literary journals, and the few translations and commentaries that appeared between those years. The picture he paints is a bleak one indeed: there was little interest in Kant's philosophy, and even less understanding of his central ideas. He was perceived mainly as a *political* writer, and a subversive one at that – encouraging his followers to reject the established political order, religious belief, and moral values. By the turn of the century increasing repression, and censorship of ideas emanating from the Continent, put a virtual stop to the study of Kant's work. With the exception of Coleridge, Kant remained a closed book to English thinkers until the 1830s.

As for the early reception of Kant in Scotland, Manfred Kuehn, in his 'Hamilton's Reading of Kant: A Chapter in the Early Scottish Reception of Kant's Thought', shows that, despite the widespread interest in metaphysics, Kant's ideas were at first understood hardly any better than they were in England. The conventional wisdom is that Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856) was the earliest Scottish philosopher to be substantially

influenced by Kant. Kuehn argues that, although Hamilton had an intimate knowledge of Kant's texts, he was in fact quite hostile to his ideas, and much less influenced by him than has generally been supposed.

Finally, in his paper 'Aspects of Kant's Influence on British Theology', Donald MacKinnon stresses that the pivot of Kant's influence lies in his doctrine of the primacy of practical reason. He criticizes the view of Kant as the 'philosopher of Protestantism', and he displays his influence on a wide range of British theologians from different denominations. MacKinnon concludes that Kant's influence did not take the form of slavish imitation, but of conversion of his insights to uses he could not have foreseen, and of which he might not have approved.

The papers in this volume give only a taste of Kant's range of interests and of his influence. There is ample scope for a series of conferences and accompanying volumes covering his influence at different periods, in different countries, and in different disciplines. In particular, there is the issue of the revival of interest in his philosophy in Britain in the 1830s, and the subsequent decline in any fundamental influence of his thought during the twentieth century. This raises the question of whether Kant's philosophy *deserves* to be more influential.

The Europe of 1989 shared with the Europe of 1789 the distinction of heralding a new political order. The year 1989 was one of progressive and democratically orientated revolution, and the influence of German culture is an issue for us in the latter part of the twentieth century as it was an issue in the latter part of the eighteenth. What Kant offers is the prospect of a world-view which portrays the ethical as fundamental to politics; and he provides an account of human nature

which at least makes possible an ethical commonwealth. These concerns are relevant not merely to the politics of the late twentieth century, but to political theory in general.

Kant's thesis that human nature is so constituted that an ethical commonwealth is possible is itself grounded on metaphysics. He sought to produce a *Weltanschauung* in which 'epistemology is logically prior to ethics in that it must prepare the ground for a philosophically defensible ethics, but [in which] ethics itself is practically prior to epistemology, because the development of an adequate epistemology is a task set by the highest good' (Van der Linden, p. 10). For Kant, epistemology and ethics, or more generally philosophical theory and praxis, are inextricably intertwined.

It has long been fashionable for intellectuals in the British tradition to hold what one can call a *modest* view of philosophy. Integral to this view is the idea that, while once all knowledge was the province of philosophy, the history of its subsequent development is a history of subjects emancipating themselves from their parent disciplines. Ever greater specialization and ever greater expertise is required for work at the frontiers of knowledge. The modest view has it that, as subjects split from philosophy, as they develop their own methods, and as the knowledge-base becomes ever greater, so the field for philosophy contracts and becomes more focused. Some have felt that the philosophical residuum for the twentieth century has been the analysis of linguistic expressions, while others have gone so far as to maintain that linguistic analysis can itself be hived off, so that nothing remains for the philosophers to study other than the thesis that philosophers have nothing to study. If such conceptions of philosophy were to remain ascendant, then there would be no serious future for the subject.

There is, however, a brighter prospect. While it is true that the knowledge industry grows ever more voluminous, it is also true that we have become ever more conscious of the limitations which the fragmentation of knowledge has engendered. Often the most exciting work, the search for solutions to pressing theoretical and practical problems, involves thinking at the frontier between two or more disciplines. What is needed is just the sort of overview of a whole problem area which philosophers have traditionally sought to attain. Reflection on the limitations of the methods used to acquire knowledge in particular disciplines can make us humble about the attainability of absolute truth; but it can also make us realize the importance of approaching problems from a different direction, or of setting up new forms of enquiry.

Prominent English-speaking philosophers have maintained that philosophy provides no answers: but to adopt this as a motto for general philosophical practice is a recipe for the long-term decay of philosophy. It is entirely reasonable for the public to ask what sorts of problems a philosophical training enables one to tackle. We should not be seduced by the frequent demand for yes-or-no answers where these are inappropriate; but we must be willing at least to say what kinds of judgement are cultivated by a philosophical training. If we believe that the philosopher's judgement is more widely informed, more objective, based on sounder reasoning, and less bound by the presuppositions of particular disciplines than that of the non-philosopher, then we must emphasize that philosophy is not just a pleasant, abstract pastime, but a practical and useful activity, the diminution or absence of which would impoverish society in multifarious ways.

The claim that philosophy must be practical as well as

theoretical is a thoroughly Kantian ideal; and it is testimony to the limited influence Kant has had in Britain that it should still be necessary to plead the case. If the case is accepted, it follows that philosophy should play a far more central role in the educational curriculum – a role it used to play in Scotland, and which it still plays in most of the continent of Europe.

Kant himself regarded the whole of human knowledge as the province of the philosopher, and in presenting this book we hope to do something to rehabilitate the view that philosophers should be concerned with the full range of intellectual and practical problems facing mankind. His life's work is not simply an episode in the history of philosophy, but a rich resource from which we can derive inspiration for the future development of philosophy as an academic discipline.

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FICHTE, BECK AND SCHELLING IN KANT'S *OPUS POSTUMUM*

Eckart Förster

I have taken the title of the conference – 'Kant and His Influence' – quite literally. That is to say, I have taken the 'and' in the title as a conjunctive, not as a disjunctive. Consequently, I want to raise the question: how did Kant respond philosophically to the way others reacted to his philosophy? For while others were struggling with the implications of the critical philosophy he had initiated, Kant was too, virtually until his death. When he died, Kant left behind a voluminous manuscript of several hundred pages – the so-called *Opus postumum* – on which he had worked for more than a decade. This is, of course, the same period during which disciples and critics, such as Reinhold, Fichte, Beck, Schelling, Maimon, and others, subjected the critical philosophy to a careful examination. Interestingly, we encounter references to Fichte and Beck as well as Schelling in Kant's *Opus postumum*. To what extent was Kant, in his last work, aware of, or even influenced by, these philosophers?

I must begin by saying a few things about the *Opus postumum* itself. Although the manuscript is virtually complete, Kant did not live to edit it. Ignoring Kant's repeated assertion that the text would be his most important work, and that it would fill 'a gap' in his critical

philosophy, his literary executor thought the text not fit for publication, with the result that it soon disappeared in the possession of Kant's heirs. When it resurfaced half a century later, influential philosophers like Kuno Fischer thought they could dismiss it without inspection as a product of senility – after all, had Kant not himself completed the critical philosophy with his *Critique of Judgment*? But more sympathetic thinkers, too, found it difficult to make sense of Kant's text, for the various sheets and fascicles of the manuscript were not preserved in the order of their composition, making it seemingly impossible to determine the chronological (and logical) order of Kant's reasoning. Eventually, in 1936–8, the complete text was published. When the war was over, Kant's last work slowly began to attract the philosophical attention one would expect, with translations of it being published in French, Italian, Spanish, and an English translation forthcoming.

What did Kant hope to achieve in his last work, a work which he initially planned to call 'Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics'? Why did he think, so late in his life, that another critical work was needed? I will offer an answer to these questions and then give an overview of the content of the *Opus postumum*, before turning to the discussion of Fichte, Beck and Schelling.¹

¹ In section I, I am summarizing what I have developed in more detail in a number of publications, including 'Is There "A Gap" in Kant's Critical System?', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, XXV, 4 (1987), pp. 533–55; 'Kant's *Selbstsetzungslehre* in Kant's *Transcendental Deductions. The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum*, Eckart Förster (ed.) (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1989), pp. 217–38; 'Kant's Notion of Philosophy', *The Monist*, 72, 2 (1989), pp. 285–304; 'Die Idee des Übergangs. Überlegungen zum Elementarsystem der bewegenden Kräfte', in *Übergang. Beiträge zur Spätphilosophie Immanuel Kants*, Siegfried Blasche (ed.) (Vittorio Klostermann: Frankfurt, forthcoming); and in the Introduction to my English edition of Kant's *Opus postumum* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, forthcoming).

I

We may take our clue from a well-known passage in the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It describes the conceptual revolution that set the study of nature 'on the secure path of a science':

When Galileo caused balls, the weights of which he had himself previously determined, to roll down an inclined plane . . . a light broke upon all students of nature. They learned that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason's own determining (B xii-xiii).

The light that broke upon the students of nature was the realization that nature does not by itself reveal its laws to the observer. No unaided observation suggests that all bodies fall with the same constant acceleration. To discover a law like this, it is necessary to isolate in an experiment certain features from their natural environment, as Galileo had done when he let balls roll down an inclined plane. The experiment, the observer's interference with nature's processes, is a condition under which a scientific study of nature is possible. But more is required for a genuine science of nature.

[P]hysics . . . owes the beneficent revolution in its point of view entirely to the happy thought, that while reason must seek in nature, not fictitiously ascribe to it, whatever as not being knowable through reason's own resources has to be learnt, if learnt at all, only from nature, it must adopt as its guide, in so seeking, that which it has itself put into nature (B xiii-xiv).

Any science worthy of the name must exhibit, or guarantee, a *systematic connection* of its various laws and propositions, and it must do so in accordance with determinate principles. Such systematic unity cannot be gained empirically; it is of a *a priori* origin and presupposes a systematic activity of the subject. No aggregate of perceptions, no mere collection of empirical data, can yield the systematicity we seek in a science. Reason 'must itself show the way with principles of judgement based upon fixed laws'. Hence, if physics is to be possible as a science, philosophy must provide principles for the investigation of nature that yield *a priori topoi* for the systematic classification of those specific forces of matter that can only be given empirically. The subject must 'adopt as its guide' in seeking to learn from nature 'that which it has itself put into nature'.

More specifically, the systematicity of physics rests on two requirements: (1) that we bring together in a systematic way the various laws of nature; (2) that nature permit such classification, in other words, that nature can be regarded as systematic. Now, (1) presupposes (2), for, as Kant had put it in the first Introduction to the third *Critique*:

it is clear that the nature of the reflective judgment is such that it cannot undertake to *classify* the whole of nature by its empirical differentiation unless it assumes that nature itself *specifies* its transcendental laws by some principle.²

The *Critique of Judgment* provided the *a priori* justification for the assumption that nature specifies its universal laws to empirical ones, according to the form of a

² Academy edition of Kant's Works (Berlin, 1900-), Vol. 20, p. 215; trans J. Haden (The Bobbs-Merrill Company: Indianapolis, 1965), p. 20.

system.³ But it remained silent as to (1).

What still needed to be elucidated, then, was exactly *how* the physicist must initially approach nature in order to be instructed by it, or what *kind of a priori* principles one must 'put into nature' in order to achieve a systematic understanding of its laws. For this task, the categories and Analogies of the first *Critique* do not suffice; nor is it enough to analyse the concept of matter in accordance with the table of categories, as the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* had done. Physics does not deal with nature *überhaupt*, nor with the 'separated (although in itself empirical) concept of matter',⁴ but with the specific corporeal nature of outer sense. Hence a new work was required, a 'Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics':

The transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics consists in a method of bringing about the systematic knowledge of physics; this cannot be done simply by collecting experiences, for here the outline [*Vorriss*] of a system is missing, which must be given a priori.⁵

If the transition *project* is relatively clear, its solution certainly is not. Kant's manuscript reveals his long and painful struggle with the problem; in a letter of 1798 to Christian Garve he even writes of 'a pain like that of Tantalus' of seeing before him 'the unpaid bill of my uncompleted philosophy'. What, exactly, is the source of the problem?

To account for its systematicity (possibility), physics

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vol. 4, p. 472.

⁵ Vol. 21, p. 492.

must be preceded by a special *a priori* science, the 'science of transition'. But this science of transition, in turn, requires an *idea* or a *plan* according to which it is to be carried out, for, as Kant had put it in the first *Critique*, 'No one attempts to establish a science unless he has an idea upon which to base it' (A 834). But what could function as such an idea for the science of transition? This idea cannot be derived from physics itself, as the transition is supposed to account for the very possibility of physics. Nor can it be derived from the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, from which the transition commences: the concepts of attraction and repulsion, as Kant wrote later,

furnish no specifically determined, empirical properties, and one can imagine no specific [forces], of which one could know whether they exist in nature, or whether their existence be demonstrable.⁶

For a while, Kant hoped to achieve the desired systematic result by 'following the clue given by the categories and bringing into play the moving forces of matter according to their quantity, quality, relation and modality'. But, as the early parts of Kant's manuscript show clearly, the system of categories cannot compensate for the lack of a proper idea on which to base the transition; it cannot itself determine *which* moving forces of matter must be connected *a priori* in order to advance to physics as a system.

After several years, in 1799, a solution eventually suggested itself. It is reflected in the unique status Kant now assigned to the concept of an ether, which had initially been introduced in the *Opus postumum* to explain a number of physical phenomena. For example,

⁶ Vol. 22, p. 282.

Kant had realized that the dynamical theory of matter of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, which explains matter in terms of an interplay of attractive and repulsive forces, cannot explain the formation of material bodies. It may explain the differences in density in different types of matter, but it cannot account for cohesion and hence for matter of a particular form – a body (hence it cannot account for mechanics). The possibility of cohesion requires the impact of an all-penetrating, internally moving material, which Kant calls the ‘caloric’, or ‘ether’. But eventually Kant also realized that empirical space, in order to be sensible, has to be thought of as being filled with a continuum of forces which ‘as it were . . . hypostatizes’ space.⁷ The ether is thus also referred to as ‘hypostatized space’. The space known from the first *Critique*, by contrast, the mere form of outer intuition, was ‘neither positively empty nor positively full, [hence] not an object existing outside me at all’.⁸

Finally, Kant argued, since perceptions must be thought of as the effects of moving forces on my subject, the unity of experience, which reason demands *a priori* and unequivocally – there is only ‘one experience’ (A 110) – is thinkable only on condition of a unitary basis of all moving forces, or an ether. Kant’s ether, in the *Opus postumum*, thus eventually becomes a necessary concept of reason, a transcendental ideal. But if it is a concept of reason, if it is an ideal of reason, it must be possible to determine analytically, and in accordance with the table of categories, those attributes that necessarily pertain to the ether in virtue of its function (cf. A 580/B 610f). To put it briefly, since the ether can only be one, it must be *universally distributed* (quantity).

⁷ Vol. 21, p. 224.

⁸ Vol. 21, p. 232.

In order to function as the basis for the connection of all the moving forces of matter, it must be *all-penetrating* (quality). Since its internal vibrations are to be the condition of the formation of material bodies (cohesion), it must be *all-moving* (relation). Finally, since the ‘unity of experience’ permits no interruptions, the internal motions of the ether must be *permanent* (modality).⁹ Expressed negatively, the ether must be imponderable, incoercible, incohesible, and inexhaustible. And this, Kant realized, can yield a basic principle for the systematic apprehension of the moving forces of matter, for ‘ponderability, coercibility, cohesion, and exhaustibility presuppose moving forces which act in opposition to the latter and cancel their effect’.¹⁰

For there to be an object of experience in space, then, we must presuppose *a priori* such limitations of the ether – limitations, that is, which make possible the constitution of an object of outer sense. We thus have an ‘idea’ or principle for the elementary system of the transition, and an *a priori* topic for the empirical forces: as regards quantity, all matter must be either ponderable or imponderable; as regards quality, either coercible or incoercible; as regards relation, cohesible or incohesible; as regards modality, exhaustible or inexhaustible. The forces themselves remain ‘problematic’ at this level, as Kant emphasizes repeatedly: they can only be given empirically. The systematic account of them, if it is to be *a priori*, must thus be expressed in the form of disjunctions.

At virtually the same time at which Kant finds this solution, he realizes its inadequacy. He had indeed found a principle for the elementary system of the moving

⁹ Cf. Vol. 21, p. 584.

¹⁰ Vol. 22, p. 610.

forces of matter, but the question, 'How are these forces to be experienced?' had thus far been left unaddressed. Specific empirical forces cannot be known through reflection, nor are they simply given to a passive subject. Empirical forces are recognized only by way of an active interference with them:

We would not know through experience the moving forces of matter in bodies, if we were not conscious of our own activity to exercise ourselves the acts of repulsion and attraction through which we apprehend these appearances. The concept of originally moving forces is not derived from experience but must lie a priori in the activity of the mind of which we are conscious when moving.¹¹

To experience the moving forces of matter, then, the subject of experience must itself exist as a corporeal subject in space and in time; it must first constitute itself as an object or, as Kant prefers to say in the *Opus postumum*, the subject must first *posit* itself (as an object). How is this to be understood from the point of view of his transcendental idealism?

We can only be affected by moving forces of matter if we exist as corporeal beings in space. And only because we ourselves exercise acts of attraction and repulsion do we apprehend the appearances of moving forces upon us. On the other hand, it is only in the process of such apprehension of moving forces that we appear to ourselves as corporeal. Only in so far as I can represent myself as *affected* do I *appear* to myself as sensuous and corporeal, that is, as an object of outer sense. Self-positing and affection through outer objects must therefore really be two sides of the same coin:

¹¹ Vol. 21, p. 490.

Positing and perception, spontaneity and receptivity, the objective and the subjective relation, are simultaneous, because they are identical as to time, as appearances of how the subject is affected – thus [they are] given a priori in the same *actus*.¹²

Hence it is from this original *actus* of the subject that there emerges the duality of empirical self and material world surrounding it, of observer and observed. Only because I apprehend the undetermined given manifold and, in the process of apprehension, insert or put into this manifold certain fundamental forces, can I represent the manifold as the appearance of an external cause of my perception, and at the same time represent myself as being affected, hence as corporeal:

The subject affects itself and becomes an object in appearance for itself in the composition of the moving forces. . . . the moving forces of matter are what the subject does with its body to [other] bodies.

The reactions corresponding to these forces are contained in the simple acts by which we perceive the bodies themselves.¹³

In these simple acts, in what it puts into nature, the subject is guided by the principle of the elementary system of forces, as established in the analysis of the idea of the ether as the unitary material ground of all outer experience. The determination of my own existence in space and time, the transition from pure apperception to knowledge of myself as an empirical being, thus takes place for Kant within the context of the ideal of a single, all-embracing experience. This experience itself depends on the collective unity of the moving forces of matter,

¹² Vol. 22, p. 466.

¹³ Vol. 22, p. 364; Vol. 22, p. 326.

which the subject investigates, progressing to a thoroughgoing determination of all phenomena; a process never completed but inevitably given as a task:

The understanding begins with the consciousness of itself (*apperceptio*) and performs thereby a logical act. To this the manifold of outer and inner intuition attaches itself serially, and the subject makes itself into an object in a limitless sequence . . . I am an object of myself and of my representations. That there is something else outside me is my own product. I make myself We make everything ourselves.¹⁴

Before proceeding to Fichte, Beck and Schelling, I want to mention briefly that the position sketched here is not yet Kant's final one. Rather, the last fascicles of the *Opus postumum* contain an extension of the theory of self-positing to the moral-practical realm. For thoroughgoing determination of my existence in space and time is not the only thoroughgoing determination of myself. As a person, I am also endowed with a will which must be determined in accordance with the moral law of reason, a will, that is, which is subject to the categorical imperative. It is thus appropriate to speak of a moral-practical self-positing, analogous to the theoretical, technical-practical one. 'Man *himself* must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, he is or is to become'. Thus Kant had already written several years earlier, in the *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*.

He now expands on this. His main concern, however, is with the *idea* which practical reason generates in the process of moral-practical self-positing: the idea, or ideal, of God. Practical reason inevitably creates this ideal,

¹⁴ Vol. 22, p. 82.

Kant argues, in order to constitute itself as a moral person – just as theoretical reason creates for itself the idea of a world (the ether) as a collective, not merely distributive, unity in the light of which it constitutes itself as a corporeal being in space and time. This, finally, allows Kant to unify the two fundamental branches of his philosophy, namely nature and freedom, in the new theory of transcendental philosophy as *Selbstsetzungslehre*:

Transcendental-philosophy is the subjective principle of the united theoretical-speculative and moral-practical reason in one system of ideas . . . through which the subject constitutes itself into an object.¹⁵

Not surprisingly, at this stage the original title, 'Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science', no longer seemed appropriate to Kant for the text at hand. Thus, in the last fascicle of the *Opus postumum* he tries out various new titles for his last work. Here are three such versions:

'System of Transcendental Philosophy in three Divisions: God, the world (universum) and I myself (man) as a moral being'

'The Highest Standpoint of Transcendental Philosophy in the System of the Two Ideas (God, the World, and the thinking Subject that connects both)'

'Philosophy as *Wissenschaftslehre* in a Complete System, by I. Kant'

Anyone vaguely familiar with the thoughts of Schelling, Beck and Fichte will immediately recognize the allusion,

¹⁵ Vol. 21, p. 67.

in these titles, to the main works of these three philosophers: to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, to Beck's *The Only Possible Standpoint*, and to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. And it is interesting that we also encounter other references to Fichte, Beck and Schelling in the *Opus postumum*. To what extent was Kant influenced, in his last work, by these philosophers?

II

Fichte

Fichte had studied with Kant in 1791, and it was Kant who had recommended Fichte's first manuscript to his own publisher. The resulting book made Fichte famous overnight. Fichte remained loyal to Kant for quite some time, and for years he continued to send his books to Kant.

It would be natural to expect Fichte to have had an influence on Kant's thinking especially in connection with his theory of self-positing. E. Adickes, H.J. de Vleeschauwer, and others have thought that this very theory on Kant's part was a concession to Fichte, and a desperate attempt to unify and consolidate his disintegrating school. I think this is mistaken. In fact, I think this theory has roots that are quite independent of Fichte, and that in fact pre-date Fichte's own philosophical beginnings.¹⁶

When Kant discusses self-positing in the *Opus postumum*, there is no mention of Fichte. Fichte is, indeed, not mentioned by name at all in this work, but there is a passage in the second fascicle (sheet VI, page 1) that is a draft for Kant's Open Letter on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*:

A *Wissenschaftslehre* in general, in which one abstracts

¹⁶ Cf. my 'Kant's *Selbstsetzungslehre*', op. cit., p. 217f.

from its matter (the objects of knowledge), is pure logic; and to imagine beyond it another, higher and more general *Wissenschaftslehre* (which, however, can itself contain nothing other than the scientific element of knowledge in general – its form) is, conceptually, to chase one's own tail.

In the Open Letter, this passage becomes:

I hereby declare that I regard Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as a totally indefensible system. For the pure science of knowledge is nothing more nor less than mere *logic*, and the principles of logic cannot lead to any material knowledge. Since logic, that is to say, *pure logic*, abstracts from the content of knowledge, the attempt to cull a real object out of logic is a vain effort and therefore a thing that no one has ever done.¹⁷

This declaration against Fichte is often treated as Kant's general dismissal of his idealistic successors, but this, I think, cannot be right. There are too many peculiarities in the Open Letter to permit us to take it at face value. It was initiated by a review, in the *Erlanger Literatur Zeitung*, of Johann Gottlieb Buhle's *Entwurf der Transcendental Philosophie*, in which the reviewer states that Kant, in his *Critique*, had only sketched the plan for a transcendental philosophy, and that Fichte was the first to have carried out this plan systematically, and hence was the first transcendental philosopher. Kant is challenged to express his opinion of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.

I have always found it extremely puzzling that Kant

¹⁷ I. Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence 1759-1799*, A. Zweig (ed.) (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1967), p. 253.

should have written this Open Letter at all. Firstly, it took him a long time to respond. The Open Letter was written more than half a year after the review. Secondly, Kant had admitted in a letter to Tieftrunk that he had not read the *Wissenschaftslehre*; what he knew of the book he knew from a review of it in the Jena *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. Thirdly, what are we to make of Kant's claim, in his Open Letter, that 'I took the completeness of pure philosophy within the *Critique of Pure Reason* to be the best indication of the truth of my work'? What completeness? For shortly before the reviewer of Buhle's book issued his challenge, Kant had written to Christian Garve that he felt 'a pain like that of Tantalus' of seeing before him 'the unpaid bill of my uncompleted philosophy. . . . The project on which I am now working [the *Opus postumum*] must be completed . . . or else a gap will remain in the *critical philosophy*'.¹⁸

One can hardly take the Open Letter at face value. Is there another way in which it might be interpreted? It is important to note that Kant had received a similar challenge two years earlier, in May 1797, this time from the German physiocrat Johann August Schlettwein. Schlettwein insisted that Kant take a side in the ongoing dispute as to who among Kant's followers had best understood the *spirit* of the critical philosophy, 'whether it is Reinhold, or Fichte, or Beck, or whoever'.¹⁹ On 29 May 1797, Kant published an open letter to Schlettwein. In response to the question as to who had understood Kant's texts the way he wanted them to be understood, Kant here wrote:

I answer without hesitation: it is the local court

¹⁸ Vol. 12, p. 257, my italics (Zweig, p. 251).

¹⁹ Vol. 12, p. 364.

chaplain and professor of mathematics, Herr Schulz, whose writings about the critical system, entitled: *Prüfung etc.*, Mr Schlettwein should consult. But I request that he bear the following in mind: that the court chaplain's words are to be taken according to the letter, not according to a spirit allegedly lying in them (since one can read into words whatever one pleases).²⁰

The distinction between the spirit and the letter of the Kantian system, to which both Kant and Schlettwein allude, had been brought into the contemporary philosophical discussion by Fichte. It had quickly gained notoriety as a means of distinguishing Kantians into rival groups. Fichte himself, of course, belonged to those who followed the spirit, rather than the letter, of the Kantian system. To the latter group belonged – allegedly – Kant's colleague Johann Schulz, whom Kant had once described as the best mind in the area, and whose two volumes of *Prüfung der Kantischen Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1789, 1792) had met with Kant's highest approval. Himself too old and too busy to engage in public disputes about his philosophy, Kant was eager to see Schulz take on that role for him, and above all to continue his *Prüfungen* of the Kantian system. Yet, it seems, Schulz was reluctant to do so; especially, the charge of being a *Buchstabenphilosoph* seems to have dampened his enthusiasm. So, when Kant was challenged again to express his views of those who proclaimed to have continued in the spirit of the critical philosophy, he may have chosen the opportunity to say a stronger word than was warranted by the situation. That this might be the right interpretation of the Open Letter against Fichte, is

²⁰ Vol. 12, p. 367f.

suggested by a little-known communication of Kant's colleague Rink to Villers, written a year and a half later, on 18 April 1801:

Schulz is now actually working on the continuation of his *Prüfung*, but age, ill health, and various official duties are creating many obstacles for him. For quite some time he was unwilling to proceed with the work, not wanting to be saddled with the label, made fashionable by Fichte, of literalist [*Buchstäbler*], and this circumstance then provided an occasion for Kant's well-known declaration against Fichte. Since that time Schulz has once again taken pen to hand.²¹

I conclude, then, that in spite of terminological similarities, there is no noticeable influence of Fichte on Kant's late philosophy. On the other hand, however, the declaration against Fichte cannot be regarded as the definitive expression of Kant's assessment of Fichte's thinking.

Beck

The case is quite different with Jacob Sigismund Beck, a mathematician and former pupil of Kant's. He is mentioned by name in the *Opus postumum* and, so it seems, approvingly, for Kant writes: '[W]e have insight into nothing except what we can make ourselves. First, however, we must make ourselves. Beck's original representing'.²²

First some background information. Early in the 1790s, Kant had suggested to Beck that he write *Erläuternde Auszüge* – explanatory excerpts or abstracts

– of the main critical writings. Beck complied with Kant's wish in a highly successful way; the first volume appeared in 1793, the second in the following year (*Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof Kant, auf Anrathen desselben*). In 1796, however, Beck published a third volume that went beyond what Kant had expected. Its subtitle is: 'The Only Possible Standpoint from which Critical Philosophy Is to Be Judged'. Beck had come to believe that the structure of the first *Critique* – especially the sharp separation of Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic – promotes a false view of the text. It suggests that sensibility has a content prior to any synthesizing activity of the subject, which is subsequently subjected to ready-made concepts or categories. This view, Beck was convinced, is bound to lead to insurmountable difficulties. In order to avoid the common misunderstanding that Kant really meant to speak of 'given concepts' and of 'objects that affect us', Beck insisted that one begins with the productive activity of the understanding, what he calls the 'original representing'. For sensibility and understanding, according to Beck, have a common root in the original act of representing, an act from which space, time, and the categories originally emerge, not as concepts of objects but rather as ways of representing, and as ways of achieving the original synthetic unity of consciousness through which I can apprehend an object in the first place.

From this 'standpoint' of original representing, Beck proceeded to give his own presentation of the main results of the first *Critique*. As we know, Kant took Beck's efforts very seriously. This is reflected not only in his correspondence,²³ but also in several 'Reflexionen'

²¹ *Altpreussische Monatsschrift*, 17 (1880), p. 288f.

²² Vol. 22, p. 353.

²³ Cf., for instance, Kant's letter to Tieftrunk, 11 December 1797.

(R 6353, 6358). And, of course, Kant himself was very much aware of the problems posed by the structure of the *Critique*. The book had hardly left the press when he wrote to Marcus Herz that he had 'a plan in mind according to which even popularity might be gained for this study',²⁴ a plan Kant immediately carried out in the *Prolegomena*.

Yet in spite of his sympathies for Beck, Kant could not see any advantage in Beck's plan to begin with the categories, and then to introduce the forms of intuition as being required for the categories to be meaningful. For the argument would first have to establish the necessity of certain forms of intuition to give meaning to the categories, and then proceed to a Transcendental Aesthetic that shows which forms we actually have available to us. And Kant believed that this method 'did not have the clarity and facility' of the synthetic method he had himself adopted in the *Critique*.

But Beck's account looks more plausible (and more Kantian) from the point of view of self-positing that Kant developed in the *Opus postumum*. No doubt Kant himself realized this. It is perhaps best simply to quote a few passages from Beck's *The Only Possible Standpoint*, and then to compare them with some typical passages from the *Opus postumum*. Here is what Beck writes:

Original representing consists in the categories. These are nothing else but modes of representation. Accordingly, we have no intention of viewing them here as concepts of objects at all. . . . The reader must transpose himself into this original mode of representation by himself, since our principle is a *postulate* and not a representation through concepts. . . . [T]here

²⁴ Vol. 10, p. 269.

really is no original representing 'of an object', but simply an original representing. For whenever we have the representation of an object, it is already every time a concept, that is, it is already always the attribution of certain determinations by means of which we fix for ourselves a point of reference. . . . Accordingly, space itself is original representing, namely, the original synthesis of the homogeneous. Before this synthesis there is no space; we generate it, rather, in the synthesis. Space or this synthesis is pure *intuiting* itself.²⁵

Compare this with a typical passage from Kant:

The understanding begins with the consciousness of itself and performs thereby a logical act. To this the manifold of outer and inner intuition attaches itself serially, and the subject makes itself into an object in a limitless sequence. This intuition is not empirical. It is not perception, that is, not derived from a sense-object, but determines the object by the subject's *a priori* act, [through which] it is the owner and originator of its own representations. . . . Space and time are pure intuitions, not perceptions, that is, contained *a priori* as intuition in representation. . . . The subject makes this manifold of representations, namely its complex as an object in appearance, be it inner or outer, according to the principle of transcendental philosophy.²⁶

Or take the following passage from Beck:

[T]he transcendental statement, 'The understanding posits a something originally', is what first of all gives sense and meaning to the empirical statement, 'The

²⁵ Trans George di Giovanni in *Between Kant and Hegel* (SUNY Press: Albany, 1985), p. 220f.

²⁶ Vol. 22, pp. 82-7.

object affects me'. For the first statement is the concept of the original representing itself in which all the meaning of our concepts has to be grounded. Indeed, the concept I have of my understanding as a faculty in me, even the concept of my *ego*, receives its sense and meaning in the first instance from this original positing.²⁷

Again, compare this with Kant:

The representations of sense-objects do not enter the subject; rather, they and the principles of their mutual connection emerge [*wirken hinaus*] for the purpose of knowledge of the subject, and to think objects as appearances. . . . The function of the categories [is] to constitute oneself (the subject) as an object. These forms of synthesis in appearance are original, not derivative. . . . Existence in space and time, which stems solely from the subject's power of representation . . . is contained in a system according to the principle of transcendental philosophy.²⁸

There is enough terminological difference in these passages to make it unlikely that Kant had Beck's text in front of him when writing these passages. But that he had him in mind, and that he saw their efforts converge, is borne out by the passage quoted earlier. Here it is again: '[W]e have insight into nothing except what we can make ourselves'. Of this much they had been in agreement previously; new is the following – 'First, however, we have to make ourselves. Beck's original representing'.

From the point of view of the *Opus postumum*, Kant seems both to agree with, and to correct or amend Beck.

²⁷ *Between Kant and Hegel*, op. cit., p. 229.

²⁸ Vol. 22, p. 86.

Schelling

Finally, let us move on to Schelling. From him we would perhaps expect the least influence on Kant. More than fifty years younger than Kant, he was a mere twenty-one at the time when Kant began to work systematically on the *Opus postumum*. Yet, as is so often the case, first appearances may deceive here too. Schelling was a child prodigy; at twenty he had already published two books. The second one, *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy*, was in Kant's library. In 1797, Schelling published *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, which contains a critical exposition and development of Kant's own theory of matter. In it, Schelling tackles the very same problems that were at the forefront of Kant's attention during this period. I do not know whether Kant read the book or not, but he certainly was familiar with Schelling from the glorious reviews Schelling's books received in the *Erlanger Literatur Zeitung*, one of Kant's favourite literary journals at the time (which also published the challenge to Kant that led to the Open Letter against Fichte). There, Schelling was celebrated as a new genius, and as the most promising representative of the (Kantian) dynamical theory of matter. On various occasions, Kant and Schelling are named together as the key representatives of the same philosophy. Kant at least knew that Schelling was a co-labourer in the attempt to secure victory for the dynamical theory of matter.

But there are passages in the *Opus postumum* itself that suggest a familiarity with Schelling's writings. Kant's repeated reference to, and criticism of, the concept of a 'world-soul' is only intelligible, I believe, against the background of Schelling's book *On the World-Soul*, which was published at the same time (1798). And there is the following notorious passage:

'System of transcendental idealism by Schelling, Spinoza, Lichtenberg, and, as it were, three dimensions: present, past, and future'. Whether this enigmatic passage shows that Kant finally acknowledged Schelling as another genuine representative of transcendental philosophy (as most commentators believe), or whether Kant is here simply referring to Schelling's book *System of Transcendental Idealism* (as I believe) is perhaps impossible to confirm. (The problem being that in German, book titles are not italicized, so that there is no direct way of telling whether Kant is referring to the book, or generally to a system of transcendental idealism.) I believe, however, that Kant is here thinking of Schelling's book, since only a few pages later he refers explicitly to a review of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* in – again – the *Erlanger Literatur Zeitung*. This review contains a lengthy discussion of the emergence of the three temporal dimensions in Schelling's theory of self-positing. A careful examination of this review strongly suggests (to me at least) that Kant's phrase 'and, as it were, three dimensions: present, past, and future' alludes to this discussion, rather than to three stages of transcendental idealism.

Be that as it may, it seems clear to me that Schelling was very much on Kant's mind when he wrote the last parts of the *Opus postumum* – perhaps even more so than Beck. This is not necessarily to say that Kant was directly influenced by either of them; we cannot establish this with any certainty. But there is no need for that either: what we can deduce is that Kant's own thoughts were going very much in the same direction as both Schelling's and Beck's. At the very least, the *Opus postumum* puts an end to the myth that Kant was too feeble in his old age to take notice of what was going on around him, or that he globally dismissed the efforts of his idealist successors as nonsense.

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