SGIR Review

Published by the Society for German Idealism and Romanticism

Volume 4, Issue 1–2 *New York City, NY 2021*

ISSN 2577-0233 (print)
ISSN 2577-025X (online)

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SGIR Review 4, no. 1–2, 1–126 © SGIR Review, 2021
ISSN 2577-025X

Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Karl Ameriks

Kantian Subjects: Critical Philosophy and Late Modernity

Oxford University Press, 2019, 288 pp., $70 (hbk), ISBN 9780198841852.

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Reviewed by:
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Response by:
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Review 1: Patrick Frierson, Whitman College

Introduction

In these comments on Karl Ameriks's excellent *Kantian Subjects*, I will focus on two main issues and raise two other, smaller questions. These issues and themes arise in much of Ameriks's work on Kant and post-Kantians over the past several decades; they are not unique to this book, but they are present throughout his discussions here, so this book provides a context for me to revisit them. The book discusses much that I will not have a chance to discuss, most notably the impressive discussions of German Romanticism, and especially Hölderlin, as heir to Kant's legacy. My comments throughout will primarily focus on Ameriks's interpretations of Kant, with only occasional nods to the excellent work he does on the Romantics. As with much of Ameriks's work, the richness of this book lies in its careful attentiveness to details of the texts and arguments Ameriks considers, and I have to ignore much of that as well. Those caveats aside, I turn to my four main themes: modesty, constructivism, historicism, and "the end of all things."

1) Kantian Modesty

My first theme is Ameriks's insistence that Kant's project is a "modest" one. Rather than seeing the first *Critique* as trying to show that various cognitive structures can be proven in a quasi-foundationalist way from the bare fact of human representation, Ameriks has long emphasized the rich commonsense starting points of Kant's philosophy and the regressive structure of his arguments. Kant should *not* be seen as engaged in anything like Hegel's "Imperial Version of the Ambitious Conception of philosophy" that "goes so far as to regard philosophy as a systematic science in the *absolutely* strong sense of requiring an absolutely certain base, an absolutely necessary sequence of derivations, and the determination of an absolutely exhaustive domain" (37). Here I confess my own complicity with such imperial ambitions; when I went to graduate school many years ago as a cocky young philosopher, I hoped to satisfy something like an Imperial Ambition

through studying Kant, only to find an advisor with a different vision of him. As he puts it in this book, Ameriks claims,

> If one keeps to the letter of the arguments of the *Critique*s, there is a significantly more "modest" way to characterize what the mature … Kant was all along most concerned with in his starting points, derivation, and ultimate conclusions…. This conception of Critical philosophy eschews an absolutely certain basis, an absolutely necessary path of development, and an absolutely exhaustive domain of determination. Such a more modest conception cannot … refute radical skepticism, but it has a much better chance of remaining persuasive in a contemporary context than does the Imperial ideal, and it is textually closer … to the arguments that Kant actually worked out in his *Critique*s. (38)

Ameriks explicates this modesty in part through his description of the "regressive" arguments of Kant's *Critiques*, whereby Kant "uses arguments that 'regress' to a priori claims from a *relatively elementary* and given philosophical 'fact,' most notably the first *Critique*'s fact of experience in general" (41). Rather than starting from some indubitable or otherwise irrefutable foundation, Kant starts with common sense convictions that we can and should accept as long as a philosophically respectable framework can be developed that makes sense of them. Kant's *Critique*s reason from these basic convictions to their a priori conditions of possibility, showing that we are committed to such-and-such complex philosophical claims if we want to show how our commonsense beliefs are fully justified. While not satisfying to the skeptic, this approach does modest but meaningful philosophical work that, as Kant put it in describing his post-Rousseauian turn, "honor[s] human beings, and … impart[s] a value to all others in order to establish the rights of humanity."[1]

I remain convinced that Ameriks's emphasis on Kantian modesty gets Kant right, presents his views in ways that are compelling today, and corrects hubristic tendencies

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols, ed. Berlin-Brandenburgishe Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer 1900–1919; DeGruyter 1920–), volume 20, 44. Translation from Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer, *Kant: Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 96. Translations of other Kantian texts are taken from Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, eds., *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (London: Cambridge University Press) 1996ff.

present in many philosophers (including myself), tendencies that tend to generate either naively optimistic dogmatism or the despairing and misological skepticism of dashed hopes. By recognizing that Kant starts with rich but commonsense claims and reasons regressively toward conditions of their possibility, we do not force his arguments to bear more weight than they can hold, and we end up with a systematic philosophy that makes sense of our most basic commitments and addresses real philosophical problems that might arise in trying to make sense of those commitments, without trying to respond to unwarranted skepticisms.

So far, so good. Even once one accepts the overall framework of Kant's modest regressive arguments, however, there is plenty of room for disagreement about the details of Kant's arguments. What, for example, *are* his commonsense starting points, what conclusions does he draw from them, and how—specifically—do his arguments for those conclusions work? In reading *Kantian Subjects*, I realized that, in one area, I still see Kant as being more ambitious than Ameriks does. In particular, within his moral philosophy, Ameriks claims that Kant packs into common sense quite substantive philosophical and even metaphysical claims, whereas I see Kant's moral philosophy beginning from starting points that are as modest and commonsensical as those in his theoretical philosophy.

To start with theoretical philosophy, Ameriks rejects the view that Kant's arguments "rely on particular facts tied to some contingent experiences as opposed to others" or that they start "only from the *thick* presumption of already accepted synthetic a priori *scientific* propositions" (41). Instead,

> The most fundamental regressive level of Kant's Critical procedure concerns common elementary matters such as the mere fact of experience, that is, our having *some* common putatively empirical knowledge on the basis of presumably similar general faculties. This is an especially uncontroversial starting point because the alternative of not accepting it must appear philosophically bleak or hastily revisionist, to say the least. (63)

When it comes to moral philosophy, however, Ameriks describes,

> the general methodological problem that arises when one appreciates that Kant's notion of practical reason brings with it the unconditional positive *causal* component of autonomy *and* boldly presumes this is part of common sense. (64)

I think Ameriks's concern with this problem links up with his more general worry about Kant's "overly quick dismissal of compatibilism" (57). On Ameriks's reading, Kant's practical philosophy starts by wrongly ascribing to common sense a rejection of compatibilism, and thus ends up being a sort of philosophical dogmatism disguised as modesty.

> [U]nlike geometry, let alone our most basic belief in some common spatiotemporal orientation and elementary empirical knowledge, which can understandably be invoked as appropriate controlling conditions for any appealing philosophy, there are dozens of widely shared modern as well as ancient metaphysical and moral standpoints that do without the unconditional causal features of Kantian autonomy and any presumption of their being commonly accepted. (64)

I do not yet see the asymmetry that Ameriks does between the practical and theoretical cases, so I would like to push him to better defend the notion that Kant ascribes anti-compatibilism to the commonsense starting points of practical philosophy, as opposed to treating it as a condition of possibility of those commonsense starting points.

First, as I read Kant, he ascribes to ordinary moral common sense not any specific causal commitments but commonplace moral judgments such as don not kill, steal, or lie. Just as in the theoretical case, Kant does not commit himself to the truth of any particular experiential claims but just to the legitimacy of *some* empirical knowledge, so too here Kant does not commit himself to any particular moral claims but only the legitimacy of *some* moral claims. Again, as in the theoretical case, where Kant argues *from* basic commonsense empirical claims *to* more philosophically controversial claims such as the existence of substances or the universality of causal determinism, so too in the practical case he argues *from* basic moral claims *to* claims about unconditional causal powers. Just as when I say, "The squirrel went up the tree," I'm implicitly committed (it turns out) to a priori intuitions of space and time and to an objective order within which perceptions of changing spatial locations are objective because their perceived sequence is necessary (see Second Analogy), so too when I say, "Don't lie!," I'm committed to seeing lying as the sort of thing that one *simply* ought not do, that is, as an unconditioned necessity. And just as Kant argues in the first *Critique* that the category of causality is necessary in order to structure perceptions in a way that corresponds to objective sequence, so too he argues

that for "Don't lie!" to be unconditionally necessary, it must be an instance or implication of the categorical imperative, and the incentive for acting on it must be respect, and the beings that act on it from respect must be transcendentally free (and hence have the "causal power" Ameriks references). *In that sense*, unconditional causal features are part of common sense, that is, in that commonsense moral beliefs require certain a priori commitments as their conditions of possibility (or conditions of possibly being legitimate moral demands),[2] and it is in that sense, I take it, that "we can conceive how it is possible to see a priori that the moral law can exercise an effect on freedom."[3] But this is no different than the way that controversial theoretical propositions are part of empirical common sense, namely in that they are required as conditions of possibility of commonsense judgments.

There are, as Ameriks rightly says, both modern and ancient standpoints that reject Kant's Critical views, whether about space, time, and causality or about unconditional causal features of Kantian autonomy (not even to mention God and immortality).[4] Kant's arguments in both theoretical and practical domains aim to show how commonsense claims depend upon Kant's controversial philosophical framework. Hume cannot maintain his commonsense belief that one thing happens after another without adopting Kant's metaphysics of causality, and he cannot maintain his commonsense belief that stealing others' property is wrong without adopting Kant's moral metaphysics of unconditioned causality. Both transcendental idealism and transcendental freedom are

[2] Admittedly, Kant does sometimes seem to rely on mere commonsense views about transcendental freedom, particularly in his examples of the gallows (Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften,* 5:30), but his formal argument starts from commonsense moral judgments, identifies the categoricity/universality implicit in all such judgments, reasons that this universality requires that moral obligation be linked with form rather than matter, and argues that only transcendental freedom can provide for a causality in terms of the "mere form of law" (Ibid.*,* 5:28).

[3] Ibid., 5:74.

[4] Here I'd note (in relation to Ameriks's response to my initial set of comments) that in the *Inquiry*, Hume not only rejects the idea that anti-compatibilism is part of common sense but also rejects the idea that universal and necessary causal determinism is part of common sense. Hume points out that with respect to "irregular events which occur in the course, of nature," "The vulgar, who take things according to their first appearance, attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes as makes the latter often fail of their usual influence; though they meet with no impediment in their operation" (David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §8). For Hume, vulgar common sense endorses neither strict causal determinism about ordinary natural events nor libertarian freedom with respect to human actions, and Kant—I take it—agrees with Hume on both points. What Kant shows is that the commitments to objective succession on the one hand and moral obligation on the other have as their conditions of possibility an implicit commitment to both strict natural necessity and transcendental (libertarian) freedom.

"built in" to common sense if to be "built in" means that some commitment is a necessary condition of possibility of some commonsense claim, but neither are directly assumed within the commonsense starting points of that argument.

Of course, it may turn out that commonsense moral claims are more controversial than empirical ones, or that Kant's analysis of the structure of those commonsense claims is more or less mistaken, or that the arguments *from* those commonsense claims are more or less (un)successful. Ameriks might object to Kant's diagnosis of the form of commonsense moral claims as categorical, or to the argument that categorical imperatives must both oblige and motivate with reference to the form rather than context of maxims, or to the inference from this formal structure of motivation to transcendental freedom. Others—post-Nietzscheans, for instance—might object to the commonsense moral claims themselves, that is, to the very idea that any judgment of the form "one ought not X" could be legitimate. In such a case, as with the theoretical skeptic, Kant's argument couldn't even get off the ground. But the case is no different with theoretical arguments. Not only might one be a skeptic, but a revamped Humean (or Berkeleyan, or Borgesian) might object to the diagnosis of commonsense empirical claims as forms of empirical *knowledge;* or to the notion that experienced succession is *objective* succession; or she might object to the analysis of such knowledge as involving commitment to a priori space and time; or she might object to the inference from, say, objective succession to the category of causality.

This leads me to two questions. First, I'd love to hear more about why precisely Ameriks thinks that the starting points of Kant's moral philosophy are more philosophically contentious than those of his theoretical philosophy, and, in particular, why he thinks that Kant commits himself to anti-compatibilism as being constitutive of moral common sense in a way that he does not commit himself to, say, causal determinism as constitutive of theoretical common sense.

Second, and a bit more tangentially, I'd love for Ameriks to say a bit about how to assess the Romantics *relative to* Kant with respect to modesty.[5] Put simply, does the

[5] A couple passages seem to point to Hölderlin as a better modest philosopher than Kant, at least for the present, but in neither case is it clear whether Hölderlin is as good as Kant, or better: "One could, like Kant on a 'moderate' interpretation of his system, acknowledge that there are severe limits for reason and even to the enchanting original projects of the Enlightenment, while also holding patiently (with the assistance of new successors to Milton and Hölderlin) on to at least some of the core hopeful teleological beliefs in our

Romantics' modest project *improve on* Kant's? Are there ways in which Romantics *fall short* of Kant? In Ameriks's *Kant and The Fate of Autonomy*, there's a largely negative story about missed opportunities, places where post-Kantian Idealists took wrong turns and missed important Kantian insights.[6] Are there any similar stories to be told about post-Kantian Romantics? From another side, do the Romantics incorporate and improve on Kant sufficiently that we can move on and simply focus energies on, say, Hölderlin as our model of modest philosophizing?

2) Kantian Anti-subjectivism and Korsgaardian Constructivism

As his graduate student at Notre Dame, I was converted by Ameriks into someone who sees Kant as the modest philosopher vindicating common sense through pure reason, and this picture has informed all of my work since. In that way, I am truly Ameriks's intellectual progeny. Somehow, however, in graduate school, I was also influenced by the writings of another contemporary Kantian. I found, and continue to find, Christine Korsgaard's readings of Kant to open up insightful and plausible ways of articulating Kant in the context of contemporary moral philosophy. I'd thus like to take this chance to get a sense for the extent to which these two Kantians who I admire can be united.

Korsgaard's name is almost absent in *Kantian Subjects*, appearing (I think) only once, when Ameriks criticizes "David Velleman's Korsgaard-inspired discussion of following a 'law of one's own'" (55). She may appear obliquely in Ameriks's denial that reason can "make the [moral] law out of … some contingent matter concretely within a person, such as the mere desire of an individual human being to preserve a particular identity" (116), which might be taken as a rejection of Korsgaard's attempt in the *Sources of Normativity* to show that human beings are committed to the moral law by virtue of

own tradition, even though they are not strictly demonstrable" (206); "For Hölderlin especially, a broadly Kantian-Fichtean moral vision … could still be firmly maintained without an immodest Cartesian insistence that the value of this notion is a matter of demonstration" (212); "[T]he very *form* of the Romantics' writing naturally brought with it a new view of philosophy's content, a turn away from insisting that it present itself as a certain, strict, and complete quasi-Cartesian system…. This more modest approach, of philosophical writing with a broadly artistic character and autonomous dignity that need not be overawed by the pretensions of strict systems, can be understood as a sensible, and ever more popular, strategy for responding to the *general crisis of late modernity* that was arising right then with regard to the status of *pure philosophy*" (243).

[6] Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

commitments to our (contingent) practical identities. In at least one other context, Korsgaard is conspicuous by her absence; when Ameriks catalogs the "advocates" thanks to whom "the general appeal of broadly Kantian ideas in practical philosophy has maintained its strength," he lists "Rawls, O'Neill, Nagel, Darwall, and even Parfit" (233), but not—not "even"—Korsgaard. This elision of Korsgaard might be simply an oversight, but at least one theme in the book suggests why Ameriks might resist Korsgaardian approaches to Kant's moral philosophy. I'd like to briefly elucidate this theme, bring it into conversation with Korsgaard, and push Ameriks a bit on whether (and why) he sees Korsgaard as a symptom of the problem he describes.

Throughout *Kantian Subjects*, Ameriks distinguishes the *Kantian* subject from a "Luciferian conception of what it is *to be a subject*" (3) that consists of a "subjectivist misconstrual of autonomy, which I (and now presumably most Kantians in German at least) take to be contrary to Kant's Critical view, [but which] is not a mere remote possibility but is still a familiar feature in Anglophone writings that make reference to Kant" (55). Ameriks's opposition to "subjectivist" interpretations of autonomy appears throughout the book, such as in his vindication of autonomy (chapter 6), where Ameriks elucidates the sense in which the Kantian moral law is a "law of one's own making":

> to be sure … individual empirical agents go through the contingent process of coming to know and choosing to live and judge according to the moral law in their own experience, and in that sense they "make it their own"…. But it is absurd, within Kant's framework, to imagine any literally **contingent** making, imposing, or creating of the *content or status* of that law itself. (101, my bold)[7]

Ameriks is quite right to reject overly subjectivist readings of Kant's moral law. Human beings cannot simply decide that the moral law means whatever they want it to mean, and Kant's emphasis on autonomy is not an emphasis on mere subjective choice. The *Groundwork*'s claim that "the human being is bound … *only to laws given by himself*"[8] does *not* say that human beings can give themselves any laws whatsoever; the passage

[7] Cf. 113 regarding making in the theoretical sense, and 207–210 regarding subjectivism in aesthetics. Whether in theoretical philosophy, moral philosophy, or aesthetics, Ameriks objects to overly subjective readings of Kant.
[8] Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften,* 4:432.

immediately goes on to add "*but still universal.*" This passage also does not imply that one is bound by moral laws only if one happens to choose to be so bound; they are, after all, *categorical* imperatives. Ameriks rightly corrects both Kant's friends and his enemies in resisting this subjectivism.

What I want to push Ameriks on is just how objective he thinks Kant's moral philosophy needs to be, and in particular, whether Korsgaard (or even Korsgaard-inspired Velleman) is overly subjectivist.[9] Korsgaard does claim that human beings construct for themselves the moral norms to which they must adhere:

> Good maxims are … the products of our own legislative wills. In that sense, values are created by human beings…. [T]he maxim isn't a law until we will it, and in that sense create the resulting value … [and] whether a maxim can serve as a law depends upon the way that we think of our identities.[10]

This Korsgaardian constructivism sounds subjectivist. It sounds as though moral laws exist only because we make them, and our making them depends upon how we happen to think of ourselves, and if we thought of ourselves differently, we would have different obligations. It seems to lean heavily on the notion that an agent is "bound … *only to laws given by himself*," while ignoring any requirements (e.g., universality) on the laws that we give to ourselves.

Korsgaard does not, however, see her own constructivism this way. In the previously quoted passage, I skipped some key qualifications, akin to Kant's own "*but still universal*" in *Groundwork*. The full passage from *The Sources of Normativity* reads,

> Good maxims are **intrinsically normative entities**, but they are also the products of our own legislative wills. In that sense, values are created by human beings. Of course, **we discover that the maxim is fit to be a law**; but the maxim isn't a law until we will it, and in that sense create the resulting value.[11]

Korsgaard emphasizes that "realism is true after all"[12] and, from the start of her book,

[9] For the sake of simplicity, I'll focus here on *Sources of Normativity*, though *Self-Constitution* and later writings are, if anything, even less subjectivist that this text.
[10] Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 112–113.
[11] Korsgaard, *Sources*, 112, my emphasis.
[12] Ibid., 108.

makes clear that the realism she endorses ("procedural realism") is committed to right and wrong answers to moral questions:

> There's a trivial sense in which everyone who thinks that ethics isn't hopeless is a realist. I will call this *procedural* moral realism, and I will contrast it to what I call *substantive* moral realism. Procedural moral realism is the view that there are answers to moral questions; that is, that there are right and wrong ways to answer them. Substantive moral realism is the view that there are answers to moral questions *because* there are moral facts or truths, which those questions ask *about*.... As long as there is some correct or best procedure for answering moral questions, there is some way of applying the concepts of the right and the good.[13]

Korsgaard does say that "obligations" are tied to our specific practical identities, so that the correct procedure for deciding right and wrong depends upon the identity from which we decide this question: "Different laws hold for wantons, egoists, lovers, and Citizens of the Kingdom of Ends."[14] She also does maintain that only by virtue of reflectively endorsing this or that identity are we obligated to laws that hold for it. But she also claims that some reasons "spring from your humanity itself, from your identity simply as a human being, a reflective animal who needs reasons to act and live," where "this is not merely a contingent conception of your identity, which you[15] ... could conceivably reject.... You must value your humanity if you are to value anything at all."[16] Korsgaard elaborates on the "must" here in the very conclusion to *Sources*, when responding to G. A. Cohen's example of the Mafioso.[17] There she affirms that, insofar as we are reflective beings, we commit ourselves to "rules ... constitutive of reflection," among which "is the rule that we should never stop reflecting until we have reached a satisfactory answer, one that admits

[13] Ibid., 35.
[14] Ibid., 113.
[15] These ellipses conceal a phrase from Korsgaard that I find genuinely puzzling, namely "which you have constructed or chosen for yourself." As I read Korsgaard's overall view, she should not deny that we construct or choose our human identity, but rather should affirm that this human identity is one we simply *must* construct and choose if we are going to choose anything at all. The phrase I've removed would push her even closer to Ameriks's anti-subjectivism, but in a substantively realist way that seems to me to conflict with her deeper insights.
[16] Korsgaard, *Sources,* 121, 123.
[17] Cohen had asked about an "idealized Mafioso" who "lives by a code of strength and honor" and "is entirely capable of (more than minimal) reflective endorsement" in the light of that code, but who never reflects to the point of recognizing and affirming his moral (human) identity (Korsgaard, *Sources*, 183–184).

of no further questioning … the rule, in Kant's language, that we should seek the unconditioned."[18]

On the whole, then, Korsgaard's view is "subjective" in that the moral law is a law to which human beings are bound because we *bind ourselves* to it. Through taking the law to be a law for our wills, we "create" the value of the law and generate our obligation to obey it. However, she is a realist in the sense that to choose or act[19] at all is already to commit oneself to an identity, namely that of reflective agent, which has its own constitutive laws, among which is the moral law. Thus, while the moral law binds us because we decide that it binds us, we cannot act without deciding—at least implicitly—that it binds us, and so the moral law simply *is* binding. Thus, as Kant says, we are bound only by laws given to ourselves, but there are laws that we categorically must give to ourselves (and those laws are "universal").[20]

My basic question for Ameriks is simply whether Korsgaard's reconstruction of Kant's moral philosophy is overly subjective, and if so, in what respects. More generally, I'm interested in how far Ameriks's reading of Kant allows for a constructivist realism according to which the moral law is binding on human beings because we legislate it to ourselves, where this self-legislation is in some way the consequence of constitutive standards of human agency. I'm here interested in both the exegetical issue of Kant interpretation and the philosophical issue of whether moral constructivism is too subjective to be a satisfactory approach in moral philosophy.

3) History and/of Philosophy

My last two comments/questions will be considerably briefer. The first relates to

[18]Ibid., 258.

[19] Here to "choose" or "act" requires that one choose reflectively, that is, act in the light of reasons one endorses in reflection. Elsewhere, I object to Korsgaard's conception of human agency, according to which genuine agency requires reflection, but that's a topic far beyond the current essay. See Patrick Frierson, *The Moral Philosophy of Maria Montessori* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishers, forthcoming).

[20] I don't think that this Korsgaardian argument for the moral law is actually Kant's. As I read Kant, he takes it to be a fact of reason that we have moral obligations, something that goes beyond and is not derivable from the mere fact of reflective agency; and Kant even entertains the possibility of reflective agents who lack a capacity to recognize and act on the moral law (e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone, edition?* 6:26n). In terms of Kantian modesty, Korsgaard falls short, in that she aims to show that from a particularly thin starting point—our mere reflective agency—she can prove that we bind ourselves to the moral law. But I do not see her argument as overly *subjective*, which is the point I'm emphasizing in this section.

the "Historical Turn" that is a prominent part of *Kantian Subjects* and also of Ameriks's previous two books, *Kant and the Historical Turn* and *Kant's Elliptical Path*.[21] At the start of *Kantian Subjects*, Ameriks lays out three senses in which the book is a book about Kantian Subjects, namely that it touches on various "topics" in Kant (wherein Kantian Modesty is a common theme), that it defends Kant's "non-Luciferian conception of … a subject," and that it addresses Kantian subjects, that is, a post-Kantian audience consisting of "most of us—that is, reflective, educated citizens of *post-1780s* Western civilization" (3). This third theme historicizes *Kantian Subjects*. It is a book for *us*, in "our" culture and especially in our time, or era, with the inheritances that have come down to us from Kant. It is a book that sees its subjects (in all three senses) as *historical* subjects, and in that, too, it is an heir to Kant. By the end of the book, however, Ameriks moves beyond—though not away from—Kant, toward his successors in the Romantics, particularly Hölderlin, and part of this move is a move from Kant's seemingly primitive historicism to a historicism better suited to our time. Ameriks concludes the book in this way:

> Some might worry that any move to Romantic versions of the Historical Turn would make matters at least as bad [as Hegel], but this is simply to conflate the sins of *Late* Romanticism with the Enlightenment beliefs of the Jena circle and their deep Kantian commitment to the principles of the French Revolution. As I have already argued, the Early Romantic use of the Historical Turn as a way of guiding the *form* of their writing is not a move away from the basic *content* of true Kantianism but is instead a more effective means towards its *actualization*. Even if, in a significant methodological sense, the Historical Turn is a move past Kant, it can also be part of a timely move back to him. In sum, on many basic issues, Kantians can still have their cake and now eat it all the better too, in properly historical post-Kantian company. (250)

This emphasis on the Romantics as inheritors of the *content* of Kant's philosophy but with a better and more historically sensitive *form* raises, for me, questions about precisely how

[21] Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Elliptical Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

much historicism Ameriks sees as already present in Kant, and how much of what one finds in the Romantics' Historical Turn is inherited from Kant's own ideas.

I would also love to hear more from Ameriks about what it would look like to be heirs of Hölderlin today. Who are such heirs, and what sort of philosophy can or should those who have gleaned the insights of Kant *and* Hölderlin be engaged in today? For that matter, to what extent does Ameriks see own philosophico–historical work—not least his work on Kant and Hölderlin—as informed by what is best about the early Romantics' appropriation and development of the Historical Turn? Is *Kantian Subjects* also a model of the sort of philosophy that continues the tradition of "true Kantianism" as it has come down to us through Hölderlin?

4) The End of All Things (Especially Religion)

Finally, I'll end—aptly—with a short question about "the end of all things," neither Kant's essay nor Ameriks's, but the general question of the end of *all* things, and in that context, about the role of religion in philosophy and more importantly in human life. Ameriks rightly emphasizes Kant's complex relationship with traditional Christian doctrines, for example about immortality, though Ameriks argues that in his "End of All Things," Kant

> finally withdrew from what sounded like straightforward … statements that the self can *literally progress*, even beyond its lifetime, and fell back, *philosophically*, on the thought that the self "survives" noumenally in the limited practical sense … of merely having a presumed … constant ultimate ground of character … throughout its ordinary experience as a moral agent. (85)

In discussing later German philosophy (especially Hölderlin), Ameriks emphasizes the importance of "religion," but of religion with "a very general and non-sectarian meaning" (179):

> Philosophically, "religion" has a broad cosmic meaning here, and basically it just signifies an absolutely serious emotional as well as intellectual concern with life as a whole, in the broadest sense. (179–80)

In discussing and defending religion in both Kant and Hölderlin, Ameriks explicitly has

in mind "a typical contemporary reader with a highly secular orientation" who "needs to bracket allergic reactions to the very notion of religion" (180), and all three—Kant, Hölderlin, and Ameriks—develop approaches to religion that can be appealing for precisely such readers. Many otherwise anti-religious secular philosophers could presumably affirm belief in the "immortality of the soul," if such belief literally just *means* taking one's mortal life seriously.

My closing question, however, is what we are to do with those other typical contemporary readers, the ones who closely identify with (and in many cases converted to) specific religious sects, and who continue to believe strongly in traditional understandings of religious beliefs, such as the immortality of the soul. Do Kant or Hölderlin or others have good reasons to reject these more naïve and less philosophical forms of religious belief? Are there reasons—other than appeal to secular readers—to prefer Kantian or Hölderlinian religion to more literal interpretations of traditional beliefs? Is anything of importance *lost* when one turns from these more literal interpretations to the interpretations that are more palatable for contemporary secular readers? And/or is there a way to be *both* a Kantian/Hölderlinian *and* a sincere believer in and practitioner of more "straightforward" or "literal" religion?

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Review 2: Meghant Sudan, Boise State University

I like Ameriks's pursuit of moderate or temperate readings of Kantian subjects. Here, I will highlight different sides of this moderation and test this temper, and, to do this, I will use moments in the book, which themselves conduct such critical examination of oneself and others. I will be able to do so only for some chapters (chapters 1–5, 8–10), and I will focus on some aspects of *self-determination* and *the historical turn*.

One obvious component of Ameriks's moderate style is the care he takes over the little things, making fine distinctions, illuminating contexts, reading closely, and even minutely dissecting titles and sub-titles (3, 18, 29n.43, 135) in the best tradition of Germanic exegesis. A thematically weightier component is his interest in identifying a middle way between extremes of subjectivist and objectivist interpretations. These components come together in the chapter "On the Many Senses of 'Self-Determination,'" which introduces a guiding line of inquiry for the following chapters about a moderate moral realism or objectivism that avoids reading Kantian autonomy as either too determin*ing* or too determin*ed*.

For this, Ameriks helpfully unpacks Kant's talk of self-determination underlying all talk of autonomy by explaining, on the one hand, how the term "self" goes beyond the subject as mind or agent toward a deep and complex structure of reflexivity and, on the other hand, how "determination" is semantically wide and includes epistemic, formal, normative, and causal senses. Using this properly deepened and widened notion of self-determination, the claim of autonomy to define morality itself[22] can be evaluated by a close reading of the transition from Section II to Section III of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, where, after describing autonomy as the supreme principle of morality, Kant proposes freedom as the key to the concept of autonomy.

[22] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88 (Ak 4:439, trans. modified): "*Morality* is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to a possible universal lawgiving through maxims." References to Kant's texts use the standard apparatus of citing the English translation, followed by the Academy edition volume and page number.

Misunderstanding this transition inspires constructivist readings resting on a presumed and "willful" concept of freedom taken as primary, or it inspires overly objectivist readings that miss how the metaphysical constitution of normativity in Section II is modified through the new talk of freedom in an incompatibilist and agentially robust sense in Section III. Understanding this transition, however, gets the mix right and enables a moderate moral realism. Such understanding requires the realization that a sense of determination *as normative* is operative in the earlier Section while a sense of determination *as causal* is operative in the following section. Autonomy, then, names neither a fourth separate formula of the categorical imperative nor empirical forms of self-governance or unencumbered thought; rather, autonomy qualifies the metaphysical makeup of the will as the self-determination of reason, which Kant underlines by giving a sketch of the systematic interconnections of the different formulae of the categorical imperative.[23]

There are a number of questions to ask here about the transition between the sections and the systematic interconnections of formulae and I will now take these up in turn.

First, is there really a transition problem here between Sections II and III? Or isn't the problem just a verbal misunderstanding easily mended precisely as Ameriks does with nifty maneuvers of close reading to show that Kant cannot intend to clarify autonomy through an as-yet-unexplained concept of freedom, and that, rather, it is the already expounded concept of autonomy that must be developed in order to receive a proposed concept of freedom? That the concept of freedom invokes causality and that the concept of determination can also cover causality along with other elements—these are additional considerations about agency, which are helpful to supplement, but not essential to understand, that is, to verbally navigate, the transition.

On the other hand, is it the case that the problem of a transition emerges into view precisely by presupposing a broad account of determination, which just does comprise normative and causal aspects, such that the one is felt to be operative in the first account and the other in the second account? This operational distribution might be true, and one might think that it has merely become obscured, as often happens, by Kant's way of

[23] Kant, *Groundwork*, 85–86; Ak.4:436–437.

talking. In that case, the problem is indeed verbal and so would be the fix. But, then, what really calls for further explanation is the adopted account of *determination*. One would, therefore, wonder about its overly schematic nature and its tension with the various historical notes about why such and such features within the schema rose to prominence at such and such times and precisely in the ways they appear in the text, and why the burden of explanation should be borne by "determination" rather than other terms, such as "law" or "nature," which also do heavy lifting on both sides of the operational divide.

I should add that this question of a merely verbal transition is not lost either on Kant or Ameriks. Despite the opacity of the structure of Kant's *Groundwork*, which is divided into sections that are each themselves conceived as "transitions" and as progressing through analytic and synthetic modes of exposition,[24] Kant clearly recognizes that the transition from Section II to Section III involves a certain circularity in the way the concepts of autonomy and freedom are connected.[25] Naturally, Ameriks knows this well and has discussed it in detail in an earlier essay, and the present essay should be seen as finessing his remarks there. The earlier essay examined Kant's failure to redeem taller claims made in Section III about freedom as a rational causality and as a part of agential subjectivity, and, interestingly, at this juncture, Ameriks describes the alternatives of either broadening the notion of autonomy to include and possibly save rational causality and freedom in some way, or a more "modest" approach that relaxes demands on rational causality and the consciousness of freedom in order to give autonomy to the will in a more restricted but also more feasible manner.[26] The latter option, whatever its merits, does not cohere with Kant's text, as Ameriks notes, and the present essay can be seen as exploring the former option further. This makes it important to ask about the way the causal sense of "determination" is considered in connection with the remaining matter of self-determination as encoded in the interlinked formulae of the categorical imperative, to which I turn next.

[24] Kant, *Groundwork*, 47–48; Ak.4:392.
[25] Kant, *Groundwork,* Ak.4:450, 453. Whether he has overcome this circularity, as he says he has, remains arguable.
[26] Karl Ameriks, "Kant's *Groundwork III* Argument Reconsidered," in *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, ed. Ameriks, K. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 238–239.

Suppose, accordingly, that we grant that the transition problem is indeed a verbal affair, which directs us to the substantive problem of the nature of autonomy. As mentioned, Ameriks's solution to this problem appeals to Kantian efforts (24–25n.32) to connect together the different formulations of the categorical imperative according to the schema of unity, plurality, and totality, as Kant claims to join the objective or formal "law of nature" formula, the subjective or material "humanity" formula, and the unity of the other two formulations in the "universal lawgiver" formula.[27] This, for Ameriks, shows us the structure of lawgiving as a "normatively reflexive pure self-determining" and points us to two main ideas about autonomy: how one is involved here in a transcendental psychological analysis of practical reason and how a "concrete *intersubjective* aspect" and an "*interpersonal* but a priori sense of normativity" is built into the pure concept of morality for Kant (23, all italicizations mine). The transcendental psychological problematic aims to locate normativity deep within pure practical reason and yields the objective warp, while the intersubjective aspect yields the agential weft of Ameriks's moderate realism.

One may ask here whether the interlinked formulae do give us these results. The second formula of humanity seems to advance over the first by underlining questions of content over form. I take Kant as saying[28] that the first formula shows the possibility of the categorical imperative as a principle of duties, which only thus incorporate an actual lawgiving function into themselves. But we still need to know that there actually is a lawgiving function and the second formula takes up this task by attending to the moments of unconditioned necessity in the determination of will through reason and, in the process, taking us from possibility toward existence and actuality. Because the second formula contains the idea of an intrinsic end and of something that has unconditional worth, it enables the third formula to talk of the impossibility of any external interest determining the will and highlights the *self*-determining aspect of lawgiving as a result.[29]

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[27] Kant, *Groundwork*, 85–86; Ak.4:436–437.

[28] Kant, *Groundwork*, 76; Ak.4:425: "[We have shown] that if duty is a concept that is to contain significance and real lawgiving [*wirkliche Gesetzgebung*] for our actions it can be expressed only in categorical imperatives … [and we have set forth] the content of the categorical imperative, which must contain the principle of all duty (if there is any such thing at all). But we have not yet advanced so far as to prove a priori that there really is such an imperative, that there is a practical law, which commands absolutely of itself and without any incentives, and that the observance of this law is duty."

[29] Kant, *Groundwork,* 81–82; Ak.4:431–432.

Here, it seems that, in going from the first to the second formula, the machinery of agency and actualization is already in place. Does this fit with any claims about these aspects emerging only properly in Section III with the talk of freedom and causation? Does Section III's focus on freedom and the awareness of acting genuinely add to how we think of agency through the ideas of law*giving*? Ameriks rejects directly identifying normativity in moral action with causal determination (26), while also recognizing that the thought of a particular case of reasoning (as opposed to the form of reason in general) has something to do with causal efficacy (25n.35), and he explains that the *Groundwork's* appeal to freedom "involves not just causality but a specific pure kind of value-oriented agent causality" (59), before renouncing the *Groundwork's* account of freedom altogether as belonging to an embattled phase of Kant's thought (61, 65–68). I am not sure how to put all these things together and thus welcome clarifications.

The third formula's picture of a "systematic union"[30] of lawgiving rational beings comes from the way the second formula holds the end of moral action to lie in a rational being and from the relation of a supreme end to any other possible end. Now, there may be many rational beings and thus arises a systematic union of volitions that are "self-determining" in the moderate way that balances activity with passivity (26), but there may also be only one rational being, in whose case, then, the will is not subject to any other will's lawgiving. I can imagine something like this distinction, being drawn not from actual quantities of rational beings but from the negative relation of one end to others, as underlying Kant's distinction of "member" and "sovereign" in this scenario. There are other thoughts in these Kantian passages about the distinction of sovereign and member that can be read in ways both helpful to the claim of an inner equality of lawgivers as members also subject to the law *and* inimical to such a claim. But even before this, the very distinction seems to give law*giving* the immoderate dimensions one sought to avoid by placing it in a community of rational beings and complex structures of reflexivity. I am not sure how this voluntarist or constructivist feature is accounted for in Ameriks's discussion of agency.

Thus far I have tried to understand the picture of autonomy not only as a basic principle of morality but also as crucial for the unity of reason itself in some way. I would

[30] Kant, *Groundwork,* 83; Ak.4:433.

now like to turn to other discussions of moderation that take up further topics in the book, some of whose chapters offer splendid opportunities to see how Ameriks confronts his own moderation and situates his interests accordingly.

One occasion comes from Ameriks's reflections in chapter 4 on Jörg Noller's charge that Ameriks's moderation is a conservative approach stuck in old quandaries about being "for or against Kant," whereas a progressive view would take up new pressures of having to be "with and against Kant" (56, 4). Ameriks's self-appraisal here is multifaceted: he combats the charge by contextualizing his search for an objectivist account of normativity against the constantly returning specter of subjectivism (thus standing with Kant against unbalanced interpretations) but, also, by locating this search amidst Kant's own struggles with himself and with others, as Kant lurched against charges of subjectivism by early reviewers of the *Critique of Pure Reason* but also tried to reconcile transcendental and logical freedom. Further, Ameriks inhabits two opposing currents in Kant's name, one that drifts toward a commonsense realism (in his discussion of Eckart Förster in chapter 3), and the other (in his discussion of Gerold Prauss in chapter 8) that leads to an ambitious speculative phenomenology, which is also described as an "explanatory realism" (124). This appears to be moderation in the form of eclecticism, which, it is not irrelevant to recall in this context, is of the sort that characterized Reinhold's work as at once a provocative amalgam of old and new doctrines, a moralizing taming of excessive results, and a fire-starting search for premises.

In reviewing Förster's interpretation, Ameriks opposes Kant's epistemologically and methodologically "modest" approach to what he calls the "Imperial Version of the Ambitious Conception of philosophy" endorsed by the famous post-Kantian idealists (37). According to Förster, Kant sought to rebut Garve's criticisms, which charged the *Critique of Pure Reason* with a subjectivism that was debilitating for a commonsense assurance of both religious morality and external world realism,[31] by producing both the *Groundwork* and the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* to defend a Critical account of morality and of spatial reality. Against this, Ameriks traces Kant's modesty to Kant's

[31] Garve cannot imagine how one is to retain any hopes to "live in the kingdom of grace after that of nature has disappeared before our eyes" (Christian Garve, "The Garve Review" in *Kant's Early Critics*, ed. Brigitte Sassen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71). This is an interesting point to keep in mind while reading Ameriks's chapter on Kant's essay "The End of All Things."

production of a practical philosophy, which is oriented to a commonsense view defended upon transcendental idealist premises (42, 60). While I find Ameriks's account of the historical background of Kant's Critical thought and his fine-grained textual interpretation more compelling than Förster's reconstruction, it obviously strains credulity to try and box Kant's immodest theory of matter (along with his lifelong concern in a metaphysics of nature), as well as, by Ameriks's own lights, the "revolutionary" (53) connection of freedom and autonomy, into the narrow confines of commonsense philosophizing of various stripes prevalent in Kant's day, especially one that sounds like Reinhold's influential foregrounding of the practical at the cost of all theoretical doctrines.[32]

Ameriks's chapter on Prauss affords a promising adjustment to this view, which accords with the genuine density of Kant's transcendental philosophy, while rejecting psychologism and physicalism in favor of a moderate Critical realism taken as a "non-empirical philosophical treatment of the empirical" (123). Ameriks lays out this experience–theoretic approach and its premises in a transcendental geometry, which, at least from the looks of it here, assumes the form of a Hegelianized version of the later Husserl, all starting from Kantian points of departure. The only way I can see this as a moderate view is by recognizing that it resists the aforesaid push toward a commonsense Kant and that its speculative flights of phenomenology are construed as a self-

[32] See Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn*: *Philosophy as Critical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167–168. I am not denying that there are significant connections between Kantian thought and commonsense theorizing as explored by scholars such as Manfred Kuehn (see his *Scottish Common-Sense in Germany, 1768–1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 167–203) or by Ameriks himself (*Historical Turn*, 108–133; see also his qualification of "common sense" as distinguished from *populäre* philosophy in his "Reinhold, History, and Foundation," in *Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment*, ed. Giovanni, G. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 124. I draw the line, however, at Reinhold and precisely for the same reason that Ameriks finds Reinhold interesting, namely, for having blended the historical and the systematic in a way that becomes defining for the later philosophers. But this blend and my lines are drawn in terms of the problematic of skepticism, which, for Ameriks, in the form of radical skepticism, has to be foreclosed at the start for a moderate realist transcendental idealism to be established. In my view, however, skepticism, in the form that is constituted *through* Critical philosophy in a distinctly Kantian outline, is a part of transcendental thinking and Reinhold falls outside these lines, not for ignoring skepticism, but for failing to apprehend transcendental thinking itself by seeing it as no more than a crude idealism or phenomenalism; see my "Disciplining Skepticism," in *Sceptical Doubt and Disbelief in Modern European Thought: A New Pan-American Dialogue*, ed. Rosaleny, V. (Cham: Springer, 2021), 249–260. But I can ultimately agree with Ameriks that another line can be drawn between Kant and Reinhold in terms of seeing history as a matter of social critique and in terms of the influence of Herder.

determining flow of mental life, which is, at bottom, "a kind of practical project, albeit epistemically rather than morally autonomous" (130–131). While I am sympathetic to the sophistication of the view sketched here, I find it hard to understand the Hegelian talk of an infinite finitizing and actualizing itself and of manifolds self-relating themselves into objective forms as still a kind of Kantian moderation, as Ameriks tries to do, and I think that it is here that the struggle "with and against Kant" seems to get its finest features.

Where I did wish for an intemperate analysis was Ameriks's striking chapter on Kant's essay "The End of All Things." This essay, written in the course of Kant's controversies with the religious edicts and censorship of the 1790s, is written in a satirical mode and contains curiosities ranging from the challenging thought of a "noumenal duration" and moral–psychological interpretations of myths and popular beliefs to bizarre anecdotes about the Adamic expulsion from paradise as a result of urgent cloacal pressures. Ameriks does us a great service by carefully analyzing the various conjectures made in this roundly neglected essay about the contents and interpretations of concepts of eternity and trans-temporality for the sake of ideas of reason, and by relating these to postulates of immortality in the Critical ethical theory. But there are many more dimensions to this short piece, and it would have been good to hear from Ameriks about more of them, for instance about the literary–historical contextualization of the text through the surrounding religious and philological controversies, or about the way in which the initial discussion of various world religions is gathered up in the end into a Christian apologetic, or about connections to other relevant works in the neighborhood, such as G. F. Meier's anti-Wolffian account of the prospects of a soul's perceptual capacities beyond its natural existence, which has been recently examined by Corey Dyck.[33] So, my only complaint here is that Ameriks did not launch a full-blown *immoderate* investigation of this short text (maybe as was once done, indeed with debts to Ameriks himself,[34] for Kant's *Dreams* essay by Alison Laywine).

Chapter 9 investigates "the possibility of a 'moderate' interpretation" (142) combining Kantian metaphysics with a non-subjectivism in a sober Hegelianism shorn of

[33] Corey Dyck, "G. F. Meier and Kant on the Belief in the Immortality of the Soul," in *Kant and His German Contemporaries*, vol. 1, ed. Dyck & Wanderlich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 76–93.
[34] Alison Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of Critical Philosophy* (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1993).

a misplaced, militant anti-subjectivism. The main source of Hegelian hostility is an account of the categories as nothing but forms of grasping experience, but, for Ameriks, a moderate Hegelianism can be imagined to peacefully coexist with a moderate Kantianism so long as we allow non-theoretical assertions about things in themselves as *entia rationis*. Ameriks's moderation here, the critique of an immoderate Hegelian critique, sounds right to me, but I am unsure what this speculative harmony of speculations can or should yield. Maybe chapter 10 indicates some answers, as it practices a like moderation in reading Schelling's texts in a generous spirit and in unpacking the inner paradoxes of extravagant unities of nature and spirit, of system and history, which reflected the outer paradoxes of the period, which embraced wild secular designs at the same time as the hold of wild theodicies waned.

This certainly signals grand disciplinary reshuffling, the concomitant rise of national differences, and the loss of philosophy's standing. Ameriks sees the historical turn as rising from this matrix. What I find a bit confusing is how "history" is meant in all of this: does it name the organic mass whose development Dilthey studied under the title of the *Geisteswissenschaften*; or should we have in mind a general rethinking of the division of history and science as the empirical and the a priori (and, since we are talking about Schelling working up to these questions through *Naturphilosophie*, should we see it through Kantian distinctions between *Naturwissenschaft* and *historische Naturlehre*, which includes under itself *Naturbeschreibung* and *Naturgeschichte*);[35] or most generally in this direction, should we hold up a "non-empirical philosophical treatment of the empirical," or, as Ameriks, reading Odo Marquard, wonders, should it encompass diverse forms of non-nature including mythology, medicine, and religion (166); or should it be thought of as a dialectical aesthetics, a fundamental progress through uncertainty with argumentative form and creative style (169) that would name the way for Any Future Metaphysics To Come Forward *Not* As Science? I look forward to answers, but it is already clear that Ameriks intends here not only a guiding path to a viable style of philosophizing, but, perhaps, even more—as, increasingly, classical disciplines issue public cries for mercy

[35] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, ed. Konstantin Pollok (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1997), 4:468.

and survival or seek asylum under hyphenated tents and makeshift shelters—we are offered a viable form of philosophy itself.

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Author Response: Karl Ameriks, University of Notre Dame

Background

Before responding to my expert commentators, it may be helpful to provide a brief review of the general systematic approach to Kant, developed in my earlier books, that continues to serve as the background for the arguments of *Kantian Subjects*. This approach reads Kant in terms of an overall moderate realism. In addition, it treats Kant's three *Critiques* as complementary to one another (despite the considerable changes that occur even in his Critical period) and takes it as significant that the different tasks of the three *Critiques* correspond to Kant's basic distinctions between our three irreducible faculties: intellect, will, and feeling.[36]

In its focus on intellect, Kant's epistemology and metaphysics is a Critical rationalist version of moderate realism. Kant's theoretical system combines empirical realism regarding knowledge of spatiotemporal objects with a substantive transcendental idealist metaphysics. This metaphysics is "transcendental" because of its claim that pure intuitions of space and time function as general experience-constituting forms for us. It is "idealist" because it holds that these forms, and all that they characterize, do not occupy the most fundamental level of ontology. Kant repeatedly states that there must be something non-spatiotemporal that underlies what we theoretically know as merely relational and spatiotemporal, but this positive claim does not mean that what we empirically know is demoted to a fiction, dream, or merely psychological intentional entity, with no status outside of our actual mental acts.

In interpreting Kant's texts, I hold to a basic hermeneutical presumption: even if we do not believe that Kant's arguments are convincing, we should be holistic and charitable in reading his Critical expressions, which were formulated during a period of complicated terminological shifts in German philosophy. Despite numerous confusing passages, it is worth making the effort to read Kant's unusual use of terms such as "subjective," "idealist," and "representation" in a way that gives him full credit for intending to maintain substantive distinctions between the realms of private fancy, mere

[36] See also, for example, work by Tamar Schapiro, including most recently, *Feeling Like It: A Theory of Inclination and Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

psychology of even the most systematic kind, and dimensions of concrete reality that extend beyond all our actual thoughts even if not totally beyond the domain of the thinkable.

With respect to will and practical philosophy, my approach is distinctive in not taking Kant to be a constructivist, unlike common readings that follow Rawls in invoking transcendental idealism in this field of thought. On this interpretive point, I have argued against constructivism ever since the 1980s,[37] despite the obvious value and influence of the *content* of Rawls's broadly Kantian practical philosophy. The key point here is that, for Kant, the realms of pure will, transcendental freedom, and unconditioned value all have a non-spatiotemporal essence and so, unlike what is spatiotemporal, they are not "merely ideal" in contrast to something ontologically more fundamental. I therefore do not resist connecting Kant with "moral realism," although "moral objectivism" is probably a less controversial term to use. This is because many philosophers understand "realism" in this context to imply some kind of natural or supernatural teleology and a commitment to moral values independent of what would be right for a finite agent to choose on the basis of pure practical reason. Kant is not committed to that kind of "good" prior to the "right," but it is important to keep in mind that Kant also recognizes instances of good, albeit not of an unconditional kind, in many items that have value independent of contexts of choice, such as the impact of pleasure and beauty.

Kant's practical philosophy is committed to a law-based objectivism with necessities even stronger than anything his theoretical philosophy affirms. In both fields Kant is disinterested in the project of trying by mere argument to defeat radical skepticism: intellect by itself (in its minimal form) can demonstrate neither the moral law nor the actuality of the external world, and it is just as well that people do not need to try to access these most basic truths at first by reflection and argumentation. Kant constantly accepts that there are, always already present for all of us, countless concrete objects and strict duties. The transcendental philosopher's task is to show that making sense of this acceptance requires, in addition, the positing of *pure* forms, laws, and faculties. Kant takes basic common sense—that is, "healthy understanding" and not folklore or

[37] See Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 274, note 25. See also Patrick Kain, "Self-Legislation and Prudence in Kant's Moral Philosophy: A Critical Examination of Some Constructivist Interpretations," Ph.D. diss (University of Notre Dame, 2000), as well as his later writings.

populism—to be fundamental, and yet by no means sufficient. Only philosophy can explain how, in order to make full sense of our commonsense world (what Wilfrid Sellars called "the manifest image"), it is necessary to affirm several kinds of pure principles on grounds that become clear only upon systematic reflection.

A similar position can be found in what is ultimately implied by Kant's aesthetics, which I believe is best understood (contrary to most interpretations) as allowing a kind of objectivism about beauty as well. Here, as in the case of morality, Kant insists on a specific order in the combination of our intellectual and affective faculties. In his third *Critique* (§9), he declares that a pure judgment of taste must precede, rather than succeed, a feeling of proper aesthetic pleasure. By no accident, this is somewhat like Kant's earlier claim, in the *Groundwork*, that practical reason's appreciation of the moral law must precede the feeling of respect. In both cases, something beyond mere intellect is crucial, although secondary, because an underlying judgment is always essential. Kant's extensive discussion of aesthetic satisfaction, along with his frequent remarks about taste as in a sense "subjective," has understandably misled many readers here. It is often forgotten that the theme of the third *Critique* is the affective faculty in general. This faculty is involved in everything that contains sensation, including ordinary particular empirical judgments, something that Kant rarely discusses elsewhere. In this context, a causal connection between the perceiver and the perceived is essential, and what Kant is ultimately concerned with is the fact that, in taste, independent objects, whether natural or artistic, make an impact on us and appear to reflect something very significant about our situation in the world. What matters most is not a mere pattern in the mind's eye, in fancy or dream, but a set of given real forms that immediately makes an impression on us of a sense of order in the outside world that goes beyond all our arbitrary volitions, determinate cognitions, and ordinary expectations. The overall point of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is precisely to make systematic sense of this surprising phenomenon.

Kant's account includes the hypothesis that a "free play" of the "harmony of the faculties" is the *immediate* source of the "disinterested" pleasure we experience in taste. There is, however, much more going on here than a private moment of pleasure and play. He does not mean "play" in the sense of a totally arbitrary process nor does he believe that the notion of a "drive" is relevant, contrary to Reinhold and Schiller. The aesthetic

moment of taste has to be generated properly by the connection of two kinds of broader factors: the form of the object itself and the intersubjective structures of what Kant calls our *aesthetic* "common sense." Unlike the common sense of "healthy understanding," which was discussed earlier, this is a mode of sensibility, hypothesized as universal in human beings, which reacts appropriately to apt external patterns. In Kant's aesthetics, a mind playing all by itself is never the focus; on the contrary, just as in the first two *Critiques*, the crucial step is an emphasis on judgment and the need to avoid limiting oneself to what follows from either mere concepts, in a dogmatic rationalist sense, or mere sensations in a classical empiricist sense. Hence, when Kant calls the harmony in taste "free," this basically signifies that it is not narrowly determined by certain kinds of intellectual patterns or mere sensations. The feeling of pleasure that the free play affords is important and yet, as with the feeling of respect, there must be a prior judgmental component, stimulated by and directed toward objective content rather than introspection.

Much has been made of the fact Kant notes that discursive demonstrability is not to be expected for particular aesthetic judgments. It should be kept in mind, however, that a similar feature also characterizes our particular ethical, political, and philosophical judgments, and yet this is not by itself sufficient reason to deny that such judgments can be (and are) regarded as having an objective status. Objectivity and truth, even in scientific fields, can transcend any actual procedures we have that can be expected to converge on proofs convincing to all.

In addition to its emphasis on natural beauty and the autonomy of taste, the third *Critique* highlights the fact that art makes an especially powerful impact upon us because of the intense way that it can appeal to all our faculties at once. In Kant's treatment of "exemplary" geniuses, he elaborates a point that has only recently been appreciated by scholars. A number of times, from the 1760s through the 1790s, Kant notes that extraordinary figures such as Milton and Rousseau—who Kant appears to regard as the two most significant writers since the Scriptures—properly combine aesthetic excellence with works of revolutionary significance that are all at once moral, political, and

religious.[38] These aesthetic themes in Kant's work are worth emphasizing because they underlie the overall argument of the second half of *Kantian Subjects* that the Early Romantics are Kant's most significant successors. It is no accident that the works of Milton and Rousseau can be seen as models that are especially relevant for Hölderlin in particular and his philosophical project of working as a Kantian by improving on Fichte and Schiller.[39]

Overview

The first half of *Kantian Subjects* directly concerns Kant's own work, and several of the essays are devoted to clarifying the quite different senses in which he says holds that our experience involves lawful self-determination. [40] Law in Kant's absolute moral sense contrasts with his notion of law in substantive theoretical knowledge. Law in the first *Critique* takes the form of transcendental principles that have a deeper necessity than particular laws of physics and yet, because of their spatiotemporal nature, still do not have the unconditional necessity found in moral law. A major argument in the key second chapter of the book is that Kant's moral doctrines of autonomy and self-legislation are to be understood as rooted in the notion of unconditional law, rather than the other way around.

Most of the chapters in the first half of this book are devoted to contrasting Kant's position with voluntaristic misunderstandings of his doctrines, and with assessing recent interpretations that differ somewhat from my argument in earlier writings that Kant's views underwent a "zigzag" development in the 1780s. In discussing a recent book by Eckart Förster, I elaborate on a hypothesis about why Kant at first took the "zig" step of suddenly and unexpectedly writing—in his very busy early 1780s and prior to the second *Critique*—a *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* in which he proposed that there are *non-moral* phenomena, such as our mere ability to think of ideas of reason, that can

[38] See Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Elliptical Path* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), chapters 12–15; and Sanford Budick, "Miltonic Mind," in *Milton's Modernities: Poetry, Philosophy and History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. Feisal G. Mohammed and Patrick Feady (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 169–198.
[39] In my research for *Kantian Subjects* I am indebted in multiple ways to numerous other scholars. This is especially true of the book's discussions of Hölderlin, although they contain what I take to be my most surprising discovery, namely, that Hölderlin's main work expresses the best appreciation of Kant's ideas.
[40] See also Eric Watkins, *Kant on Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2019).

provide some kind of warrant for our belief in absolute freedom. In a discussion of Owen Ware's recent work, I reiterate reasons why it is noteworthy that, in a second, or "zag" step, Kant's second *Critique* then carried out a kind of methodological "reversal" and insisted instead on a "fact of reason" that makes the claim of absolute freedom *explicitly* dependent on a prior awareness of the moral law rather than on any non-moral evidence.[41] This fact is central to what is sometimes called the doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, but it would be more accurate to call it a doctrine of the primacy of morality within practical reason.

Other arguments in the first half of *Kantian Subjects* point out positive parallels between Kant's ethics and Sartre's, as well as with Onora O'Neill's interest in defending a position between the extremes of an overly subjective "radical existentialism" and an overly objective "panicky metaphysics." Another chapter provides a taxonomy that sorts out the numerous ways that the notions of necessity, law, and universality are relevant to Kant's philosophy. The first half concludes with a review of some broadly Kantian systematic arguments, concerning our necessarily encompassing pure intuitions of space and time, that have been developed by the German philosopher Gerold Prauss in his most recent writings on transcendental subjectivity.

The second half of *Kantian Subjects* illustrates various ways in which Kant's philosophy was fruitfully extended later, especially by the Early Romantics. A major aim of this section is to break down long-standing misconceptions about post-Kantianism as being caught in aestheticism, subjectivism, and relativism. I argue that, on the contrary, the best writings by the best Friedrichs of this period—Schlegel, Novalis, and Hölderlin, along with some arguments by Schelling, Schleiermacher, and the early Hegel—amount to an appropriate furtherance of Kant's most basic objectives rather than a departure from his Enlightenment orientation. Kant's relation to these later writers is often understood in terms of a sharp contrast between philosophy as science and philosophy as "mere" poetry and exaltation of art. I argue that interpretations along this line misunderstand the Early Romantics and their grasp of the unique status of philosophy as a valuable enterprise that exhibits some characteristics of science (because of being progressive) as

[41] For a discussion of an important recent book in line with this interpretive approach, see Karl Ameriks, "*Aufklärung über die Sittlichkeit. Zu Kants Grundlegung einer Metaphysik der Sitten*, by Bernd Ludwig" (review), *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 103 (2021).

well as of art. The extraordinary talents of these writers allow them to play the most productive role in the post-Kantian appreciation of what I call the Historical Turn and the onset of Late Modernity.

The Historical Turn is a methodological shift in philosophical writing that began when the aftermath of Kant's work coincided with a clear rise in the prestige and convergence of the methods of modern science, along with a clear decline in the reputation of pure philosophy and a growing divisiveness in the discipline in general. Philosophy's Historical Turn is not a turn to mere history or a merely academic concern with the history of philosophy—both of which are, to be sure, features of this era—but is marked instead by a positive methodological reaction to the fact that it had become no longer appropriate to reduce philosophy to the project of trying to make it foundational in a way that is modeled on the procedures of mathematics and physics, or to make it entirely dependent on new disciplines such as psychology. The new path forward, developed at first by Reinhold and the early Schelling and Hegel, is characterized by an insistence on developing philosophical positions by constructing an argumentative narrative that criticizes recent philosophical developments in detail. The aim is to identify specific dialectical ways in which one-sided weaknesses in all of one's main predecessors can be improved upon with the creative elaboration of thicker concepts such as alienation and reciprocal recognition. A chapter on the philosophy of history develops this point in a more general way by arguing that the Early Romantic's progressive but multitrack conception is a significant improvement on other options, including the overly optimistic or chaotic conceptions of history offered by other post-Kantians.

The approaches of all the Early Romantic practitioners of the Historical Turn are "late" insofar as they involve turning far back to significant (and often neglected) predecessors while giving up on the central premise of the earlier modern period, from Descartes through Kant, that philosophy must focus on providing an independent foundation for the new exact sciences. The approaches are "modern" insofar as they do not relapse into a "post-modern" relativistic reduction of philosophy to mere rhetoric but instead show that it has its own legitimate value as an argumentative, progressive, and imaginative style of writing that lies between strict science and "mere" art. The second half of *Kantian Subjects* is primarily devoted to documenting several still underappreciated ways in which the Early Romantic development of this kind of

historical and Late Modern approach to philosophy—which unfortunately was cut short by a number of tragic events—advances the Enlightenment ideals at the core of Kant's work in a manner most appropriate for our era as well as their own. The final chapters conclude with a brief assessment of how the Early Romantic development of this approach compares with recent somewhat analogous writing in contemporary philosophy (for example, by Robert Pippin, Robert Brandom, and Raymond Geuss) and with movements that are either less open-minded or overly anti-systematic, such as traditional Hegelianism or pragmatic naturalism.

Response to Patrick Frierson

In his very helpful and well-informed comments, Patrick Frierson mentions a change of view occasioned by his graduate school education, one that reminds me of a significant change of my own concerning the status of common sense. This change is directly relevant to my characterization of Kant's approach as "modest" and to Frierson's query about whether I am exaggerating the "asymmetry" between theoretical and practical philosophy. The key text that turned me around, about a half-century ago when studying with Robert Fogelin, is the argument of Hume's chapter on liberty and necessity in his *Inquiry*. This chapter goes beyond the twofold claim that libertarian freedom is philosophically unjustified and belief in it can be accounted for by some simple confusions about necessity. What is most provocative is that Hume also contends that libertarianism is not even the default position of unconfused common sense. Supposedly, the simple practice of going to the marketplace, or of trying to change the physical barriers of a prison rather than the minds of jailers, is proof of a common underlying belief that there are regular causal levers in human interaction that we constantly accept. In other words, reasons can also be causes, and it is compatibilism rather than libertarianism that actually characterizes our commonsense attitude.

I was never convinced by Hume's argument, but I was—and still am—quite struck by the fact that his anti-libertarian considerations about our actual beliefs are at least something that all philosophers should keep in mind. There are two reasons why this point is especially relevant in a *Kantian* context. One general reason is that even a quick look at the history of philosophy reveals that libertarianism in practical philosophy and common life seems unlike the acceptance of physical causality in ordinary theoretical

thought, even apart from modern science. The presumption of some kind of determinism, either natural or supernatural, appears to be present in all ages and all levels, whereas the libertarian thesis of free will, in the sense of an undetermined power of choice, is not nearly as widespread. As Michael Frede has argued,[42] free will appears to be a striking new thesis of late antiquity, one that is still not widely accepted except in groups influenced by some strands of Judeo-Christian thought. A second reason why Hume's challenge is relevant is the more specific fact that libertarianism was not accepted even in *Kant's own* early writings, which in that respect follow the position of most other modern philosophers. Later, Rousseau's resuscitation of the idea of absolute freedom had a huge impact, but Kant explicitly acknowledged that it amounted to a dramatic *change* in his own thinking, one connected to a newfound concern that a denial of libertarianism would stand in the way of fundamental practical doctrines such as equality, fairness, and justifiable personal blame and retribution.

In sum, although Kant definitely attempted to present his mature practical philosophy as in several respects parallel to his theoretical philosophy because of its relying, in its first step, on basic notions of commonsense experience as its "modest" starting points, his specific "keystone" practical notion of our "transcendental" freedom cannot be said to have a non-controversial status as a *most* basic idea. On this point, Frierson's comments have led me to appreciate the need to explain further that there are *sublevels* worth distinguishing within common sense as a *general relatively* non-reflective level of life and thought. Against Cartesian claims of direct awareness of absolute freedom, Kant began to resist asserting that this is something we are directly acquainted with, for such a claim would conflict with his Critical restrictions on our theoretical knowledge. Kant's ultimate view is that, even in our practical life, what we are *first* aware of are categorical *moral* demands and actions in regard to them.[43] Only on that basis do we go on to believe that agents can be praised or blamed on account of the *additional* claim—which is a default position to be held on to until there is strong contrary

[42] Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[43] Here Kant is unlike later libertarians such as Kierkegaard and Sartre, who explored a broader basis for our initial belief in freedom. Contrary to many interpreters, however, I believe the *content* of Kant's moral theory is central to the views of Kierkegaard and Sartre—although unfortunately not to those of their existential cousins, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

evidence—that actions are to be assessed as morally worthy or evil because they are rooted in free choice. Insofar as libertarianism involves this second step, it is not quite at the *lowest* level of basic common sense and yet, insofar as it involves what Kant, unlike Hume, takes to be our common default position, it is still *meant* to be a matter of common sense's universal "healthy understanding" rather than something grounded at the higher reflective level of *philosophical argument*.

It is significant that, despite the zigzag complications in Kant's development referenced earlier, the Critical Kant never quite *fills out* a direct proof of our absolute freedom. What Kant is clearest about is the claim that, unless the thesis of freedom can be shown to be at least not *demonstrably* false, morality, in his strict sense, would have to be surrendered in the face of modern natural philosophy. His key argument is that transcendental idealism, and allegedly it alone, proves that libertarianism *cannot* be *demonstrated* to be false because this would itself amount to an unsupportable claim about things in themselves. Methodologically, Kant is thereby conceding that it is actually theoretical philosophy that in one sense has primacy, insofar as a negative result at this level would altogether wipe out the significance of practical thought and life in his sense. Unfortunately, Kant himself never explicitly acknowledges that attributing a belief in absolute freedom to *all* "healthy" pre-reflective agents is much more controversial—given philosophers such as Hume and history in general—than attributing to them a mere belief in an external world and some sort of causality connecting that world. In the end, there therefore remains a *significant asymmetry* between the level of obviousness of the theoretical presumptions of basic common sense and that of what is ultimately the key condition of Kant's practical thought: our transcendental freedom.

Kant's concern with moral law is connected with the two other main issues that Frierson raises: how my reading of Kant relates to *constructivism* and how the authors that are stressed in the second half of *Kantian Subjects*, namely the Early Romantics, are related to my concern with a *modest* philosophical methodology. Before filling out my worries about constructivism, it should be reiterated that there is a harmless version of it that may account for much of its appeal and to which I have no objection. On this version, constructivism is simply an objective alternative to dogmatic versions of realism that insist on grounding *moral* value in some kind of teleology or ontology of *external* objects that is not essentially connected to the specific situation of rational agency. This kind of

realism is indeed foreign to the Critical Kant. The kind of constructivism that remains questionable from my perspective, especially as an interpretation of Kant, is one that holds that the moral law can be adequately accounted for by reference to rules that have an objective validity just because of the mere *human* ability to make rational choices. The humanism in such a version may seem harmless, but it ignores Kant's contention that rules of *pure* reason, and even general categories such as quantity, have a scope and meaning that extends beyond the spatiotemporal conditions that define us specifically as human agents. In his practical philosophy, Kant stresses that the moral law has an *absolute necessity* that holds for rational beings as such, including a divine being, and hence nothing that human beings might construct or ground *as human*, that is, as a *particular* species of sensory agents, is a crucial condition of the basic validity of the law (in contrast to its status as an imperative for sensible beings like us). Furthermore, the moral law cannot be defined by mere general conditions of rational consistency, choice, and agency, or even the maintenance of personal identity, because a will defined simply in those terms still does not include an appreciation of necessary respect for persons as such. Rules that are needed simply for rational beings to be able to reflect and live at all are simply too thin to generate the specific necessary duties that Kant takes to distinguish his position, which relies on the substantive notion of *unconditional pure* moral reason and the intrinsic dignity of personhood.[44]

Kant's objectivism is not as fully worked out as it might have been. He wrote too hurriedly when dismissing the "objective" alternatives that he discusses in the *Groundwork*, that is, conceptions of moral law that are rooted, in the peculiar ways that he mentions, in ideas of divinity or perfection. All that he was explicitly concerned with there was countering capricious and contingent notions of divinity and empty or contingent versions of perfectionism, which tended to rest on dogmatic teleological claims. There appears to be room, therefore, for a Kantianism that would avoid those mistakes and permit a kind of normative perfectionism.[45] One can combine an emphasis on the "right," in the sense of a priority given to moral duties as *necessary* regulations on

[44] A similar point is made in regard to Habermas and Rawls in Charles Larmore, "The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999), 599–625.
[45] See David Brink, "Normative Perfectionism and the Kantian Tradition," *Philosopher's Imprint* 19 (2019), 1–28.

fair and reasonably helpful human interaction, with a hearty acknowledgement of many universal goods as well, such as rational development and the general, but not unconditional, value of prudence, along with the unconditional value of aiming toward the real possibility of what Kant calls our highest *good*: virtue combined with proportionate happiness.

This concern with a strict but not overly austere morality is also to be found in the most valuable writings of the Early Romantics. Like Kant, these writers were energetic advocates of reasonable Enlightenment reforms of political and religious institutions. They were most evidently Kantian in the period in which Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schlegel expressed ideas meant as a corrective to non-Kantian tendencies in Fichte and Schiller. The key *modest* feature of Early Romanticism is its explicit methodological shift, against Fichte and Reinhold's pseudo-Kantian Jena idealism, toward a pronounced respect for common sense and an emphasis on a narrative style of philosophical writing. Their version of this style was meant to replace the pretense that philosophy needs to be presented as if it is a strict scientific system, an unfortunate notion that dominated not only modern philosophy up through Kant but also the high idealism that followed with Reinhold, Fichte, Hegel, and the early Schelling. The Early Romantics took what was best in the idealist movement while also modestly backing off from calling for an all-inclusive, demonstrative system.

Another modest contribution of the Early Romantics was to generalize Kant's third *Critique* idea that, in great art, succession is to be understood not as a matter of mere invention, imitation, or definitive accomplishment but of piecemeal, creative, and *exemplary* progress. They understood that Kant's treatment of our cultural progress as a sequence of great moral innovators who built on but went beyond the past—Job, Jesus, and Rousseau—suggests other examples of philosophically relevant progress. Just as Kant's own literary hero, Milton, combined classical and Christian ideas of value into a new normative outlook appropriate for seventeenth-century modernity, the Early Romantics invented a way of writing appropriate for what I call the philosophy of *late modernity*: that is, an era in which the authority of modern science is acknowledged within its own domain, while emphasis is placed on developing an enlightened morality and aesthetic religiosity that combines the *Critique*'s anti-dogmatism with a timely appropriation of what is best in past cultures.

Frierson at one point uses the term "historicism" in this context, but I prefer to reserve the term "historicism" for designating a form of relativism. In contrast to historicism in that sense, all the post-Kantian philosophers that I discuss, as advocates of what I mean by the Historical Turn in philosophy, hold to a fundamentally *progressive* view of argument and thought. Moreover, the Romantics do so in a path-breaking, flexible spirit that prefigures our own era, for they emphasize the contingencies of cosmopolitan pluralism rather than any assumption that our progress requires the imperialist, necessary, and convergent form that characterizes the systems of their high idealist neighbors.[46]

Response to Meghant Sudan

I now turn to Meghant Sudan's quite subtle and wide-ranging comments, which raise a number of complicated issues. Here again I will be able to discuss only a few points related to the overarching concerns of *Kantian Subjects*. Sudan understandably asks about "how history is understood in all this." This question is worth addressing in further detail from a broad perspective. Although the main concern of my last three books has been concentrated on philosophy in its argumentative relation to its own immediate history in the Critical period, an additional point has been that the conception of philosophy itself broadened considerably in that time, and its development became connected much more than usual with broader revolutions in science and society.

My study of these changes has varied in its focus in my last three books: *Kant and the Historical Turn* (2006), *Kant's Elliptical Path* (2012), and now *Kantian Subjects* (2019). In each case, these books have been divided, in different ways, into one part directly attending to Kant and one part concerning the post-Kantians. In the first title, the term "and" is somewhat misleading, because the main point of that book is that Kant has a style of arguing that is *not*, at its most fundamental level, deeply historical, and it is the

[46] *Kantian Subjects* does not explore the ways in which the Early Romantics significantly furthered the better cosmopolitan tendencies in Kant's work. This is an important and increasingly controversial issue that I have begun to explore in a series of essays on Kant's notion of dignity. See e.g., "History, Progress, and Autonomy: Kant, Herder, and After," in *Kant and the Possibility of Progress: From Modern Hopes to Postmodern Anxieties,* eds. Sam Stoner and Paul Wilford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 137–151 and 262–266. Significant contributions on related topics have been made recently by scholars such as Pauline Kleingeld, Inés Valdez, and Dilek Huseyinzadegan. A good first source to consult on the topic is Jane Kneller and Sidney Axinn, eds., *Autonomy and Community: Readings in Contemporary Kantian Social Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

post-Kantians who are responsible for working out the new style called the Historical Turn. The discussion of Kant in that book contains, to be sure, chapters on the relation of some of Kant's main ideas to those of a number of his modern predecessors, such as Descartes, Hume, and Reid, but it is significant that in that context it is not relevant to consider these figures as constituting a philosophical *sequence*. The metaphysics of mind, the structure of moral motivation, and the epistemological issue of foundationalism are approached there in systematic rather than developmental terms. In contrast, the chapters in the second half of that book place an emphasis on philosophers who frame their own work primarily in terms of a narrative account of the argumentative *development* of a series of recent positions leading right up to their own. There are two basic reasons for this epochal shift that still have a connection to Kant. One reason is that the appearance of Kant's Critical philosophy had a special impact on everyone because its overall project fit in with a watershed moment in European cultural history, the moment in which exact scientific and democratic moral–political revolutions were forcing an unparalleled rethinking of how philosophy could henceforth responsibly present itself. The second reason is that, right after the first *Critique*, a plethora of conflicting interpretations of Kant's uniquely complicated work swamped German philosophical literature. The best minds of that day then picked up on Reinhold's path-breaking example of introducing one's own philosophy by trying to organize these interpretations, along with Kant's position in history in general, in terms of a clear *rational sequence*.

The main immediate responses to this watershed moment went in two quite different directions. On this point the book on the Historical Turn continues a theme studied in a yet earlier book, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (2000), in which I argued primarily *negatively* and contended that several of the first post-Kantian philosophers made the mistake of carrying out their work with overly systematic and scientific pretensions. Their high idealist procedure was more extreme, and eventually more harmful for the reputation of German philosophy in general, than Kant's own quite ambitious claims. My negative approach here was motivated by a felt need for a partial corrective of the hasty enthusiasm, in much of contemporary philosophy then, concerning the best-known philosophers in Jena's golden age, Fichte and Hegel. This enthusiasm often had understandable roots in the student movements of the 1960s, which were influenced by Hegelianism and its successors, but philosophically it tended to rely on

unfortunate stereotypes and went too fast in its dismissal of Kant's metaphysical and moral considerations—in large part because of a lack of appreciation for the influence of some distorting characterizations of Critical philosophy in Reinhold's pivotal work between Kant and Fichte.

In contrast to the book on autonomy, *Kant and the Historical Turn* was intended as a reminder that there is another and much more *positive* side to post-Kantianism. There is an innovative, pluralistic, and historically sensitive style of philosophy that arose among the Early Romantics at the end of the eighteenth century, and that can be found even in some strands of the writings of Reinhold, Schelling, and the early Hegel. In a subsequent work, *Kant's Elliptical Path*, I was primarily concerned with Kant's own development, and the way in which, even more than the scientific-systematic revolution of Newton, it was the moral–historical revolution of Rousseau that suddenly came to influence Kant's thought after 1762. Kant's work then took on the trajectory of what I called an "elliptical path" because it took the long detour of devoting a couple decades to theoretical considerations in order eventually to work out the metaphysics of transcendental idealism. Only then was Kant in a position to publish an ethics and provide a consistent Critical account of the key notion of absolute freedom that Rousseau had led him to put at the center of practical thought. In working out the details of the proper realization of this freedom, Kant eventually tried to outdo the historical insights of his proto-Romantic student, Herder, by outlining, in his book on religion and in other late essays, his own sketch of the main stages of humanity's moral–political progress. The final chapters of *Kant's Elliptical Path* argue that, although Kant's introduction of the notion of an exemplary sequence of aesthetic–philosophic geniuses was not developed enough to be itself *part* of the Historical Turn in philosophy, it was an inspiring *catalyst* for the new and fundamentally historical and literary style of philosophical argumentation that was developed by Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schlegel. The book concludes by arguing that, after the perception of another round of failures in overly ambitious philosophical projects in our own time, several aspects of the Early Romantic style of philosophy fortunately reappeared in the work of influential figures such as Richard Rorty, Stanley Cavell, and Bernard Williams.

The book *Kantian Subjects* differs from its two immediate predecessors largely in giving more attention, in its second half, to *details* in the writings of the Early Romantics,

while its first half remains devoted to Kant's work. This half has little to say directly about the role of history in Kant's work and is primarily concerned with clarifying various aspects of the concept of self-determination, which lies at the base of all of Kant's philosophy as well of what is best in Early Romanticism. A common thread of the book is that—contrary to the tendencies of many of Kant's immediate successors as well as of many "fans" and critics in our own time—the emphasis on self-development in the process of self-determination is *not* to be understood as a matter of mere individual, contingent, and reflective self-making. I argue in detail that Kant's notion of moral self-determination has to be understood in strict and *necessarily* objective terms, and that this kind of objectivism is also central to what is best in Early Romantic philosophy. Moreover, in his theoretical philosophy as well, Kant's work can be understood as primarily a project of vindicating the idea that we have pure faculties of mind that necessarily constitute an objective world for all of us—a point that is mirrored in Early Romanticism's enthusiasm about the constantly developing successes of the modern sciences.

Because it is another of Sudan's key concerns, more still needs to be said, in conclusion, about the nature of Kant's Critical understanding of human *self-determination*. A point that deserves re-emphasis is that, although the first sections of the *Groundwork* do contain considerable discussion relevant to the notions of freedom, autonomy, and causality, it must be kept in mind that, now that we have become so familiar with Kant's *ultimate* views on these issues, it is easy to forget the context in which that text first appeared. The shocking fact is that, by 1785, Kant was already over sixty and yet he still had not made a clear statement on his mature view of freedom and morality. Moreover, he lived in an era when Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff, Hume, Herder, Schulz, and many others insisted on an anti-libertarian position, and even his own *Critique of Pure Reason* had just argued against traditional Cartesian grounds for libertarianism. What Kant suddenly made clear in the *Groundwork* is that the crucial issue is not just whether human agency and spontaneity, in *some* sense, are important, but whether a *proof* of our *absolute* freedom is needed and possible. It is quite noteworthy, therefore, that, right at the end of the Second Section of the *Groundwork*, Kant insists that, unless something more can be said, morality itself would have to be regarded as a mere phantom. For Kant, if human beings knew about the moral law but had *mere rational* agency without pure uncaused causing, this would not allow for moral worth and would reduce humanity's

status to that of something like a mere "turnspit." The problem of finding an appropriate ground for our belief in absolute freedom is therefore central to the complexities of the Third Section of the *Groundwork* and Kant's numerous subsequent writings on practical philosophy.

This problem is also central for any response to Sudan's understandable concern with the issue of how *moderate* Kant's philosophy really is. In the end, my position is that Kant is not quite as moderate as Frierson may believe, but he is still somewhat more moderate than Sudan suggests. Kant's insistence on a substantive metaphysics of transcendental idealism, along with a strict conception of morality that requires transcendental freedom, admittedly puts him in a position that, at first, may not seem moderate to many contemporary readers. Nonetheless, with the closely related revisions in the B edition of the first *Critique* in 1787 as well as in the form of argumentation in the second *Critique* in 1788,[47] Kant finally made fully *clear* that his commitment to absolute freedom at least does not rest on anything like the Cartesian theoretical arguments in the work of figures such as Crusius.[48] Insofar as Kant's libertarianism ultimately does not depend on either an esoteric claim of the "schools" or a doctrine of dogmatic theology, one can see why he may have felt that his position is no worse than that of Rousseau's celebrated Savoyard Vicar, who affirms absolute freedom by just relying on common sense and keeping to what he cannot "honestly" deny. This is still a controversial position, but the Critical Kant at least stays clear from affirming the dogmatic spiritualist and teleological claims that the Vicar asserts in addition.

In addition, I would say that it is a significantly moderate rather than an immoderate position to hold, as Kant did in contrast to Fichte and others, that we cannot, and need not, do better than accept, as a matter of common sense, the fact that our existence is shared with a plurality of other persons in an enveloping common space. To claim otherwise and to insist, for example, that a plurality of not-I's can be philosophically deduced from the mere notion of a self-positing I, or dialectically from something even

[47] This development is originally discussed in Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1982).

[48] Richard Price is another major libertarian philosopher of the era. Kant unfortunately ignores Price, even though, except for his overly Cartesian approach to libertarianism, Price's views on most issues are in many ways much closer to Kant's than are those of any of his other contemporaries. See Karl Ameriks, "Dignity Beyond Price: Kant and His Revolutionary British Contemporary," *Kant Yearbook* 13 (2021).

more primitive, is something we know that the Early Romantics regarded as absurd and not truly Kantian. Most contemporary philosophers should be able to go along with this position as well, and so, at least in this respect, they too may come to recognize themselves as moderate Kantian subjects.[49]

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[49] I am much indebted to the organizers of this SGIR APA session, my commentators, and all those who participated in the discussion.

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Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Helga Varden

Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Theory

Oxford University Press, 2020, 368 pp., $99.95 (hbk), ISBN 0198812833

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Reviewed by:
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Response by:
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Review 1: Jennifer Ryan Lockhart

One of the obvious charms of Helga Varden's *Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Approach* is the unlikely combination of an outstanding sympathy for Kant's practical philosophy with a willingness to criticize Kant severely in light of contemporary approaches to sex and gender. While some historians of philosophy might focus solely on what Kant actually thought, Varden, although not neglecting this concern, probes Kant's texts for an answer to the question: What *should* Kant have thought? And for this not to amount to an exercise of telling us what is true (since, of course, Kant should have thought what is true), the question becomes one of what Kant should have thought given his *deepest* commitments. Part of the task Varden assigns herself in the book, then, is sorting through Kant's works (which, when it comes to discussions of women and sexuality, are very much of their time) and determining what aspects of Kant's philosophy are in fact the fundamental ones, what mere dross, and how these most profound Kantian insights might allow for a refashioning of his understanding of women and sex that is suitable to contemporary tastes.

At times Varden is passionately and unusually sympathetic to Kant. She writes, for instance, "When I am feeling most fond of Kant, such as after I have read him as he nails European colonizers to the wall, I tend to think that if he could come back from the dead and see what has happened—see how many women philosophers first proved him wrong [in his belief that women are incapable of philosophy] precisely by further developing his philosophy … he would smile" (111). By turns, Varden is more critical. For instance, she writes of his discussion of homosexual activity, "Kant is aggressive and condemning: sometimes, such as when reading the texts where we find the language of 'defiling' and 'debasing' … it feels as if Kant is having angry panic attacks in the middle of his texts. Why did he not do better? What is it about sex, love, and gender that makes it so easy and tempting to join damaging social forces, to turn as aggressive, cognitively stubborn, dehumanizing, and narrow-minded, as Kant did?" (116).

This tension reflects the complexity of the methodology that underlies the book. One way to frame this question is: Who was Kant *really*? And who might he have been?

Was he ultimately the sexist homophobe on display in what he says explicitly? Or are his sexist and homophobic arguments and conclusions evidence of a falsity to himself? Might he have kept hold of his truest philosophical self and arrived at very different conclusions? Varden's book is an attempt to answer this final question in the affirmative and to lay out the contours of such a philosophical system. In some respects, this project is not unlike that of other feminist scholars of Kant who have sought to ignore or to denounce his views on women and sex. But Varden surpasses other feminist Kantians in looking for materials for a Kantian account of sex, love, and gender in unexpected places and in reappropriating these in imaginative ways. Her revised Kantian position draws heavily upon, among other things, Kant's relatively neglected anthropological and religious writings.

The resulting work is one that demonstrates an idiosyncratic flair that might serve to indicate that Varden is indeed capable of the necromancy requisite for the success of so delicate an enterprise. In her discussion of pregnancy, for instance, Varden speaks of "pregnant persons" as opposed to "pregnant women." I suspected, as a reader in the twenty-first century, the first reason for her word choice: "not only people who identify as women get pregnant (also people who identify as trans men, as ungendered, as queer, and some people who identify as intersex get pregnant)" (221n). But, she goes on to explain that it is possible that in the future we might "meet non-human embodied species in the universe (besides animal species) that also get pregnant" (221n). The phrase "pregnant persons" is, then, brought to bear to do double duty at once to address LGBTQIA concerns and more traditionally Kantian concerns, with the scope of morality having necessary applicability to us in virtue of our rational nature and not due to any contingent feature of our biological species. Kantian morality is that of the finite rational being. Therefore, anywhere in the universe that rational beings get pregnant, Kantian morality will issue unconditional commands.

Varden's book, then, is partly of interest as a case study for a set of issues that are not its announced topic. What should our attitude be toward figures of the past, those dead white men, who have, up until now, received a great deal of veneration, but whose actions and attitudes are unregenerate when it comes to women and sexuality, not to mention race and empire? Should they be canceled and their monuments torn down? Should the philosophical canon be radically overhauled to exclude much of what has historically been a part of it, or should the very idea of it be abolished altogether? Is the

philosophy of these thinkers so corrupted with the ills of the civilizations that brought them forth and nourished them that their ideas can be to us only repugnant, or have we nevertheless inherited from them a pure kernel of insight worth preserving in spite of its sexist and racist trappings? In answering this question in the case of Kant, part of the daring of Varden's proposal is that it is not just that Kant's critical writings can be prized cleanly apart from his offensive anthropological observations about women and moralizing about sex, but also that the latter arguments too can, in spite of some unsavory admixture, nevertheless still illumine contemporary thought on sex, love, and gender.

Pauline Kleingeld outlines three unsatisfactory approaches to dealing with Kant's views on the character of the sexes and then recommends a fourth way.[50] First, one may simply endorse Kant's misogyny (and ignore any tensions that this produces with respect to the seemingly universalist tendencies of his philosophy). Kleingeld cites Roger Scruton as a recent advocate of this approach, for he praises Kant for writing "eloquently on the distinction between the sexes."[51] Second, one may reject Kant's entire "moral and political philosophy out of hand as thoroughly misogynous."[52] The third and most common way of dealing with Kant's views on the character of the sexes is simply to ignore them, holding them to be inessential to the overall thrust of his practical philosophy.

> The fourth approach, the one that Kleingeld argues is most appropriate, is to make explicit the tension that exists between what Kant writes about "human beings" and what he says about "women." Although there may be specific cases where this tension is not relevant, one should be alert for instances in which Kant's views on the different characters of the sexes do play a role. And whenever there is such a case, it deserves at least some discussion.[53]

Varden's book admirably exemplifies this method. The second chapter, for instance, discusses Kant's views on the character of woman, and the third chapter is devoted to reassessing the significance of his views.

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[50] Pauline Kleingeld, "The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy: The Case of Kant," *Philosophical Forum* 25 (1993): 134–150. I'm grateful to Varden for drawing my attention to this paper.
[51] Roger Scruton, *Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 9; quoted at Kleingeld, 129.
[52] Kleingeld, "The Problematic Status," 139.
[53] Ibid., 145.

The resulting discussion does not, however, prominently exhibit the contours of the set of concerns that Kleingeld suggests might surface from the employment of such a methodology. In particular, Kleingeld worries that what Kant's discussion of the nature of women and men is likely to obscure in his moral and political philosophy is the way that at its foundation there may be hidden assumptions about the public/private distinction (in particular as these relate to his understanding of the household) and the devaluation of reproductive labor and caregiving. This relates to feminist worries that granting women formal rights will not bring about material equality. So, for example, equal employment opportunity in the public sphere will not resolve inequalities in employment rank and compensation for women if the way that the private sphere of the household is theorized is such that matters to do with reproduction, childrearing, and caretaking are considered private, domestic concerns. If success in the public sphere requires having a functional wife at home, opening up this position of functional wife to men and nonbinary people (by giving up on the idea that the sexes have a determinate essential nature) will be unlikely to bring about equality for women. Although officially the functional wife may now be understood as a generic domestic partner, this gender-neutral theory of the sexes will only serve to obscure the fact that, by and large, functional wives are women. This de facto arrangement is not merely accidental but is instead the result of having inscribed (not explicitly, but deeply) the conception of a nurturing feminine nature within the political theory of the household. One question for Varden is whether she is at all moved by the thought that Kant's conception of the household is inextricably bound up with his conception of feminine nature as reproductive, caregiving, and best suited to a private space governed by affection rather than by law, or whether the idea of the household can be thoroughly purged of these vestigial anthropological commitments. And, if so, don't we need to take care to say much more about how to understand reproductive and caregiving arrangements within such a household?

Varden's revised Kant does argue for the importance of marriage (including same-sex and symmetrical polyamorous marriage) on the grounds that to deny people this is to "deny them of their right to establish a rightful, shared, personal domestic sphere—a legally recognized home—together with others as their equals" (250). Marriage provides another interesting example of the way in which the discussion does not at this point turn to feminist concerns about the way that the notion of the domestic has tended to be

harmful, especially to women. Varden's basic argument is that, "if same-sex couples are not given the right to marry, then they are also not given access to laws constitutive of a rightful legal personal, domestic 'us,' and they are also not given legal protection against many types of domestic wrongdoing in their shared, personal homes" (258). I found Varden's explanation of this abstract claim very puzzling, and so will quote it at length:

> Since without a right to marry, same-sex couples have no legal claims to one another as spouses, continuous authorizing consent with regard to each action institute the end of their legal rights with respect to each other. This means that it is impossible for same-sex couples to unify their private lives into homes without thereby subjecting each member of the couple to the other's unilateral decisions regarding the most intimate and important aspects of their personal lives. It means that when one party no longer consents to let their private life be under their reciprocal control, or no longer wants to disclose important information concerning how they conduct their private life, or simply wants to quit the agreement, the other party has no legal claims to them beyond what everyone else has too. (258–259)

What I find surprising is that this passage seems to tout as purported benefits to marriage precisely some of those features of the institution that have traditionally made feminists wary and that have been used to argue against gay marriage on the grounds that the institution itself is irredeemable. Claudia Card discusses a number of problems with the institution of marriage.[54] But the one that she sees as likely in-principle unresolvable because it has historically been so tightly linked with the concept of marriage is that,

> the legal rights of access that married partners have to each other's persons, property, and lives make it all but impossible for a spouse to defend herself (or himself), or to be protected against torture, rape, battery, stalking, mayhem, or murder by the other spouse. Spousal murder accounts for a substantial number of murders each year.[55]

[54] Claudia Card, "Against Marriage and Motherhood," *Hypatia* 11 (1996): 1–23.
[55] Card, 8.

> Central to the idea of marriage, historically, has been intimate access to the persons, belongings, activities, even histories of one another. More important than sexual access, marriage gives spouses physical access to each other's residences and belongings, and it gives access to information about each other, including financial status, that other friends and certainly the neighbors do not ordinarily have. For all that has been said about the privacy that marrying protects, what astonishes me is how much privacy one gives up in marrying.[56]

One might object that any people who cohabit and share their lives intimately give up this sort of privacy. But, as Varden would point out, with respect to their private lives, such people remain "in a state of nature where it is impossible for them to avoid subjecting one another to a kind of unilateral use of force that only a public institution of marriage can overcome" (259). But what is this unilateral use of force? As we saw in the passage above, this natural unilateral "force" amounts to the fact that if one of the partners doesn't consent any longer to having their private life under mutual control, doesn't want to share personal information any longer, or wants to leave the arrangement altogether, they are able simply to withdraw from the situation and to keep their space, information, etc., private from their partner, just as they would from anyone else. As Varden notes, without marriage "continuous authorizing consent with regard to each action institute the end of their legal rights with respect to each other" (258). Yet, read another way, this means that what is supposed to be good about marriage is that when one partner to the arrangement stops giving their consent to it, this is not sufficient to withdraw from the arrangement. It seems that what is being theorized as "force" in the state of nature is actually the force required to withdraw when one no longer gives consent to the actions of their partner. The force that Varden advocates for on behalf of the state seems to be the force of law against the partner who is no longer giving authorizing consent (e.g., to shared domestic space or medical or financial records). Card flips this same point on its head, reflecting on abusive relationships that, "[w]ithout marriage, it is possible to take one's life back without encountering the law as an obstacle."[57]

[56] Card, 13.
[57] Card, 13.

Varden's discussion of marriage appears in the latter half of the book, which is divided into two parts according to Kant's distinction between "internal freedom (virtue or first-personal ethics) and external freedom (right or justice)" (188). I'd like to turn now to the first part of the book. I won't be able here to do justice to the richness of Varden's exegetical and interpretive work, but let me try to sketch a few of the broad contours of her rehabilitated Kantian view. The main Kantian insight is that, "we can explore sexuality's or gender's givenness by means of an idea of embodied, animalistic forcefulness (natural vital force) that is engaged and developed, transformed, and integrated through our faculty of desire—through abstract conceptual, associative, and aesthetic-teleological means—in such a way that it is also brought into union with our moral vital force" (135). Kant thought that the "animalistic sexual union becomes a (teleological) union" (118), allowing the male and the female to unite and to bring together the sublime and the beautiful, and that this union is therefore "compatible with procreation and, so, with a teleological species-maintaining use of the imagination" (118). Varden argues that we can salvage the main lines of this account by doing away with the idea that our animality need be understood simply according to the binary of male/female. Instead, our animality, which undergirds our "natural vital force," should be understood as a highly complex and individualistic set of physical and emotional needs that can be explored only first personally by asking ourselves what sort of experiences make us feel safe, healthy, vigorous, and excited. The givenness of one's animality that can be worked up through experience and aesthetic imagination so as to be integrated with one's humanity and personality is not to be understood simply as givenness through causal mechanism on the one hand, nor is it merely a matter of free choice or the exercise of power on the other. Like aesthetic judgment, judgments of one's own sexuality and gender are not entirely free to be made in any way about anything (there are correct and incorrect judgments of beauty and also of sexuality and gender) and yet, in spite of the givenness one experiences in this realm, these judgments aren't fully determined by rules (sexuality and gender, like aesthetics, are not investigated through exploration of deterministic laws).

Not only do I laud Varden's efforts to weave together a story of Kantian sexuality from the materials of human beings' predispositions to good (from Kant's *Religion*) and of the sublime and the beautiful (from Kant's anthropological writings and the third

Critique), but, also, I stand in her debt, as I learned a great deal from her account. Yet, as she helped me come to a better understanding of Kant on these matters, I found myself skeptical that a genuinely Kantian view could be refashioned in the way that she suggests. To motivate this worry, let me begin with a question: Why is animality considered a predisposition *to the good*? It seems clear enough from the context that Kant means that it is a predisposition to *moral good*. So why not think of our animality as, at best, neutral with respect to the moral good and, at worst, an occasional impediment to it, tempting us to do immoral things in order to fulfill desires that have their root in our need to survive and to reproduce? This question gains importance for the Kantian given Kant's own conviction, expressed in the antinomy of the second *Critique*, that the principles of happiness and of morality are completely heterogenous, and that the only way that our understanding of happiness and morality can be brought into harmony with one another (in order to strive toward the highest good) is by positing the existence of God as the moral author of the universe. Varden notes that Kant thinks that the highest good involves the integration of happiness with morality, but she ignores the fact that Kant thinks that this appears to be impossible (in the absence of a theistic postulate) given that the two have completely different principles, one grounded in experience (happiness) and one grounded in pure reason (morality).

Light can be shed on the question of why animality is a predisposition to good by turning to the *Metaphysics of Morals* (hereafter MM) where Kant discusses "[m]an's duty to himself as an animal being."[58] Kant says that, "[t]he first, though not the principal, duty of a human being to himself as an animal being is *to preserve himself* in his animal nature."[59] This is because, for animals like us, our animal powers are the precondition for exercising our moral powers. At the extreme, we cannot act morally if we are dead. So animality in this sense is a precondition to good in that it allows us to exist so that we can act morally.

But what about sex? In the *Religion*, Kant describes predisposition to animality as

[58] References to Kant are to the volume and page number of Immanuel Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–). Translations are from Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Peter Heath, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Kant, MM, 6:421.
[59] Ibid.

threefold, "*first*, for self-preservation; *second*, for the propagation of the species, through the sexual drive, and for the preservation of the offspring thereby begotten through breeding; *third*, for community with other human beings, i.e., the social drive."[60] A similar answer may also be given for sex: since we human beings are finite and experience death, part of our animality (our sex drive) is geared toward reproduction, making more of ourselves. If there were no reproduction, there would be no human beings, and there would therefore be no moral action of human beings. So, it is in this sense that the predisposition to animality as relating to the sexual drive is a predisposition of the human being to moral good, a necessary condition on there being any human moral action. If this is correct, then it shows that Kant has available to him the theoretical tools for explaining a systematic emphasis on heterosexual, reproductive sex (which is not yet to say that he has an argument for any other sort of sex being immoral).

Thinking about reproduction on a par with self-preservation in this way allows us to see why Kant opens his discussion of lust by saying that "[j]ust as love of life is destined by nature to preserve the person, so sexual love is destined by it to preserve the species; in other words, each of these is a *natural end*…."[61] This appeal to natural ends needn't be read as expressing anger or fear, as Varden reads it. It simply expresses a rather low view of the body (as good primarily insofar as it makes possible moral good) and an elevated view of morality itself. The thought that Kant, through an unduly stringent conception of pure reason and morality, neglects the significance of the human body and emotions is a classic enough complaint. Returning to Kant's incorporation of aesthetic categories into his discussion of sexuality, the fact that such male/female union between the beautiful and the sublime is "compatible with procreation and, so, with a teleological species-maintaining use of the imagination" (118) becomes central as to how the disposition to animality when it comes to the sex drive is integrated in order to become a disposition to the good. If this is correct, Kant's heteronormativity is not an aberration from his ordinary ways of philosophizing, but, rather, another symptom of the dualism between reason and inclination that grounds his practical system—a dualism that he himself argues is so deep that the highest good, the pursuit of happiness and morality as a harmonious whole, can

[60] Kant, *Religion*, 6:26.
[61] Kant, MM, 6:424.

be possible only by positing a divine moral creator outside of space and time.

I found Varden's suggestion that the source of Kant's errors when it comes to sexuality is to be found in his own repressed homosexuality implausible for a related textual reason. While passages in Kant's works are certainly homophobic by today's standards, these passages are not *particularly* homophobic. Instead, they are *generally* anti-sex. The language of "a *defiling* (not merely a debasing)" does not appear in a discussion of homosexuality but of masturbation.[62] At times, Varden is perhaps overly generous in her reading of Kant's sweeping anti-sex views, and I think that this can lead to an overemphasis on those views that are critical of homosexual sex. For instance, she writes of her revised view that "[t]he analysis above also helps to bring out Kant's claims that being sexually attracted to someone is to want their *person*—and not just their body—as we want the other to show us their aesthetic, creative playfulness and invite us to be part of their endeavor to develop themselves as who they are, an endeavor that requires us to learn to show respect for one another in this process and, so pushes us toward morality" (120). While it is tempting to see a glimmer of the contemporary sort of enlightenment in Kant's suggestion that sexual appetite is for a person rather than merely for their body, Kant in fact twists this in exactly the other direction: how abhorrent it is to have an *appetite* for a *person*! He notoriously describes the post-coital moments as follows:

> In loving from sexual inclination, they make the person into an object of their appetite. As soon as the person is possessed, and the appetite sated, they are thrown away, as one throws away a lemon after sucking the juice from it … there lies in this inclination a degradation of man; for as soon as anyone becomes an object of another's appetite, all motives of moral relationship fall away; as object of the other's appetite, that person is in fact a thing, whereby the other's appetite is sated, and can be misused as such a thing by anybody.[63]

Far from pushing us toward morality, for Kant, the appetite for a person leads all moral motives to fall away.

[62] Kant, MM, 6:424.
[63] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 27:384–85.

Of course, Varden is well aware that Kant says things like this about sex. And, of course, the question is how essential this sort of claim proves to be to the promise of his philosophical system. I have suggested that while Kant's views on sex are bad and poorly argued, they are not so in quite the way Varden claims. His homophobia is species of his generic sex phobia, which itself reflects the hypertrophy of reason in his philosophical system. His discussion of the sex drive and animality does lead him to place an emphasis on the heterosexual couple and reproduction as the way in which the predisposition to animality is a predisposition to good and allows the integration of our animal vital force with our moral force. But if what I said above is correct, this is for principled reasons to do with maintaining the necessary conditions for any human moral action, not homophobia or sexual repression. It is difficult for me to see how to remove this piece (the emphasis on reproduction as why animality is a predisposition to good) from Kant's overall picture and still have a recognizable Kantian account of animality left. How else could we explain why a sex drive serves as a predisposition to *moral* good?

One final note: it is true that it would not follow from the claim that reproductive sex is natural in Kant's sense that masturbation or homosexual sex is immoral. But, again, Kant's problems on this score seem to me generic. His arguments against masturbation are very much of a piece with his arguments against suicide, gluttony, and drunkenness. Kant employs the idea of misusing one's own humanity to explain in each of these cases why these actions are supposed to be wrong (affording his abstruse practical system what would have seemed to him at the time an intuitive plausibility). I am equally skeptical that Kant has any successful moral arguments against suicide, overeating, or stupefying oneself with wine. Does it really follow from the fact that, by gorging myself, I might fall into a pleasant but slightly incapacitated state (approaching "the enjoyment of cattle"[64]) that doing so is debasing my humanity and therefore immoral? What I want to emphasize here is that the problems with his arguments regarding all such matters are of a piece with the problems with his arguments about sex and masturbation. His reasoning about masturbation and homosexual sex may not be particularly good, but it is bad in a generally Kantian way.

I hope that these comments have served to highlight the richness and audacity of

[64] Kant, MM, 6:427.

Varden's work. I have been able to discuss only a fraction of the material she covers in this sweeping, challenging, and imaginative book. It has been my honor to have had the opportunity to discuss it with her.

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Review 2: Carol Hay, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Helga Varden's *Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Theory* is an extraordinarily ambitious, systematic account of sexual love, sexual and gender identity, and sexual orientation viewed through a Kantian lens. The book's title rather undersells the comprehensiveness of the work; what Varden has given us here is nothing short of a radically new, cohesive, and wide-reaching encapsulation of Kant's entire theory of human nature, one that stands to upend (and ultimately rectify) more than a half-century of mistaken interpretations of Kant's views.

In the process of laying out this new Kantian account of human nature, Varden defends Kant from a number of feminist criticisms that have arisen from these misinterpretations—particularly those that characterize the Kantian framework as cold, calculating, and hostile to the emotions, embodiment, and the particularities of experience and relationships. Genevieve Lloyd, for example, has charged that regardless of whether or not this was Kant's intention, "his philosophy has fostered a view of morality which tends—as did Descartes's view of the self, which it in some ways resembles—to split human life, on the one hand, into truly moral universal concerns, and, on the other, into the particularities of the merely personal."[65] Robin May Schott has claimed that "[m]odern philosophical theories such as Kant's maintain the principles of the dominance of reason over passion and of pure truth over temporal existence."[66] Feminists in their wake have charged that the seeds of men's historical oppression of women have taken root in this split view of the human condition and in these rankings of dominance. A book like Varden's shows not so much that that these criticisms are misguided as that their proponents have been wrong to characterize Kant as the appropriate target.

In Varden's hands, we find a Kant who is fully aware of and attentive to our embodied animal nature. This is accomplished by attending to Kantian texts often overlooked—in particular, the *Religion*—thus broadening the analysis far beyond the

[65] Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" & "Female" in Western Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), 69.
[66] Robin May Schott, *Cognition & Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 71.

conventional tendency to focus only on Kant's account of freedom as it is relevant to our moral ends. Instead, Varden's account explores "the phenomenological structure of Kant's account of human nature … [and emphasizes] the importance of letting Kant's ideas of animality and humanity do their own, distinctive philosophical work in an overall account of our human nature"(3). The account with which we are left is a significant improvement over the feminist caricature of Kant as a thinker whose hyperrationalist disdain for both the body and the emotions is responsible for nothing less than the entirety of the Enlightenment's warped and damaging view of human nature.

There is, however, an upside to what we might call the conventional strategy of interpreting Kant's account of human nature as fetishizing abstract and disembodied rational capacities at the expense of all else. The benefit here is that, on this interpretation, all of the contingent differences between people (sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.) disappear—or are, at any rate, irrelevant from the moral point of view. Using this conventional strategy, it thus becomes relatively straightforward to defend reading Kant in a gender-neutral manner.[67] Proponents of this strategy tend to write off the problematically sexist, racist, or homophobic things Kant says as self-contained claims that can be excised quickly and neatly without affecting what's central to the broader framework of his practical philosophy. These Kantian apologists often buttress their case by reminding us that, with very few exceptions, the explicitly problematic claims Kant makes about women are found in works that have traditionally been viewed as peripheral to the Kantian canon—most notably, in the *Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime* and the *Anthropology*, as opposed to Kant's central systematic works such as the first *Critique* and *Metaphysics of Morals*.[68] Because Kant simply does not talk about women at all in his central works we need not be overly concerned about the problematic claims

[67] See, e.g., Barbara Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Rae Langton, "Feminism in Philosophy," in Frank Jackson and Michael Smith (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231–257; Mari Mikkola, "Kant on Moral Agency and Women's Nature," *Kantian Review* 16, no. 1 (2011): 89–111; Kurt Mosser, "Kant and Feminism," *Kant Studien* 90, no. 3 (1999): 322–353; Herta Nagl-Docekal, "Feminist Ethics: How It Could Benefit From Kant's Moral Philosophy," in Robin M. Schott (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 101–124; Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender, & the* Family (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

[68] These two exceptions both occur in Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals,* 6:279 and 6:314–15. Hereafter referred to as *"MM."* Reprinted in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*.

that pop up in his peripheral works, this conventional strategy insists, and we are thus justified in taking Kant's gender-neutral references to "persons" and "humanity" more or less at face value.

Despite explicitly endorsing such a strategy in my earlier work,[69] I've come to be as dissatisfied with it as Varden is, for reasons to be considered in more detail shortly. Much as I want to rescue the possibility of using Kant for radical liberatory purposes, I worry that there's something deeply suspect about cherry-picking the parts of Kant we like best and brushing aside whatever is inconvenient or offensive to our contemporary sensibilities. I now concur with Varden in thinking it better to grapple head-on with everything that Kant actually said. After all, it is precisely her willingness to do so that lets Varden find resources in underexplored parts of the Kantian canon that can upset the hyperrationalist interpretation of Kant that feminists have rightly criticized as extremely problematic.

But I worry that Varden's more embodied and emotional Kant is open to feminist criticisms from a different angle. It is, of course, all to the good to have her show us that Kant understood that human beings are not brains in vats, that reason is but one (admittedly important, but not solitary) aspect of our existence, that we are vulnerable and interdependent and interconnected and appetitive and sensual and erotic and passionate, and so on. But, the problem here is that the more robust an account of human animality we pull out of Kant, the more we come to see that we are saddled with an account of human nature shot through with regressive ideals of gender essentialism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.

Let's take a closer look at what Kant actually says. Even if we don't put too much stock in the notoriously offensive pull quotes that Kant's most ardent critics like to go to—that women display their books like watches to show off that they have one, even though it's broken or set to the wrong time[70]; that intellectual women might as well have beards to better express the "mien of profundity" they're striving for[71]—we're still left with a Kant

[69] Carol Hay, *Kantianism, Liberalism, & Feminism: Resisting Oppression* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 51.
[70] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 221. Hereafter referred to as *"A."* Reprinted in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*.
[71] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, 78. Hereafter referred to as *"O."* Reprinted in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*.

who subscribed to an *essentialist* view of human nature that assigns fundamentally different natures to women and men. As Varden notes, feminists following Simone de Beauvoir's lead have tended to be extremely suspicious of gender essentialism, noting that the character traits assigned to women in most essentialist worldviews are those that make their subordination to men appear both natural and justified. And Kant's version of gender essentialism does appear to be guilty of this. Women are depicted as naturally nurturing, caring, and attuned to the beautiful; men's nature, on the other hand, is fundamentally rational and attuned to the sublime.[72] Women's characteristic virtues (sensitivity, patience, and financial prudence) and their superior social skills (their speech, charm, gentleness, and courtesy) are supposed to suit them to their gendered role of managing the home; men's characteristic virtues (physical power, industriousness, and reason) are supposed to suit them to participation as active citizens in the public sphere and their gendered role of protecting the home.[73] Varden notes the complementarianism inherent in this essentialist contrast between the genders, where the interplay between each gender's strengths and weaknesses constitute what she refers to as a "traditional ideal" that is supposed to permit each individual, as well as society and the species as a whole, to flourish. And she insists that this essentialist ideal to which Kant is committed is, by his own lights, something that is contingent, not necessary. Thus when, for example, Kant explains that the legal dominance of men over women—where "he is the party to direct, she to obey"—is justified by the "natural superiority of the husband to the wife in his capacity to promote the common interest of the household,"[74] Varden interprets him not as claiming that men have an unconditional or a priori right to rule over women in the private sphere, but rather as describing a traditional ideal that is contingent—one rooted in an account of the natures of the sexes about which Kant recognizes he might be mistaken (97, 104–105). One gets the sense that Varden wants to be respectful of this traditional view because a great many people, even today, find it valuable. She thus wants to avoid writing it off as an outdated relic of a more regressive time, instead going to great lengths to emphasize the complementarity and strength Kant saw in both gender ideals, and pointing out that Kant viewed "any such actual, historical

[72] Kant, *O* 2:228–243; see also 27:49–50.
[73] Kant, *A* 7:306.
[74] Kant, *MM* 6:279.

submissive ideal of womanhood as a perverted version of the normative, traditional ideal (the traditional female ideal realizable by the first two predispositions to good in human nature, to animality and humanity)" (93).

If I read her right, Varden means us to see this traditional ideal as one among many that people might use to structure their conception of a good human life. In addition to defending this traditional ideal, she thus also takes her task to be to show how there is room in Kant for those who fall well outside it—in particular, those with LGBTQIA+ identities. On this latter task, I think she succeeds admirably. But, as I will discuss in more detail shortly, I'm concerned that Varden's willingness to defend this traditional ideal leaves her unable to arbitrate between the disputes that will inevitably arise between this ideal and its more progressive alternatives. The problem here is that proponents of this traditional ideal tend not to present it as one among many; they present it as the *only* morally acceptable option. This, certainly, is how Kant himself presents it. Much as we might want to make Kant into a pluralist here, then, there's a real concern that these different ideals are simply not compatible. This, I take it, is a major explanation for why more radical or progressive theorists have so long been skeptical of the tenability of the Kantian framework.

I read Varden as giving us a strategy that can respond to these sorts of radical concerns in three related ways. In many places, she attempts to demonstrate that elements of Kant's views on sexual love, sexual and gender identity, and sexual orientation aren't as problematic as they might initially strike us to be. In other places, she demonstrates the surprisingly profound insights and powerful theoretical analysis we can find in Kant for thinking through contemporary social and political issues about which Kant's critics have usually painted him to be problematic—issues including abortion, pornography, sex work, sexual harassment, and queer marriage. In other places, she is willing to admit that Kant was in error and leads us in thinking through these contingent mistakes about which perhaps Kant should have known better, insisting that Kant's failures can be instructive about our own.

The concern I have, however, is that that a strategy like this flirts with being, for lack of a better term, an *ad hoc post hoc* tap-dance. That is, I worry that what's really doing the work in deciding what in Kant is worth saving and what is better consigned to the dustbin of history are our pre-theoretical intuitions, which we try to shoehorn Kant to

fit. For the record, I think anyone engaged in projects of rational reconstruction of canonical figures will end up with this particular partner on their dance card, and I think Varden's footwork is significantly more deft than most.[75] But I would like to hear a little more about what, if any, systematic justification she has for when we are to take Kant at his word and when we are to chastise him for knowing better.

The most plausible candidate for a discriminative principle here is probably something like internal consistency. Varden says as much, arguing that "by making Kant's basic philosophical framework and insights more consistent, we can derive from them a compelling approach to sexual love, sexual or gendered identity, and sexual orientation" (116–117). But internal consistency as a discriminative principle by itself still doesn't decide what should stay and what should go when inconsistencies arise. Nor can Varden appeal to consistency with what has traditionally been considered the theoretical core of Kant's practical philosophy to solve this problem, because what is novel about her interpretation is precisely her refusal to adhere to the tradition of pretending that anything other than the *Critiques* and *Groundwork* are some weird afterthought that we can safely ignore when inconvenient.

Varden clearly seems to recognize the need for such a discriminative principle here, for she goes on to offer four criteria that must be satisfied by any good account of sexual love, sexual or gender identity, and sexual orientation:

> It must explain how activities and relations involving these aspects of ourselves are deeply personal and can have a grounding function for us; they can make us feel safe and at home in the world as who we are. Second, sexual love, sexual or gender identity, and sexual orientations are often accompanied by a certain creative playfulness of which the experiences of the beautiful and the sublime in oneself and in another often are constitutive parts. Third, although sexual love is unruly in nature, we can assume moral responsibility for how we go about developing our capacity for it. Fourth, a minimally plausible account of sexual love, sexual or gender identity, and sexual orientation cannot end up with a cisist, binary,

[75] To be clear, I worry that my own work is far more guilty of this than Varden's is.

> heterosexual analyses since that makes it incapable of speaking to polyamorous, polysexual, and LGBTQIA being and experiences in meaningful ways. (117)

I happen to agree with Varden on the importance of these four criteria—perhaps not surprisingly, for I find myself agreeing with her on most things!—but I wonder whether the normative justification for these four criteria is meant to come from within or without Kant himself. It is of course anachronistic to expect Kant himself to have explicitly supported criteria such as this, but I read Varden as taking herself to have built a Kant*ian* justification of these criteria—a justification that draws from and is supported by the core tenets of the Kantian framework. This is all well and good, but we cannot deny that other commentators throughout history have been perfectly happy to use the Kantian machinery to buttress projects that have been considerably less progressive. And at least some of these regressive Kantianisms have been, presumably, no less coherent with the words on Kant's pages than Varden's progressive Kantianism is. Without an explicitly articulated discriminative principle, choosing between these various Kantian options starts to look troublingly arbitrary.

Even amongst progressive allies such as Varden and I are, there's work for such a discriminative principle to do. While she and I will likely generally agree on a great number of priorities, interpretations, and ideals broadly construed (committed, for example, to a world that is feminist, LGBTQIA+-friendly, anti-racist, etc.), there will still arise cases where we do not agree on the details. And it would be good if we could go to Kant to arbitrate such disputes, or at least shed light on them.

For example, as intimated above, I'm concerned that the traditional ideal that Varden defends (or at least says isn't so bad because she wants to honor the very many people out there who are drawn to it) is more problematic than she wants to admit. One concern I have about how this traditional ideal functions for Varden's Kant has to do with what I take to be its perniciously binary nature. Varden explicitly says that the beautiful/sublime dichotomy should be uncoupled from the female/male dichotomy, but I read her as suggesting that we should still retain these two separate dichotomies and merely permit people of both sexes and genders to identify with whichever they find more appealing. I worry that this way of carving things up is still too reductive, that it doesn't go far enough in making room for the wide varieties of the human experience of sex,

gender, and sexuality, and instead ends up affirming traditional understandings of these things that end up shoehorning people's experiences into arbitrary and procrustean boxes.

One of the primary motivations underlying Varden's account is the need to accommodate the fact that so many people experience both their gender identity and their sexuality as *given*. This is a desideratum driven primarily by the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people, whose non-normative identities and sexualities have needed to be defended because they have traditionally been at odds with what is deemed acceptable by the status quo. But Varden points out that straight cis people also experience these facts about themselves as given, and, thus, consistency demands that these traditional identities and sexualities deserve just as much accommodation as any other. I don't deny that straight cis people experience their identities and sexualities as given, but I do think it's worth registering a healthy dose of skepticism about the givenness of identities and sexualities that just happen to fall completely in line with a regulative ideal that has the full force and weight of history behind it. Once we start attending to the effects of the forces of socialization—the devastating sticks and manipulative carrots that exist to keep people in line—I think people with cis straight identities have reason to ask themselves whether what they experience as given isn't rather the result of a lifetime of extremely powerful and pervasive social pressures. LGBTQIA+ people, on the other hand, have at least some epistemic evidence supporting the givenness of their sexualities or identities, given the often extreme costs often borne by their bucking the tide. A fruitful project of future study inspired by Varden's Kantian account, I think, would be to explore what insights Kant stands to offer on questions such as these.

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Review 3: Janelle DeWitt, University of California Los Angeles

In *Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Theory*, Helga Varden takes on a rather daunting challenge. Not only does she attempt to develop a systematic account of sex, love, and gender, but she does so in what might seem to be the most inhospitable of environments—a Kantian moral framework. Feminist philosophers, among others, have criticized Kant for being a hyperrational moralist who expresses a deep antipathy toward the material aspects of human existence. However, thanks to the careful work of a new generation of female Kant scholars (highlighted by Varden), this cold image is giving way to a new understanding of Kant as someone who recognizes and embraces the value of emotion, happiness, and social connectedness in human life. Varden is a leader among this group, drawing widely from Kant's moral, political, legal, and anthropological writings to develop the complex account of human nature and non-moral agency embedded within the Kantian moral framework. She then brings these resources to bear on issues of concern in moral, political, and feminist philosophy, including sexual violence and oppression, abortion, sexual orientation and identities, marriage, and trade in sexual services. Throughout the book, she weaves these topics together into a rich tapestry, one that I cannot do full justice to here. So instead, I will focus my attention on her account of the Kantian framework in which she develops her views. It is the point at which I believe I can most fruitfully engage with her work. And though I am generally sympathetic to her account, I will likely depart from it on some of the subtle, but important, details. So my goal is to raise a few friendly challenges at points where I believe Kant might have additional resources that Varden could capitalize on in support of her project. I begin by raising a general concern about the underlying theory of feeling that Varden adopts. In particular, I worry that it is not robust enough to fully account for how we are able to *develop, transform, and integrate our feelings and desires* (a theme that runs throughout the book). I then take a short detour through a discussion of angelic agency to highlight some of the ways in which I think Kant can be interpreted to further support Varden's aims, especially in relation to the role of happiness in the highest good and to her account of moral evil.

Varden approaches Kant with the same overarching aspirations that I have—to show not only that our rational and animal natures can be fully integrated, but that it can

be done in such a way as to capture what is truly distinctive about *human* life. What makes this integration possible, as Varden frequently notes, is our ability "to develop, transform, and integrate our feelings and desires in good ways"—i.e., in ways consistent with our rational, moral nature (35–36). And though she gestures in several places toward how this might be accomplished, it is still not quite clear what this process entails or what it is about Kant's understanding of feeling and desire that makes it possible. This raises two related concerns for me. One, I might not completely understand her vision for a fully integrated human life. And two, if I do, I worry that the underlying theory of feeling and desire that she appeals to won't provide her the theoretical resources needed to achieve her goal. To put these two worries more simply, either her vision of the integrated life isn't integrated *enough* to capture what is distinctly human about the way we experience emotions as embodied, yet *rational* beings, or it is, but then the theory of emotion she adopts cannot sufficiently account for it.[76]

As I understand Varden's view, integration occurs when there is an interweaving of the two parts, such that room is made for both our moral and our personal concerns. And I may be wrong here, but from her brief description in chapter 3, it appears that this cultivation and transformation of our animality happens in what is to my mind a rather external, mechanical, and therefore limited way. For example, by stepping back and reflecting on my habit of eating bacon for breakfast, I might realize that it is having a negative impact on my health. I might even take a stronger stance and reject eating meat on ethical grounds. But rather than deny my enjoyment of the taste of bacon, which

[76] To be fair to Varden, this is a concern I have with most Kantians working on emotion. They are correct to recognize the sophisticated roles that Kant assigns to emotion, but they fail to see that these roles require the theoretical resources that only a cognitive theory of emotion can provide (a theory that they deny can be attributed to Kant). Nancy Sherman has expressed a similar concern, though her point is directed to Kant himself. This conflict is most notable in his account of *respect for the moral law*—one in which he characterizes the feeling of respect in terms of its cognitive content, while continuing to hold a non-cognitive theory of emotion. She states, "It is not just that the emotion of respect has pleasurable and painful 'feels.' Rather, the pleasure and pain are directed at certain thoughts and construals, and the overall feeling is informed by those thoughts. To feel respect is to see ourselves *as* inhibited and *as* governed by a supreme law whose source is our own reason. The emotion is the causal effect of those judgings. *But Kant implies further that the emotion is in part constituted by those judgings. The identity of respect as a specific emotion hangs on specific sorts of appraisals* (my emphasis). In the case of respect, at least, Kant seems to appreciate the paucity of his own official view that emotions are mere feelings without evaluative or intentional content." Nancy Sherman, "Concrete Kantian Respect," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 135. My own view is that Kant actually did hold a cognitive theory. (See my "Respect for the Moral Law: the Emotional Side of Reason," *Philosophy* 89, no. 1 (2014): 31–62, and "Feeling and Inclination: Rationalizing the Animal Within," in *Kant and the Faculty of Feeling*, eds. Kelly Sorensen and Diane Williamson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 67–87.)

remains, I search for a suitable plant-based alternative instead. After eating it for a while, I might even come to prefer the taste. So it is by transforming my activities in this way that I can come to integrate my moral and personal concerns.

My worry, however, is that merely *interweaving* our animal and rational natures in this way is not enough. In doing so, the most we end up with is an animal life guided by reason, albeit in complex ways. So for the integration to result in a fully *human* life, I believe the two parts must actually become one. This happens when our rationality can reach down and partially constitute the feelings and desires of our lower, animal nature. In doing so, we transform our animality *into* humanity.[77] And when our two natures are integrated in this way, that is, when our feelings and desires become more richly conceptualized, it fundamentally alters the way in which we experience the world. To return to the example above, if I were to adopt the view that killing animals for food is an abhorrent practice, the smell of bacon that once enticed me would now likely trigger a disgust response instead. So on this view, even the way in which I experience the smell of bacon can be altered by my change in beliefs. It thus follows that the more access I have to the concepts that structure my feelings, the more I can cultivate and shape their development *from the inside*. However, it is this access that Varden appears to deny when she describes our animality as "ways of being [that] do not require reflective self-consciousness and abstract conceptual reasoning" (36). If reason is not involved, then the *feeling or desire itself* cannot be transformed.

To the extent that Varden is not fully settled on her view, I hope to nudge her in the cognitive direction. This is because a cognitive view enables us to have a better understanding of the self in self-love, and to have that be reflected in action (among other things). On my view, emotions primarily take the form of evaluative judgments that represent a relationship of fit between an object and the subject, by which the life or activity of the subject is furthered. When I determine that an object fits with my needs, I

[77] See Kant's *Notes and Fragments*, where he states, "The first and most important observation that a human being makes about himself is that, determined through nature, *he is to be the author of his happiness and even of his own inclinations and aptitudes, which makes this happiness possible* (my emphasis).... As a freely acting being, indeed in accordance with this independence and self-rule, he will thus have as his foremost object that his desires agree with one another and with his concept of happiness, and not with instincts; and the conduct befitting the freedom of a rational being consists in this form" (NF 19:272–273). Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments* (NF), ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and trans. Curtis Bowman and Frederick Rauscher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

then judge it to be good and set it as my end to be pursued (the object of my desire). However, until reason comes online, nature must act as a surrogate and set our ends for us. The resulting feelings thus take the form of generic instinctual responses shared by *all* members of the species (the drives for nourishment, protection, and propagation). This is why all babies have the instinctual drive to suckle. But as reason becomes more involved, the child can begin to conceptualize the object, the subject, and the relationship of fit between them in various ways (and to various degrees). This is what enables my feelings and desires to eventually reflect my particular subjective condition—i.e., how I think it is best for my life to go given my unique needs, preferences, talents, goals, and circumstances. And it is this ability to break free from the constraints of instinct and act in ways that reflect my individuality that I believe might make it a useful tool for Varden to further develop aspects of her theory.

I now turn to what might seem to be a strange topic—Varden's brief discussion of angels. My intention is not to challenge her account, of course. It isn't in any way central to her aims in the book. Rather, doing so enables me to cast her overall approach in a different light, one that I hope will challenge her understanding of Kant in a helpful, supportive way. And the irony is certainly not lost on me that I am using an account of angelic agency to comment on elements of a theory of sex, love, and gender. But it has been a surprisingly useful way to humanize Kant on an issue central to Varden's project—i.e., to show why he must have taken happiness seriously and given it more prominence in his own theory of human agency than many have recognized. More specifically, by considering the role Anselm assigns to happiness in angelic beings, we come to understand why the end of happiness is essential to *any* account of finite (non-divine) agency.[78] To put this more bluntly, Anselm shows us that the typical picture of a disembodied, rational, free Kantian agent who acts solely from a pure representation of the moral law is not only unattractive, it is conceptually impossible. Anselm's account also gives us a better understanding of moral evil in Kant. It was for just this very reason that Anselm developed it—i.e., to explain how an angel created all good could not only come to sin in a morally responsible way, but also in such a way that he became the most

[78] Anselm, *Anselm: Three Philosophical Dialogues*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002).

depraved being on earth. It's a model of moral psychology that I argue Kant adopted almost in its entirety.[79]

Now, as Varden describes them, angels "are neither embodied nor have animality nor set ends of their own." Instead, they must be thought of as "acting on maxims where their ends are set by the Divinity" (i.e., to deliver messages), so they "do not have external use of choice (external freedom) nor could they experience imperatives (because they do not have animality)" (246). However, when described in this way, angels are not really agents. Instead, they behave much like animals acting on instinct. This is a conception that served Varden's point well. But Anselm thinks of angels in a very different way. They are still purely spiritual beings composed of nothing but reason and will, yet nothing about that fact prevents them from being individual agents with their own personal projects and goals, or from being subject to moral imperatives. In fact, as Anselm argues, to be free moral agents, angels *must* have two ends or affections of the will—happiness (which includes anything that is beneficial, useful, advantageous, or "good for the individual"), and justice/morality (which is correctness of will or what is "good in itself"). These two ends are essential because they contrast the particular perspective of the individual agent with the universal perspective of morality, or what might be thought of in Kantian terms as prudential and moral reason. His conception of freedom as a form of moral self-determination by the standard of justice or goodness, his recognition that the ultimate end of angelic beings is to will happiness *justly* (which he calls *holiness*), and his explanation of moral evil all stem from the interaction between these two ends. It is the potential for our desire for happiness to be restricted to within the bounds of justice (correct willing) that accounts for its role in the highest good, or what Kant calls "rationalized self-love." Likewise, its ability to exceed the bounds of justice is what accounts for its potential to be what Kant refers to as the "propensity to evil." In other words, it is the same predisposition to the good (the prudential good or the "good for me") that can be cultivated *or* corrupted. And finally, these two ends (happiness and justice) determine the ultimate character of the will. When they conflict, the angel is forced to prioritize one over the other. If he chooses to retain his justice, he then confirms his good will and is rewarded by God with perfect happiness. But if he chooses the benefit instead,

[79] See my "Freedom and the Rational Origin of Evil: Kant's Anselmian Roots" (draft).

he is essentially rejecting the constraints of morality by prioritizing his own happiness above all else. In doing so, he so thoroughly corrupts his will that he becomes truly evil.
I sketch this picture here because it challenges the standard Kantian understanding of the nature of happiness and its relationship to morality in a way that I believe supports Varden's overarching aims in the book, yet in a way that I don't think she has fully capitalized on yet. Anselm's account highlights how happiness must stand alone as its own independent end, distinct from morality. Yet, in standing alone, it is nonetheless still *good*. As a distinct good, however, the problem now becomes one of reconciliation with the moral end. A common reading of Kant is that we can incorporate only one of the two incentives into our maxim—either *respect for the moral law* or *self-love*. This is one of the main wedges thought to force a division between our animal and rational natures, because it seems to suggest that we are to prioritize morality even to the exclusion of our own happiness. But when there are two incentives at play and both can be incorporated into the maxim, it now becomes a question as to which of the two gets priority. We see this point reflected in a passage of the *Religion* that Varden doesn't mention, but that I think is important for her account of evil in chapter 4:

> The human being (even the worst) does not repudiate the moral law, whatever his maxims, in rebellious attitude (by revoking obedience to it). The law rather imposes itself on him irresistibly, because of his moral predisposition; and if no other incentive were at work against it, he would also incorporate it into his supreme maxim as sufficient determination of his power of choice, i.e., he would be morally good. He is, however, also dependent on the incentives of his sensuous nature because of his equally innocent natural predisposition, and he incorporates them too into his maxim (according to the subjective principle of self-love). If he took them into his maxim as of themselves sufficient for the determination of his power of choice, without minding the moral law (which he nonetheless has within himself), he would then become morally evil. But … *he naturally incorporates both into the same maxim* (my emphasis)…. Hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their subordination (in the form of the maxim): which of the two he makes the condition of the other. It follows that the human being (even the best) is evil only because he

> reverses the moral order of his incentives in incorporating them into his maxims. He indeed incorporates the moral law into those maxims, together with the law of self-love; since, however, he realizes that the two cannot stand on an equal footing, but one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the incentives of self-love and their inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law.[80]

This is why he explains depravity, the lowest degree of evil, as the "propensity of the power of choice to maxims that subordinate the incentives of the moral law to others (not moral ones)."[81]

However, as Varden understands it, depravity requires self-deception because it is the only way to reconcile the evil action with Kant's insistence that we act only under the "guise of the good." Somehow the agent must deceive himself into thinking that he is instead acting in a moral way, as when an abusive man "tells himself a story according to which his wife and children are intentionally unappreciative of his goodness, that they are constantly out to get him or to put him down" (46). I agree that this is an instance of depravity. But in it, there is still a semblance of goodness, in that the man still sees the need to justify his actions to himself. And this is the deepest form possible when we assume that there is only one kind of good. Anselm, however, shows us that when we recognize happiness as an independent good (as Varden appears to do), then there is an even deeper level of depravity possible—one in which the abusive action itself is seen as (prudentially) good and so not in need of any such self-deceptive moral justification. That is, the man can now abuse his wife simply because it gives him pleasure (an instance of *Schadenfreude*), knowing full well that such an action is morally wrong.[82] In doing so, he

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[80] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (R), ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6:36.
[81] Ibid., 6:30.
[82] Kant describes *Schadenfreude* or malice in various ways, but always in the starkest of terms. It is the antithesis of the moral feeling *love of one's neighbor* (MM 6:399). "*Malice* [Schadenfreude], the direct opposite of sympathy, is likewise no stranger to human nature; but when it goes so far as to help bring about ills or evil it makes hatred of human beings visible and appears in all its hideousness as *malice proper* … [it] is the direct opposite of love for our neighbor" (MM 6:459–460). Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* (MM), ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). In the lecture notes on ethics, he describes *Schadenfreude* as a form of "devilish wickedness … which consists in taking an immediate pleasure in the misfortunes of others," i.e., it "evince[s] an immediate inclination to evil" (LE 27:440). He goes on to explain what he means by this, stating that "*Schadenfreude* has a different

is still acting under the guise of the good, but one in which he prioritizes his own (prudential) good over the moral good. I raise this issue because I think there are some cases of sexual violence that can only be explained in terms of this deeper form of depravity. I have in mind cases such as Ariel Castro, the Ohio man who kidnapped three young girls, imprisoned them in his basement, and raped, beat, and tortured them on a continuous basis for nearly ten years. In my own opinion, to think of Castro as having been motivated by anything other than his own sadistic pleasure would fail to capture what it was that made his actions truly evil.

In contrast, the proper ordering of our incentives is to prioritize the unconditional moral good over the conditional prudential good of happiness. When we do, we get a robust account of the highest good, one in which we no longer pursue happiness as something merely permitted. Instead, its inclusion in the highest good tells us that Kant recognizes it to be an important good for human life and so as something that *should* be one of our primary aims. That is, so as long as it is morally permissible, we can and should pursue whatever it is that makes us happy.

This is why I think it is important to qualify Varden's understanding of holy wills. As she sees them, angels are holy wills because God sets their ends for them. But for Anselm, a holy will is one whose ends of happiness and morality so closely align that he is no longer able to sin. This happens in part because God rewards the good angels with perfect happiness, so nothing remains that could tempt them to violate the bounds of justice. This is reflected in Kant's distinction between a *holy will* and the *divine will*. What makes holy wills *holy* is not that they have no inclinations—that is the divine will. Instead, like with Anselm, it is that their inclinations now perfectly align with the moral law. This may seem like a minor quibble, but I think of it as an important pivot point for understanding the role of happiness in Kant's theory. Why? Because *holiness*, properly understood, represents the ideal Kantian agent. Not the typical hyperrational, hyper-moral disembodied Kantian agent, but instead the emotionally healthy and morally good

complexion [from envy]. Such people laugh when others weep, and feel pleasure when others feel pain. To make other people unhappy is cruel, and if physical pain results it is bloodthirsty; collectively these things are labelled inhumanity, just as pity and sympathy are called humane, because they distinguish man from the beasts" (LE 27:443). Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (LE), ed. and trans. Peter Heath and ed. J.B. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

agent Varden is after. She describes this agent beautifully in the context of friendship in chapter 1, but it is a theme that runs throughout. This is also reflected in Kant's discussion of the commandment to love, particularly as it is developed in the second *Critique*. In that passage, he states that the command "to love one's neighbor means to practice all duties toward him *gladly*. But the command that makes this a rule cannot command us to *have* this disposition in dutiful actions but only to *strive* for it."[83] In other words, the commandment to love is commanding us to cultivate our feelings and inclinations so that we do what the moral law commands *gladly*, i.e., without resistance. When we achieve this disposition—i.e., when we have cultivated our lower nature to the point where it perfectly aligns with the moral law—then we have achieved holiness of will. And though it is not possible for us to achieve this perfected moral disposition (at least not on our own), if we were in fact to succeed, then our feeling of *respect for the moral law* would be transformed into *love for the moral law*.[84]

I mention these passages because I think they provide further evidence and support for Varden's claim that the ideal Kantian agent is one whose two natures are fully integrated, and that a "bottom up" approach to Kant can be fruitful. But I also mention it in light of the concern I raised above—that this demand to cultivate our inclinations in a way that they come to perfectly align with the moral law (and likewise, with our own concept of happiness) requires that we be able to transform and develop our feelings and desires in a fairly radical way, and I'm not sure that the account Varden sketches will be enough. As I noted earlier, my own intuitions are that a cognitive theory of emotion is required.

Sex, Love, and Gender: A Kantian Theory makes two clear contributions to the discipline. It is a bold first attempt to bring Kant's theory to bear on issues surrounding sex, love, and gender. But to my mind, it makes an equally valuable contribution to the movement in Kant scholarship to uncover and develop the rich and nuanced account of human nature embedded within his moral theory. And despite our differences on some of the subtle details, it has been an absolute pleasure to be discussing *how*, rather than *whether* Kant can make room for the more human aspects of our existence—i.e., our

[83] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5:83.
[84] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:84.

ordinary emotions and desires, our dreams and goals, our development over time, and of course, our failures. I expect these conversations will continue as the movement continues to grow.

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Author Response to Critics: Helga Varden, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Hannah Arendt writes in "Remarks"[85] that "each time you write something and you send it out to the world and it becomes public, obviously everybody is free to do with it what he pleases, and this is as it should be.... You should not try to control whatever may happen to what you have been thinking for yourself. You should rather try to learn from what other people do with it." Hence, my responses to my critics today are in this spirit, meaning that I do not have an interest in trying to control what they (or anyone) think about my book—or about Kant, or about how to do Kantian or feminist philosophy or the philosophy of sex and love (with or without the philosophical tools offered in my book). Although I will of course try to clarify my ideas when asked to do so, my main aim is to try to learn from what my readers do with my book and to engage the topics they would like to engage with. Some of these topics, as my critics know, take me a good bit beyond what I have done in the book, while others require me to reflect on what I have done but have not reflected upon in the book. For example, they want me to reflect upon the method used in the book and on god, two things I don't explicitly do in the book. So let me start with method since immortal and eternal beings are not in a hurry. And then I will talk a little about something I do talk about in the book, namely Kant's uneasiness around sex and his account of human nature, before, toward the end—once hopefully also god, the gods, and the goddesses are a little more satisfied—I'll return one more time to some questions of method.

The questions from my interlocutors regarding method are several. Lockhart, to start, first asks about whether I believe that we also need to revisit Kant's conception of the household—since some of his and our inherited sexism find their expression exactly in this sphere. She then asks about marriage, noting that I appear to take a different route than some of the strong voices in feminist philosophy, such as Claudia Card, who

[85] Hannah Arendt, "Remarks" in *Thinking without a Banister: Essays in Understanding*, ed. Kohn, J/ (New York: Schocken Books, 1973/2018), 476.

denounce marriage as an incurably oppressive institution, especially for women. Lockhart's concern that I haven't said enough about the household was also expressed by Alice MacLachlan in her comments on my book at the AMC session at the Central APA earlier this year; MacLachlan also wanted me to talk more about how to re-envision the family in light of the theory I have developed in the book. Moreover, Jordan Pascoe, at that same AMC session, relatedly asked if I couldn't do more with the idea of people sharing ends than I do in the book. She used my example of kidney donations, in response to which I started to think about sex therapy as another area that needs more thought. More generally, I think my response to Lockhart is similar to the one I gave MacLachlan and Pascoe, namely that yes, I do believe that there is much more to be figured out and said about care relations on this kind of Kantian approach; in fact, my belief is that doing all the work needed there could be a book on its own. In other words, in addition to working out in more detail how to re-envision the family, I believe the account I've presented in *Sex, Love, and Gender,* together with other work I've done on the philosophy of care,[86] may yield a useful contribution to our re-envisioning of all relations involving some notion of shared end-setting, guardianship, and being entrusted to act on others' behalf in the ways that, for example, physicians and therapists are. But I haven't done a good deal of that important work yet, so I'm not quite ready to write that part of the theory yet.

Before moving on to more questions on method, let me also address explicitly Lockhart's more specific puzzle regarding my account of marriage. As Lockhart notes, I take a different approach to this question than many prominent feminists, including Claudia Card. That is to say, in my view, Card was a brilliant philosopher and she did an enormous amount for women and for members of the LGBTQIA+ community—and I am deeply grateful to her. I also disagree with some of her views on marriage. That is, I don't disagree with her that marriage often has been or is a bad institution for women in many places around the world and that marriage is not for everyone; in fact, divorce statistics

[86] I'm thinking in particular of Helga Varden, "A Kantian Critique of the Care Tradition" in *Kantian Review* 17, no. 2 (2012): 327–356; "Kant's Moral Theory and Feminist Ethics" in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism*, ed. Garavaso, P. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 459–482; and "Kantian Care" in *Caring for Liberalism*: *Dependency and Political Theory*, ed. Bhandary, A. and Baehr, A. (New York: Routledge, 2020), 50–74.

suggest rather clearly that the majority of people find it impossible to live together with only one other person for most of their adult lives. What I disagree with her about is her claim that marriage is an institution that we should abolish. I believe instead that marriage should be an institution that LGBTQIA+ and polyamorous people should have access to on the same footing as cis, straight folks and that it should be up to each person to decide whether marriage is part of how they want to live with others in their homes.

In other words, I believe that those in the LGBTQIA+ community who have fought hard to gain the right to marry were not fundamentally self-deceived or mistaken about pursuing these rights. Although most people do not seem to flourish in marriage for a lifetime, some do, and everyone should have a right to access such a legal institution when they share a home as partners. In my view, those who rationally want to marry want access to a certain set of legal rights and duties with regard to their shared home during the period they live together. These legal rights and duties include those concerning how to end that shared life: namely, they commit to the end as not being simple abandonment, but that it comes with a legal procedural closing that they in principle also can use to solve various disputes that tend to occur when we dissolve our shared homes. This is therefore not to say that we cannot divorce or live in ways that aren't shared in that way anymore, but, rather, that if we choose to marry, we thereby choose that we do not simply abandon our spouse(s) if we want to end the relationship; marrying involves the commitment to own our shared, married life as equals as well as to owning the end of the relationship in certain legal ways before moving on. Hence, though I don't think marriage is for everyone, especially not in the sense that living together in married ways for life is something most people can do even if they try, I do think the desire to marry, as such, is not fundamentally irrational. Moreover, my account of marriage provides resources with which to speak to why and how family law is constitutive of rightful homes as well as why the state has special responsibilities to create safe, new homes for people who need to get away from domestic abuse. Hence, my account does take on the problems Card identifies with the institution of marriage that we have inherited from our ancestors and suggests solutions, both in terms of private right (family law) and public right (systemic justice). At some point, though, a fuller analysis of married life brings us back to the first point Lockhart mentions, namely about the household. That is to say, how to envision a world where the responsibility of and security for all parties in a home is real regardless of whether or not

one marries and, as mentioned above, this part of the theory is not yet completed.

This segues to one of Hay's worries about method, namely that many of her pre-theoretical intuitions line up with this theory—and, so, she is worried that the theory simply justifies what she believes in anyway, and that this is one of the reasons why she finds the theory persuasive. Moreover, she is worried that because it does align with many of her intuitions, it doesn't help us when we do have different intuitions—as she and I sometimes do, at least on the surface—because it doesn't give us the resources we need to work through our differences. This point relates to the above point regarding feminist philosophy in that, similarly to the way I defend the people who do want to have a right to marry against some feminists, like Card, I defend those among the LGBTQIA+ community who argue that whether or not one is gay, trans, bi, etc., is not experienced as a choice for many, which means that there are aspects of one's sexual orientation and gender/sexual identity that are not constructed all the way down. This is to say not only that some strong voices in feminism have much to disagree over on the topic of marriage, but also that other strong voices in feminist philosophy and the philosophy of sex and love have much to disagree over regarding the question of whether construction goes all the way down when it comes to central issues concerning sexual orientation and sexual/gender identity. In a related interchange with Ann Cahill at the already mentioned, earlier AMC session, I responded to some complexities regarding construction by saying that, although it makes deep sense to think that race is a result of racism (and, so, constructed all the way down), it doesn't make corresponding sense to say that homosexuality is a result of heterosexism or homophobia (and Cahill agreed). Hence, my reconstructed Kantian account of sex, love, and gender responds in part to this complexity.

This is also my first response to Hay: I do believe that deep pre-theoretical intuitions held by those whose lives our theories speak to yield *one* source of theoretical correction as we go about developing our theories. Moreover, I think that it's possible that my theory doesn't fit Hay's pre-theoretical intuitions in the sense of the intuitions she had before she started to do feminist philosophy, and the philosophy of sex and love. And, if it is the case that my theory fits with many of her pre-theoretical intuitions in the sense of the intuitions she *now* has as an incredibly thoughtful—in fact, leading—voice in feminist philosophy, the philosophy of sex and love, and the corresponding Kantian literature,

that, to me, is also very important with regard to the question of whether the theory is on the right track. Indeed, it is not implausible that in the process involved in working out my theory, I paid special attention exactly to these two sources of correction. As the "Preface" explains, I believe I was shown much of the best of our current philosophical practice in terms of careful, generous, open-minded, and deep engagement by thinkers (students and faculty) from across the field (of study or philosophical or scholarly tradition) as this theory developed. As the preface also emphasizes, some of what has been most valuable in working with the ideas that ultimately became this book are the ways in which readers or people in the audience have used the theory to engage with and better understand difficult aspects of their own lives or selves. Whether with regard to the question of what it is to be a woman (in philosophy), to be trans, or, as DeWitt did in her oral commentary at the SGIR session, as a resource for dealing with the experiences of lethal threats of illness attacking our loved ones, nothing matters more to me than to see that my theory (and book) is experienced as a friend when dealing with these parts of ourselves.

My next response to Hay is that the theory I present in *Sex, Love, and Gender* is definitely not consistent with some of my initial pre-theoretical intuitions nor with my first philosophical intuitions. My starting point was a set of pre-theoretical intuitions that fit rather perfectly with Simone de Beauvoir's account as presented in *The Second Sex*. Among other things, one reason why I realized that those intuitions cannot be correct is similar to why I think those theories that are constructivist—as is the case for those who follow, for example, Judith Butler or Sally Haslanger's basic theoretical commitments—cannot be correct all the way down. For me, one initial wake-up call came in relation to my students who were trans; in my view, the constructivist theories cannot capture characteristic subjective experiences of those for whom transitioning involves surgeries.[87] And then I realized that neither can those theories explain any of the other sexual or gender orientations identified by the letters "L," "G," "B," "I," and "A" in the acronym LGBTQIA; constructivist theories (of various existentialist, continental, postmodern

[87] Butler has noted this problem with her own theory as presented in *Gender Trouble* quite recently. See Molly Fischer, "Think Gender is Performance? You have Judith Butler to Thank for That," in *New York Magazine: The Cut* (June 13, 2016, www.thecut.com/2016/06/judith-butler-c-v-r.html?mid=fb-share-thecut) for more on this.

kinds) ultimately do best with regard to the "Q." So I had to step back and think again; something was wrong about how I thought about all of this. And as I thought through it—and listened to many, many talks and relevant non-philosophical expressions of related experiences—I also realized that it is important to make sense of how we appear to have certain, deep phenomenological patterns in this regard, as well as how sexually flourishing lives often have quite a lot of flexibility that is characteristic of what we do sexually, so that our sexual experiences often go beyond what we mean when we say things such as "I'm gay" or "I'm straight." To give an easy example, being straight is clearly compatible with having many non-straight sexual experiences and incompatible with generally living a non-straight type of life.

All of this entails, as Hay notes, that the philosophical account I present is not binary, though let me emphasize that it does not propose that femme cannot be fundamentally attracted to femme (simplified: beautiful to beautiful) or butch fundamentally to butch (simplified: sublime to sublime). However, it does acknowledge and accommodate that some people experience their own related identities and orientations as binary in ineliminable ways—just as it makes space for lives that are not binary or that are not very sexual or that are quite traditional. It only calls on everyone not to universalize their contingent ways, and instead to appreciate that we are very different in these regards and that the first and major aim should be to try to find a way that works well for oneself. For example, after much listening (to talks and presentations) and reading (of articles and books), I believe that many Kantian and other philosophers and academics do not experience themselves as very sexual; they experience themselves (in these regards) subjectively as more in line with rationalist interpretations of the self. I want my theory to be consistent with and have room for these more asexual ways of being. At the same time, I resist the common philosophical or academic (including Kantian) proposal that these more asexual ways are the universal or the best ways of living a human life. I insist that it is one among many good, ineliminably contingent ways. Finally, I also aim to ensure that the theory is consistent both with how sexuality is an aspect of life that many deeply associate with the meaning of life, including as captured by their religions or religious sentiments, and with how it is something that many find a little scary and/or want or need to keep in a less prominent space or in a space that is more than anything safe and affectionately and morally loving.

Some aspects of this self-exploration, again, I do not think my theory (or any theory) can solve for people—and so all I try to do is to speak to some of the emotional complexities involving sexual, loving, gendered lives in the hope that doing so may be useful for those who are engaging seriously with these aspects of themselves by means of philosophy. That is to say, I defend the view that the subjective explorations of these questions must lie with each person; my aim in the book is only to suggest a range of possible clues and phenomenological patterns that we may want to pay attention to as we engage in those self-discoveries in careful ways. Moreover, I hope my book as a whole communicates the importance of being careful around these contingent aspects of ourselves, including those who inherit more socially powerful ways of being sexual and/or loving and whose (their own and their predecessors) lack of care in the past and present has done and does so much existential damage to other human beings. The theory thus does contain a warning to both cis men as well as straight folk that their inherited privilege leaves them extra vulnerable both to self-deception as well as to doing damage to women and to sexual and gendered minorities. However, as Hay is quite right to say, this warning should have been made clearer and more explicit.

Finally on this point, Hay is quite right to push me on identifying the source of the four criteria for a good theory—and she's right in that I'm not quite sure what the source is. I can only say where I think the criteria come from: I think they express what I tried to do over the fifteen years or so when I was developing the theory in a way that I think takes more seriously (than Kant did) the fact that these parts of our theories are contingent. That is to say, if we start with the human phenomena of sex, love, and gender where central to that endeavor is to listen to those whose lives our theories strive to speak to, as well as pay attention to lives clearly lived well or not so well (and why/how) in these regards, what are some of the core things we must pay attention to as we develop our theories? Those four things, I think, consistently struck me as central yardsticks I needed to measure my theory against to ensure that it was on the right track or, which I'm often more confident about, not on the wrong track. And then, as Hay also notes, I kept striving to make sure that the objective framework was set by the principles of (internal and external) freedom. Within this framework, I tried to make space for what is contingent or distinctly human. My overall aim is to envision how a more complete theory of sex and love can combine objective principles of freedom and contingent human matters. More

specifically, in Part I, I try to show how the objective principles of internal freedom—virtue—can make space for what Kant sometimes calls "moral anthropology"[88] or human contingencies or structures of our human phenomenology. In contrast, in Part II, my main aim is to show how the principles of external freedom—right—can make space for this as well as what Kant sometimes calls a "principle of politics"[89] or historical contingencies regarding the societies we inherit. The four criteria Hay is concerned about come up especially in relation to the analysis in Part I. Her comments—as well as those of others—have made me think, though, that writing a paper on ideal and non-ideal theory in Kant's practical philosophy with a focus on central questions concerning method should be a task I set myself soon, and I'm very grateful to her and other critics for having pushed me on this.

And now we have pretty much arrived at god, gods, and goddesses, which represent a shared concern of DeWitt and Lockhart, and also at Kant's uneasiness around sexuality, which is a central concern for Lockhart. First a word or two on Kant's uneasiness around sexuality, including how the patterns of his anger around non-procreative sexuality reveals much internal conflict around these issues. On the one hand, I don't think that it is most plausible to see his writings as simply expressing sexual discomfort in general, as Lockhart does. After noting in my book that Kant is definitely uncomfortable around all non-procreative sex (115–116), the patterns of his anger always track what Kant typically calls "unnatural sex" and he never, to my knowledge, talks about homosexual sex without anger. For example, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, after noting that he thinks sex comes in two forms—natural (procreative) and unnatural (non-procreative), he continues by saying about unnatural sex that it "takes place either with a person of the same sex or with an animal of a nonhuman species. Since such transgressions of laws, called unnatural … or also unmentionable vices, do wrong to humanity in our own person, there are no limitations or exceptions whatever that can save them from being repudiated

[88] Kant, MM, 6:217. Throughout this text, all of Kant's works are referenced by means of the standard Prussian Academy Pagination as well as the following abbreviations: "MM" for *The Metaphysics of Morals;* "R" for *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*; "TP" for "On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, but It Is of No Use in Practice," and "SRL" for "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy." All these works are printed in Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy* trans. and ed. by Gregor, M. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[89] Kant, SRL, 8: 429, cf. and Kant, TP, 8: 277ff.

completely."[90] Hence, though Kant's anger tracks all unnatural sex (but not all sex as such), the anger becomes especially prominent when he talks about homosexual sex. Hence, my take on this is that, although it is certainly the case that Kant is generally uncomfortable around sexuality, when we look at discomfort and related anger, there are patterns to be discovered. In Kant's case, his anger does not, for example, track women—and, so he does not, as many philosophers in history do, lash out at women, such as condemning women who seem to enjoy sex, who are concubines, or who are sex workers. If my theory in the book is on the right track, these patterns of anger are not an accident given the kinds of beings we are; there are deep emotional reasons (of failure, of fear, and of low self-esteem) for them. Indeed, it is not impossible that the fact that I perceive his anger as revealing self-hatred—which is so common among people in the LGBTQIA+ community—is one of the reasons why I have what strikes Lockhart (and others) as a surprising level of patience with Kant on these issues.

What about god? First I want to emphasize—as I believe I do in the book too—that the instrumental type of interpretation regarding our animality that Lockhart is most drawn to certainly is a possible reading of Kant's texts. Moreover, this instrumentalist reading of Kant on animality is compatible with the historically prominent, rationalist readings of Kant's moral philosophy, which often leads to conclusions such that Kant views the sage as *the* instantiation of the highest good—the best way of life—for human beings.[91] Moreover, I agree with Lockhart, the feminists, and philosophers of sex and love who believe that if this rationalist approach captures the ideal Kantian agent, then Kant's philosophy doesn't have the resources we need to give rich, plausible accounts of human beings' diverse and flourishing ways of being sexual, loving, and gendered. There just isn't enough to work with, since on these conceptions, sex, affectionate love, and gender become irrelevant or distractions from or merely a means to our true aim—namely to become like the sage—and, too, our animality and social aspects of our ever so earthly being don't have value beyond instrumental value (since all that has true value is internally related to our moral personality). My account of human nature challenges these

[90] Kant, MM, 6:277.
[91] For my interpretation of Kant on animals and the sage, see Helga Varden, "Kant and Moral Responsibility for Animals," in *Kant & Animals*, ed. Allais, L. and Callanan, J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 157–175, and *Sex, Love, and Gender*, respectively.

instrumentalist interpretations and/or accounts of Kantian animality and rationalist interpretations of the Kantian agent. I point to places in Kant's texts as well as philosophical ideas of his that don't sit well with such instrumentalist or rationalist interpretations as well as to the host of philosophical problems that are associated with them. I then suggest a different way to interpret Kant's account of human nature, one that is also textually plausible, overcomes these philosophical problems, is consistent with what I regard as his deepest philosophical commitments, and is very useful as we seek to explore classical issues of feminist philosophy and the philosophy of sex and love. Hence, my book is agreeable to those who think my philosophical account is Kant's and those who think it is not, in that both groups can agree that my account is distinctly Kantian and philosophically better in that it enables us to engage the questions of sex and love as well as issues of feminist philosophy in useful ways—ways the traditional instrumental, rationalist Kant interpretations and accounts cannot do.

Some of DeWitt's comments enter the discussion around here. She defends a cognitivist approach to Kant, but one that is not matched with the instrumentalist account of animality that Lockhart favors. DeWitt's account is furthermore an account where much of the important philosophical work is being done by what I call "humanity" and "personality" in my book (and in this text below). Her account of humanity is also compatible with a different account of angels, namely one where the angels have a conception of happiness as well as a moral will. She thinks that her account is consistent with much of what I argue for in the book, including my interpretation of Kant's idea of the highest good, but she thinks hers is better both as a matter of Kant interpretation and philosophy (otherwise, of course, she wouldn't defend it). Our conversations about this will probably continue in the years to come—which I look forward to because I absolutely consider it possible that perhaps we can do more with a cognitivist approach than I currently know. Moreover, as DeWitt knows, there are points at which my book hands the ball over to my Kantian friends who do metaphysics and metaethics much better than I do. In particular, I pass the ball to Kantians such as Lucy Allais and Katerina Deligiorgi on issues of so-called "free will" and to Alix Cohen on metaphysical questions regarding the faculties of desire and of feeling. Since some questions of interpretation ultimately depend on interpretations of Kant's metaphysics and metaethics, I want to hold it open that DeWitt has the stronger interpretation of Kant. (Time will tell.) As a matter of getting

the best Kantian account of human nature, including as it pertains to capturing core sexual, loving, and gendered experiences, I don't, however, agree with DeWitt's current take. In short, as we will see in more detail below, her account becomes an account that is philosophically quite similar, in relevant respects, to certain constructivist phenomenological and/or existentialist accounts. In my view, her account is good at capturing individuality or particularity (as mine can, too), but it is not good, in my view, at capturing our animality, including the related patterns of our phenomenological experiences regarding sex, love, and gender.

Here is another way to express this last point, one that joins with Lockhart's concerns above as well as the journey of developing this theory as a whole. Assume for a moment that we agree with DeWitt's alternative account of angels—so that they become more humanlike as they are pursuing happiness (even if not in spacetime, but only in time)—*and* that we make the human agent very particular in the ways she is suggesting *and* that we accept DeWitt's account of animality. Alternatively, let us assume that Lockhart is correct to suggest that we should abandon Kant's account of animality and instead look to other contemporary accounts of sex, love, and gender if we want to move the Kantian project forward—a temptation also expressed by Charlotte Sabourin in her review of *Sex, Love, and Gender*. Now, first, notice that all of these thinkers then will need to answer the following question: which contemporary account of sex, love, and gender do they want to endorse instead? They all agree—either explicitly (Lockhart) or implicitly (DeWitt) that they do not want essentialist approaches—for reasons I agree with. So the main contenders we have left are virtue theory/capability theories or constructivist (existentialist, phenomenological, continental, postmodern) accounts. Because of all the philosophical work she wants "humanity" and "personality"—and, so, reason—to do in her account of human nature, DeWitt's proposed account in effect, I believe, becomes one such constructivist account (or else it becomes conservative in ways that cannot capture diversity). However, as explained above and as argued in the book, as far as I can tell, none of these theories work philosophically with regard to some core issues in the philosophy of sex, love, and gender. They don't have the philosophical moves we need, while the reconstructed Kantian theory I have presented does, as well as the moves regarding particularity or individuality that DeWitt wants a good theory to have.

For example, if we try to use a DeWittian constructivist account to capture sex,

love, and gender, I believe we will not be able to explain how and why sexual orientation and sexual/gender identity are experienced as existentially important, or how and why there are certain phenomenological patterns involved in flourishing sexual, gendered lives. To draw an analogy: Kant's first *Critique* presented a new, third alternative to rationalism and empiricism as he thought that his new theory—transcendental idealism—could keep many of their important insights and yet solve puzzles neither one of them could solve on their own. Philosophy of sex, love, and gender used to have two prominent theories: essentialist and constructivist theories. My theory of sex, love, and gender presents a new, third alternative that seeks to keep the important insights of the two existing, prominent kinds of theories and solves puzzles neither one of them can do on their own. Alternatively, just like Kant's transcendental idealism bears some important similarities with Aristotle's hylomorphism (form-in-matter) theory, my reconsidered Kantian theory bears some important similarities with virtue theory, but it is able to overcome its inherent conservativism without losing its ability to explain the existential importance and phenomenological structures of sexual orientation and gender/sexual identity—something I believe contemporary capabilities theories such as Martha Nussbaum's cannot explain. *Sex, Love, and Gender* is not, however, proposing that my theory is the only possible one, but it is proposing that all strong theories need these central, new philosophical moves regarding our related phenomenological structure and animality.

Still, Lockhart is likely to ask here, even if we accept this, is my account still compatible with Kant's postulate of the existence of god, that is, with his postulate of the existence of Being as such? I don't yet have any reasons to think that it isn't (and we can read DeWitt's text as implicitly agreeing with me on this point). One doesn't need an instrumentalist interpretation of animality combined with a rationalist interpretation of the human agent to defend Kant's postulate here. For example, the teleological judgment of sexuality—the one Kant links to the sex drive and preservation of the species—can be seen expressed in, for example, homosexual activity and in sexual activities of people who biologically cannot or cannot any longer have children. It is not uncommon to feel the desire to have a child with one's partner regardless of whether, as a matter of biological fact, one can literally engage in the physical activities that can lead to creating a human baby. Kant himself notes this: if marriage were only to track procreative sexual activity,

then, once menopause hits, sex should also stop and the marriage should dissolve. But it doesn't work like that. My account doesn't give up any of this, it just adds layers of complexity regarding our phenomenological structure as well as the development, transformation, and integration of our basic sexual and erotic desires. In a related conversation with Alice MacLachlan at the earlier mentioned AMC session, I suggested that I think what ultimately follows from my account is that learning to trust the postulate is to learn that one can trust one's deepest life-affirming feelings of pleasure and pain—and this is something everyone must learn, and for those whose lives are characterized by having inherited oppressed identities, this lesson is absolutely crucial. After all, the world and much of how people talk and act will attack some of what is most precious in you, and you must learn to trust yourself in these regards, that you are good, that you can trust your deepest distinctions between pleasure and pain and how they enable you to realize yourself in vitally strong ways. That is to say, you need to learn to trust that your predisposition to good is good. It is also where I would put grace; that you have this in you is something, philosophically, for which you appropriately feel gratitude, since you didn't make it the case that there are such fundamental distinctions between pleasure and pain in yourself or that you can trust them, including as you go about learning to understand, develop, transform, and integrate them.

The main reason why I don't talk about god, gods, and goddesses in *Sex, Love, and Gender* is the same reason why I didn't say anything explicit about method. And that reason is that I do not yet know exactly what I want to say or how to say it. My current thoughts about god, gods, and goddesses are deeply inspired in particular by both Hannah Arendt and Immanuel Kant, and they go something like this: it makes sense to think of some of our deep religious intuitions and experiences as being internally linked with the fact that we are Earth-dwellers. Hence, it makes good sense to think with Arendt in *The Human Condition* that before philosophy started in Ancient Greek society, the gods and goddesses were viewed as immortal beings who capture central human characteristics that track both a flourishing planet, a flourishing human life in society, and the presence of natural events and our own unruly emotional nature that make it truly difficult for us to flourish over a lifetime. For heathens like me, I still think these religious aspects related to the fact that we Earth-dwellers are best tended to in nature—by hiking in the mountains or swimming in the lakes, fjords, and oceans—but I realize that others prefer to have these

experiences by coming together in religious houses where they sing and play religious songs as well as read classical religious texts together. We are different in these basic religious sentiments, in part for historical reasons and in part because of our temperaments. Consequently, some of us prefer these related religious imaginations involving gods and goddesses and natural spirits, while others prefer rich, epic (his)stories with religious prophets who know and care about human beings and suffering, for example. All of these religious ways are furthermore consistent with a postulate of Being as such and with thinking that our philosophical or scholarly reflective abilities—for Kant: our reflective self-consciousness and our abilities to use abstract concepts and think in terms of laws—open up access to and engagement with reality that goes beyond the senses and the planet Earth. And once we do this—a practice that in the Western world started with Ancient Greek philosophy—we can no longer simply appeal to what is available in (religious) natural experiences or in religious texts to answer some of the questions that arise. The awe that can be experienced at the top of a mountain, the stories of the Greek gods and goddesses, or the writings related to Judaism, Jesus, Muhammed, or Buddha don't offer much philosophical help if we try to ponder whether mathematics or atoms are ontologically basic, for example. When we try to answer these questions, we need to appeal, at some point, to God or Being as such or X in our arguments.

In Kant's transcendental idealism, this appeal can only be a postulate and not an affirmation. Moreover, in Kant's account, it is our ability to think in terms of abstract concepts and laws in a self-reflectively conscious way that enables us to explore and travel to the universe beyond the planet, as well as to set and pursue ends or our own—to participate actively and in morally responsible ways—in the universe. All of that can only be explained philosophically, in Kant's account, if we postulate an X or Being as such or one ultimate being ("God")—and view this Being as internally linked both to our rational capacities and to the possibility of embodied, social beings on planet Earth. At this point in time, I believe Kant is right about this, and nothing I have said in *Sex, Love, and Gender* contradicts it. Hence, I believe my account is consistent with both heathen and doctrinal religious beliefs, as well as with the postulate of Being as such. However, saying much more than what I did in *Sex, Love, and Gender* is not something I'm yet ready to do—though I agree with DeWitt that the more convincing accounts would have to restrict any

claims about what Being as such possibly could be to what is consistent with the way in which our powers regarding feeling, thought, reason, and imagination are. Once I can do all of this with a steady philosophical mind, I will also be able to speak to the unity of the first *Critique* (objective, universal laws of scientific causality), the second *Critique* (objective, universal laws of freedom), and the third *Critique* (contingent laws of biological organisms and aesthetics) in Kant's or Kantian philosophy. I suspect, however, that my metaphysics/metaethics friends will be able to do this before I can—and that DeWitt will be one of them, even if it is also the case that unless she changes her views (especially on animality and the natural vital force) a little, I will probably end up following one of my other favorites in this regard.

There is, however, one more aspect to this question about god from Lockhart, one that links up with many of DeWitt's concerns, too. One way to ask this question is: what does it mean to say that the predisposition to good is *good*, including the way in which Kant says that realizing the predisposition to good is not only compatible with what is morally good but leads to it. This worry lines up with one of Hay's concerns about my claims that Kant should have known better, namely, what does it mean that he should have known better, and with DeWitt's worries about my Kantian account of evil. Is the problem that Kant was internally inconsistent or, as Lockhart also notes, that his account is deeply inconsistent (maybe also with his own deepest philosophical commitments). Relatedly, with DeWitt, we might wonder whether the person who has a depraved heart is not always self-deceived when doing horrible wrong. I don't yet have a complete philosophical picture of the incoherence of our minds insofar as they are bad in the patterned ways of racism, sexism, and heterosexism, and so I don't yet have all the tools to capture all of Kant's own failures in these regards, but let me go over some of the features of the account presented in *Sex, Love, and Gender* in the hope that it might facilitate further discussion in the future about these important questions.

So, to start, given my interpretation of Kant's account of the predisposition to good in human nature, why is it a predisposition to *good* not only in that it does not contradict what morality requires but leads to it? Or to ask with DeWitt: exactly how does this story of transformation, integration, and development go such that feelings and desires are distinguished in the right kinds of ways? Or, as she asks in Kantianese, why think that there is one faculty of desire and one of feeling; how are they integrated in a human life

with regard to our animality, humanity, and personality?

To bring everyone into the discussion, let me first briefly summarize what I believe I say in the book: the predisposition to good in human nature refers to basic ways in which we can distinguish—all the way from when we are born—between pleasure and pain. We start by being able to distinguish between animalistic pleasures and pains as well as being able to feel our lack of ability to act as frustration (we scream when we are born), and then, as we develop, we also reveal a capacity for taking pleasure and/or pain in having a social sense of self (our first smile, and, later, shame, envy, jealousy, etc.). Much later, as we become able to recognize the conclusions or commands of our practical reason, we become capable of moral feeling ("the ought," feeling the pangs of our conscience, etc.). My suggestion is—viewing myself as following Cohen here in important regards—that all these feelings are constitutive of the faculty of feeling, which in turn is developed, transformed, and integrated through the faculty of desire. The faculty of desire enables us to develop, transform, and integrate these basic feelings into ways of orienting in the world by means of, and insofar as our capacities allow us to employ, associative and abstract conceptual, reasoning thought as well as through aesthetic–teleological imaginings. (More on this below.)

Now, it follows from this that constitutive of emotionally healthy, morally responsible persons—persons who are pursuing "the highest good" understood as a union of happiness (with its connection to the natural vital power) and morality (with its connection to the moral vital power)—is a commitment to truthfulness and a striving to be harmonious. That is, such persons are not constantly experiencing conflicting feelings of pleasure and pain, or having their pleasure and pain all over the place, nor are they finding themselves often or constantly numbing their pleasure and pain through affect or creating much destructive excitement through passions (in Kant's technical senses of these terms). The idea is that insofar as we use our faculty of desire well, we describe and pay attention to our most basic pleasure and pain in vitally attentive ways. We thereby learn to discern and distinguish between different objects and activities correctly, which in turn will be supportive and lead to what is morally good because, first, being morally good requires us to be able to act on maxims (subjective rules of action) truthfully. That is, being morally good is possible only if I'm able to act truthfully. Second, to act in morally good ways is to ensure that we act on universalizable maxims, namely ways consistent

with and supportive of rational being and that make space for embodied, human sociality. The predisposition to good is, in other words, constitutive of our development into moral beings. And in contrast to DeWitt's account, there are limits to what our reasoning powers can or should try to do with regard to our animality; in my account, it is central to learn to attend to and develop our animalistic pleasures well so that we can become a harmonious whole.

To illustrate these points in ways that may also show how my account is different from the more traditional rationalist interpretations as well as DeWitt's cognitive account, take a Kantian conception of learning to eat well.[92] To eat well starts for us (as newborn babies) as simply eating when we're hungry and stopping when we're full—our animalistic predisposition to self-preservation enables us to do this; we drink milk until we are full. With time, however, our move to associative thinking and then to abstract conceptual thought and aesthetic–teleological imagination develops this ability to preserve ourselves with sustenance. We develop not only such that we don't just eat when we're hungry, but we gain an ability to eat as a social practice—and, so, have many types of meals—and to make food that is creative, nutritious, aesthetically pleasing (what we like and what is aesthetically beautiful), and respectful of others (such as carnivores not serving meat to their vegetarian friends). In my view, to capture why this leads to morality concerns the way in which we are aware of what we are doing—we can describe these activities correctly—and we are thereby also aware of the kinds of value involved in doing so, and all of this strengthens our commitment to morality. That is to say, as we develop moral character, we become steadfast in our commitment to do all of this such that we are in harmony internally and so we don't find it difficult, but rather obvious, that our meals are always respectful of all our guests, and within this framework we create our wonderful meals together.

To illustrate this general idea from a different direction, a sexually loving, gendered encounter that hits all the buttons on this theory would be one involving: animality

[92] I choose this example rather than DeWitt's bacon-eating example because I think it's easier to get an impression of my theory this way. Also, for reasons explored in the book, DeWitt's bacon-eating example would involve what I there identify as basic, religious sentiments about how we need to engage the world. Hence, in the theory presented in the book, those who change from eating meat to not eating meat harmoniously would do so because of a prior, deep (religious) transformation regarding how they need to engage the world in order for their engagement to be felt (reflexively) as good.

(meeting someone one is deeply sexually attracted to, for whom one feels deep affectionate love, and with whom one feels safe), humanity (one feels truly seen by this other person and seen as wonderful, and one feels one can be oneself with that person), and personality (one feels truly respected by this other person). Then we use associative, abstract conceptual, and aesthetic and teleological imagination to develop this initial starting point into a flourishing relationship (which may or may not also involve others and/or living together, etc.). Developing our predisposition to good in human nature is therefore to learn to stand steady on our feet by realizing our faculty of desire in its fullest way, which, ultimately, involves realizing all of us within a framework that we morally own and that makes us happy. Alternatively, eating or drinking poorly—pathologically, addictively, etc.—means that we are using our capacity for choice to mess with our distinctions between pleasures and pains regarding food or drink so as to deal with aspects of our lives in a way that feels palliative (pleasant) in the moment, but is, ultimately, self-destructive. We eat or drink substances to numb or set aside unruly, difficult feelings rather than to work on them to learn to manage life better. In these ways, our animality is much more important philosophically, has patterns that are not accidents or reducible to individuality (particularity), and is more integrated into full lives than DeWitt's current and other constructivist accounts allow. I believe these features of my account yield a philosophical strength when we try to capture human sex, love, and gender.

Let me now return once again to my conception of fallen angels and the depraved wrongdoer in general, as DeWitt wants me to do, before, as Hay wants me to do, talking more about Kant's wrongdoing in particular. DeWitt suggests that the fallen angels should be thought of as having both a conception of happiness (in time only, not in both space and time) as well as moral sense, which is why she thinks holy beings (including the sage) capture the human ideal. In contrast, in my book, I propose that the angels can be thought of as not having a conception of happiness at all (as they are imagined to deliver messages from God) and that, correspondingly, Kant proposes the sage as a moral ideal agent, but not as *the* ideal human moral agent. Since I—as a heathen—don't have much knowledge

of religious texts[93]—Christian or otherwise—let me just say that my two main reasons for thinking that DeWitt's conception of fallen angels isn't yet convincing to me, are, first, that if she is right, then it's strange to me that most angels are not fallen—why *the* fallen angel is such a big deal in the religious text (unless my knowledge is faulty here)—and that angels don't experience the categorical imperative (i.e., it seems like, on DeWitt's conception, the fallen angel could choose not to be fallen any longer or to morally improve, which I thought was impossible for the fallen angel). Second, if we accept DeWitt's conception of angels, then I think they become too similar to human beings and not particularly difficult to imagine (even if a little, since they have a conception of happiness in time only)—which I had thought Kant thinks they are—and, correspondingly, they seem a little less philosophically puzzling and interesting to me. Finally on these points, if the sage really is Kant's ideal human moral agent for DeWitt, then this illustrates some of my worries regarding her current take on our animality, namely that animality doesn't do enough philosophical work in her account of rich human lives.

What about the depraved wrongdoer? I don't want to be too assertive here, since I hold it as a real possibility that I may not have listened enough to the streams of consciousness of people who have done horrific things (and I definitely experience myself as having an emotional limit here). So, instead, let me only suggest where I come from: also in my view, the wrongdoers do know, at some level, that what they are doing is wrong. They are self-deceived, and they hide what they are doing from the world. A core challenge, I find, is to capture this way in which they, at some level, do know better, which I consider essential to explain their moral responsibility for their wrongdoing. I currently believe that if we do listen to the stream of consciousness of the people who have done such awful things to others—including the horrible wrongs mentioned by DeWitt—we find that they do rationalize what they are doing. Depending on the type of wrong they are involved in, they, for example, tend to either say that the people whom they are wronging are getting what they deserve, which is prominent when the abuse is aimed at women or members of the LGBTQIA+ community, or that it is what they "really" want, which is

[93] Indeed, after a "mini-course" generously taught me by Deligiorgi after learning about my clear limitations here, I realize that I need to learn much more about angels.

common in child abuse cases and also in some cases of sexual assault (such as cis men raping lesbian women). This is consistent with them knowing, at some level, that what they are doing is wrong.

To give one example of a case that I have followed a good deal,[94] when questioned about killing children and teenagers at Utøya, Anders Behring-Breivik responded not unexpectedly (on my theory) that the killing was emotionally difficult but justified, because these people were the future leaders of the Norwegian Labor Party, as well as morally heroic and necessary to bring about a better future with less multiculturalism. When asked whether he thought himself the moral authority of life and death, he said no, and when asked about what is morally heroic about shooting defenseless children, Behring-Breivik didn't have an answer, but just mumbled that they didn't look like children, but looked older. I still believe that the incoherence of the depraved mind characteristically has such features; if you can bring the wrongdoer around to share any of their stream of consciousness at all, it will either be a passionate rant about moral heroism and their own moral greatness, or it will be quiet, stumbling, somewhat incoherent sentences like these, which occur when you call their attention to obvious contradictions, lies, or claims that make no sense whatsoever. And I believe the reasons for this are deep and reveal some of the tragic nature of such wrongdoing. As Kant says in some of his (more sensible) comments on the death penalty: truly owning that what you have done is this horrible is internally linked to feeling that you don't have a right to live any longer. My current view is that even if you have only been engaged in such wrongdoing indirectly, owning it is internally related to deep shame and thinking differently about how you have gone about central aspects of your life in ways that have involved practices of dehumanizing others. Hence, owning wrongdoing that involves a depraved heart is truly difficult for us even if doing so is central to our projects of transforming and improving human life on planet Earth.

Which is a natural transition to Hay's questions about Kant's own wrongdoing:

[94] I'm using this example because I did listen to Behring-Breivik's stream of consciousness (testimony) for the month when he was on trial for his terrorist attack at Utøya. If I had written the related article after having written my book, I could have spoken to more features of this trial as well as developed this analysis further. Still, for more on this case, see Helga Varden, "The Terrorist Attacks in Norway, July 22nd, 2011—Some Kantian Reflections" in *Norsk Filosofisk Tidsskrift/Norwegian Journal of Philosophy* 49, no. 3–4 (2014): 236–259.

what resources did he have internal to himself that he could have used to stop himself from dehumanizing women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community? Now, I don't think he did as poorly on the woman question as he did on the LGBTQIA+ issue, so let me focus only on the latter. A first resource—in fact, a red flag to him that his thinking was off—was his own anger and discomfort around non-procreative sex as well as his own dehumanizing language with regard to other human beings in this regard. Until we are able to be truthful and vulnerable about our own sexual desires, including our fears and hopes, we usually are not ready to write well philosophically about them. And, given Kant's own theory of human nature, this anger should have been alarming to him. His practical philosophy generally is, at least in the interpretation presented in my book, in line with Maggie Smith's advice to her own younger self in *Tea With the Dames* (2018): "If in doubt,"—i.e., in this context: as long as you don't know what you feel or what to say, or whether you can say something about really difficult issues in a careful way and without dehumanizing people who may be different from you—"don't." Or, as Kant says, you need to strive to "know your heart" if you want to live wisely,[95] and, of course also, write wisely as a philosopher.

A second, related resource was, I think, the one that all philosophers must use when we try to do philosophy, namely to listen to those whose lives we are describing with our theory—including those who have only what Hay calls pre-theoretical (and not technical philosophical) intuitions—with a special emphasis on their own vulnerable self-regarding intuitions. And then we can use our theories to see if we can make sense of them. If we can't, then we must improve our theories. When it comes to diversity in particular, such as that involving sexuality, religion, and ethnicity, people are profoundly different, and those who speak the loudest often don't speak for all. Again, if you're not sure, stop, think, and listen for a while longer. Also, and here I'm leaning on some of Cahill's other comments at the earlier mentioned AMC session, I believe some puzzles regarding my method in *Sex, Love, and Gender* stem from how it is written in a way that I hope would be good to read also for Kant. Kant's writings on freedom and human dignity have been tremendously important to me, and yet did fail himself, I think, and he failed me in regard to sex, love, and gender. As a philosopher, then, in these regards he failed

[95] Kant, MM, 6:441.

humanity; he was not able to love humanity, whether in himself or in general—and so he engaged in unjustifiable and terrible dehumanization. Life as a member of the LGBTQIA+ and/or polyamorous community—as a philosopher, as a Kantian, or as a human being—would have been better if Kant hadn't done what he did on these topics. Moreover, according to the theory presented in *Sex, Love, and Gender*, such serious failures come from a place of self-damage, and the more uncontrollable or deeply angry philosophers are when they write on these topics, the more serious is the damage from where these outbursts come. Moreover, my patience with Kant probably would not be possible if he were still alive and his hatred and anger were directed at me in person. After all, this part of Kant is very destructive, and he never managed to do anything about it, which is objectively very sad—as are all cases of such failure—and subjectively especially sad when it happens with someone we admire and/or is very important for us. I hope Kant would read *Sex, Love, and Gender* as a writing of a friend who appreciates all he did well and cares deeply about his philosophical legacy. To put the point from a different direction: I believe Malcom X and James Baldwin in important ways also let down the LGBTQIA+ community, but mostly in what they didn't say but could and should have said differently and better. I am grateful to them too, but not for what they weren't able to do well. In the case of Kant, maybe what I am able to do is to look him in the eye and hold him accountable with love because I too belong to the LGBTQIA+ community, and so I know his struggles from a first-person perspective. For this reason, it is easier for me to be a friend of his than it is for those who are not members of this community. And I hope that he would recognize my efforts as those of a true friend, even if he probably wouldn't like it at first.

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Karen Ng, *Hegel's Concept of Life: Self-Consciousness, Freedom, Logic*

Oxford University Press. 2020, 336 pp., $80 (hbk), ISBN: 9780190947613
Reviewed by Eliza Starbuck Little, University of Chicago

Hegel's Concept of Life: Self-Consciousness, Freedom, Logic is the eagerly anticipated first book from Karen Ng. The book's topic is the elusive Hegelian claim that there is a non-empirically derived notion of life that has a role to play in the field of logic. The book is emblematic of the recent vitalist turn in the study of German Idealism. Ng joins ranks alongside figures as diverse as Catherine Malabou and Michael Thompson in the quest to recuperate Hegel's account of organic form for a present-day philosophical audience.

The particular virtue of Ng's contribution to this conversation is her dedication to reconstructing Hegel's arguments with careful attention to the original texts, an approach that will be gratifying to readers with a historical interest. The framing of the argument is also of note. In a welcome departure from a somewhat tired trend in the literature, Ng declines to take the debate about Hegel's metaphysics as her starting point. Instead, the book is posed as an investigation into the way in which Hegel's early interest in Kant's theory of teleological judgment can be tracked forward into Hegel's later works (23).

In the most general terms, Ng's central claim is that, on Hegel's mature view, end-directed organic form is a condition of possibility on self-conscious thought (109). Pursuing this line of argument, Ng ultimately arrives in the company of the more epistemically inclined readers of Hegel—lines of argument drawn from McDowell and Redding tellingly make frequent appearances in the book's later chapters, though Pippin, the usual standard-bearer of this interpretive direction, is in less evidence—but the route she takes to this destination is largely novel.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I, entitled "Thinking Purposiveness from Kant to Hegel," describes Hegel's reception of Kant's Critique of Teleological Judgment and offers an account of how this inheritance is manifest in the development of Hegel's views on the topic of life. Ng's analysis begins with the 1802 *Differenzschrift* and carries

through to the *Phenomenology* (1807). Part II—"The Purposiveness of Thinking in Hegel's *Logic*"—then demonstrates how a proper understanding of Hegel's interest in the life problematic outlined in Part I can be brought to bear on the *Science of Logic*.

The importance of Kant's Critique of Teleological Judgment to Hegel's mature thought is widely recognized.[96] Ng's aim in beginning with this well-known material is not to offer a new view about Hegel's inheritance of Kant but, rather, to remind the reader that the relationship between judgment and purposiveness is a philosophical question originally asked and answered by Kant (64). On Ng's reading, Hegel's early dissatisfaction with the Kantian answer to this question—that is, with Kant's suggestion that teleological causation is a "regulative idea" belonging to the mind of the judging subject instead of to nature itself—remains a motivating force throughout his philosophical career.

Ng argues further that Hegel's interest in what she calls Kant's "purposiveness theme" (23) is primarily in the Kantian notion of *inner* purposiveness (55), which she equates with life (63). Thus, Hegel's mature concern with the relationship between life and self-consciousness is best understood as a direct inheritance of Kant's discussion of teleological judgment in the third *Critique*.

In chapter 3, Ng goes on to claim that life and self-consciousness are the two terms identified in Hegel's notion of "speculative identity" (68). This proposal is developed by negative appeal to Fichte and positive appeal to Schelling. Though it is no longer scandalous to propose that Schelling exerted a coherent philosophical influence on Hegel, the details of this influence remain disputed. A highlight of this chapter is Ng's proposal that Hegel draws on Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*-era notion of life in order to mount a refutation of logical solipsism (78–79).

While these early chapters are highly suggestive, at times the arguments fall short of full clarity. For example, the exact contours of the relationship that Ng's Hegel advocates for between self-consciousness and life are somewhat elusive at this stage. In

[96] Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Hegel's Appropriation of Kant's Account of Teleology in Nature." *Proceedings of the Hegel Society of America* 13 (1998): 167–88; James Kreines, "The Logic of Life: Hegel's Philosophical Defense of Teleological Explanation of Living Beings," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 344–377; Förster, Eckart, "The Significance of §§76 and 77 Of the Critique of Judgment for the Development of Post-Kantian Philosophy (Part 1)." *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 30, no. 2 (2009); and Sally Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*. 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

chapter 3, life is variously described as being a "condition" on self-consciousness (109), "constitutive" of self-consciousness (111), an "analogy" for self-consciousness (111), and a "mirror of the central features of self-consciousness" (104). A picture on which all of these descriptors hold true can certainly be imagined, but Ng's own view about how they do so is not always apparent. In a related vein, the reader is largely left to infer for herself exactly what Ng understands the "self-consciousness" that stands in contrast to life to consist in. These questions remain open until Part II.

In the book's second half, Ng turns to the *Science of Logic*. Her treatment focuses on three specific stretches of text: the section entitled "Actuality" that marks the transition from Essence to Concept, the account of judgment in "Subjectivity," and, finally, on the section at the outset of the "Absolute Idea" that deals explicitly with life. I will focus primarily on the last of these, which I take to be representative of Ng's most original and well-developed line of argument about the *Logic*.

In chapter 7, Ng links together the view of life as inner teleology sketched in Part I with the Subjective Logic's signature problem: namely, the question as to how it is that transcendental logic gives itself a content. Ng's proposal is elegant. She argues that one of the logical formal functions of life is to provide rational thought with content in the same way that the Kantian faculty of intuition provides content to the understanding. This is so partially insofar as living beings possess a capacity for sensibility (266), and partially insofar as a host of other features, such as a living being's status as both an individual (261) and a member of a genus (271), inform this capacity for sensibility. In Ng's words, the content-providing function of life is "Hegel's attempt to replace Kant's doctrine of the two stems of knowledge where[in] life and cognition take the place of intuitions and concepts" (249). In this way, Ng's detailed argument about Hegel's inheritance of Kant's theory of teleological judgment culminates in a claim about the way in which Hegel's logical notion of life responds to Kant's theory of intuition.

One of the most pressing questions that emerges in the course of the book, then, is the question of how exactly the chapter 7 view of life as a way in which intuitive content is provided by means of corporeal sensory capacities squares with the view of life as end-directed activity that is defended throughout the rest of the book. Ng gestures toward an answer to this in both her chapter 3 discussion of the *Phenomenology* (100–101) and her later discussions of the *Logic*, suggesting that life is best understood as a "schema" (270)

according to which the external world that is available to a living being's senses is somehow made congruent with that living being's purposive activity. Ng writes, "The external world is given shape (at least immediately) entirely through the lens of the needs of the subject" (270). So, just as a honeybee might parse its world in terms of honeybee-apt affordances such as pollen and nectar, a human being will parse her world in terms of human-being-apt affordances (whatever exactly those might be). This is a promising direction, though a worry arises regarding why, in the case of beings whose "needs" are informed by their rationality, it does not amount to a naturalistic version of the same logical solipsism that Ng has claimed Hegel wishes to avoid.

Some answers might be found in a reconsideration of the material that Ng treats in chapter 5. Here, Ng reads the discussion on "Subjectivity" that opens Hegel's Concept Logic as a Hegelian "critique of judgment." This leads to some interesting interpretive moves, including a compelling discussion of Hegel's own take on teleological judgment (186–200). Even so, Ng's election for a third *Critique* lens leaves many of the first *Critique* themes of the section untouched. Yet, "Subjectivity" arguably contains one of Hegel's most explicit attempts to grapple with Kantian apperception. As such, what this section has on offer is not just a critique of judgment; it is also Hegel's introduction of the subject of judgment, of his version of the synthetic unity of apperception. To my mind at least, a satisfying post-Kantian answer to the question of how it is that corporeal sensory capacities serve as an adequate constraint on cognition must eventually run through Hegel's account of apperceptive synthesis.

Ng's reading has been described elsewhere as "neo-pragmatist."[97] Yet, although topics such as "the space of reasons" and "inferentialism" do crop up, these are not ultimately the central targets of Ng's argument as I construe it. By arguing that life provides an a priori notion of corporeality, Ng makes the mature Hegel out to be more of a phenomenologist (in the twentieth-century sense) than any sort of pragmatist. In so doing, she opens up a variety of exciting new interpretive directions for mind-centered readings of Hegel.

As anyone who has spent time with Hegel's humbling theoretical texts is well

[97] Chaput, Emmanuel. "Karen Ng, Hegel's Concept of Life | CSCP / SCPC," July 15, 2020. www.c-scp.org/2020/07/15/karen-ng-hegels-concept-of-life.

aware, Ng's book is an achievement. As in any short review, I have managed to touch here on only a few of the many points of interest contained in Ng's text. The reading presented in *Hegel's Concept of Life* is an ambitious effort that announces an energizing new presence on the scene of Hegel scholarship.

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Gerad Gentry and Konstantin Pollok (eds.), *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*

Cambridge University Press. 2019, 267 pp., $33 (pbk), ISBN 1316647862

Reviewed by Laure Cahen-Maurel, Sorbonne Université

The philosophical conceptualization of the imagination, in the modern employment of the term, owes much to Kant. The Königsberg philosopher strove to shed light on the "blind though indispensable (*blind, obgleich unentbehrlich*)" (*CPR*, A78/B103) functioning of its productive power, its role in the constitution of knowledge, and its capacity to construct the real, as much as to produce the unreal or the fictional. This philosophical acknowledgement of the imagination strongly influenced Kant's immediate successors, the idealists and romantics. The idealists viewed this faculty of synthesis as one of the instruments for the completion of the system of philosophy. It is therefore not surprising to see this collected volume of eleven essays, *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, edited by Gerad Gentry and Konstantin Pollok, take its starting point from Kant (Part I). The book then traces the further history of the development of the concept of the imagination as it traverses post-Kantian philosophies, first in German idealism (Part II), and then in romanticism (Part III). In doing so, the volume adopts a tree-like structure: Kant is the main source of this philosophy of the imagination (the roots or even the trunk), of which idealism and romanticism are presented as its two branches. The principal figures considered as ramifications or offshoots of these branches are Fichte and Hegel on the side of idealism and Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher on the side of romanticism, onto which Herder is grafted, as it were. Gerad Gentry's long introduction therefore underlines the general significance and scope of the imagination, which brings the idealists and the romantics closer to Kant, despite their often fundamental differences of orientation.

However, this book does not, strictly speaking, adopt a purely historical approach to the topic. It is not simply satisfied with a series of reconstructions of the cardinal points against the background of the interpretative problems raised in the secondary literature.

One of the great merits of this volume is that it seeks to rehabilitate and take seriously the imagination in a deeply philosophical sense. In other words, it underscores how the imagination relates to reason and the discipline of philosophy itself. More specifically, for Gerad Gentry it is additionally a question of showing how the imagination ought to be of more interest to a certain "analytical" contemporary use of philosophy in the English-speaking world. The introductory remarks on the last "hundred years of [philosophical] silence" (17–18) regarding the imagination should, however, be more nuanced. Although this claim may hold to some extent with regard to Anglophone analytic philosophy, it does not apply to the tradition of twentieth-century French philosophy from Bachelard to Ricoeur via Simondon and Castoriadis.

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There are four articles in the first part of the volume devoted to the Kantian source and conception of the imagination. They treat the definition of the transcendental imagination in its twofold, semi-sensible and semi-intelligible, nature, which makes it homogeneous to both the phenomena and to the categories of the understanding. These four articles above all seek to characterize the activity of synthesis that is proper to the transcendental imagination and its different roles. Thus, the topics specifically investigated are: the operational links created *a priori*—according to Kant—between the imagination and experience (Clinton Tolley), temporality (Tobias Rosefeldt), the cooperation between sensibility and the understanding (Günter Zöller), or the different uses of reason, and how the imagination provides a more global scope for a profound understanding of human experience (Keren Gorodeisky).

The presentation of the theory of the imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is particularly complex, with its two variants from one edition to the next. The articles by Clinton Tolley and Tobias Rosefeldt examine this complexity, especially highlighting the role played by the "figurative synthesis" of the transcendental imagination in pure intuition—a role that has recently been the subject of intense debate. Clinton Tolley's reading in "Kant on the Role of the Imagination (and Images) in the Transition from Intuition to Experience" offers a middle ground between two opposing interpretative tendencies. The first type of interpretation assigns imagination only a minimal (if not

nonexistent) role in the formation of experience, on the grounds that Kant would otherwise have run up against the problem of a mere "indirect" apprehension of the objects of experience, in which a mediating image or representation enters between the thing and the mind. The second opposing type of interpretation ascribes maximum scope to the imagination by extending its role to the original production of intuitions. The imagination therefore functions from the beginning of the constitution of experience on the grounds that intuition must have an intellectual component. For Tolley, the essential contribution of the imagination is to introduce into the relationship between the mind and the thing (as the object of experience) the transition constituted by perception (*Wahrnehmung*), as an intermediate mental act between intuition and experience. The synthesis of the imagination therefore intervenes, according to this proposed thesis, not below but only *beyond* or *after* intuition: it makes "perception possible by acting on *already-formed* intuitions in order to bring about the *consciousness* of them, rather than to bring the intuitions about in the first place" (29).

In "Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time" Tobias Rosefeldt takes up this question of figurative synthesis, but he does so from the angle of temporality, whereas Kant scholarship often favors the aspect of the *a priori* intuition of space. Rosefeldt analyzes with great meticulousness an essential feature of Kantianism, according to which time is included in any empirical representation of the manifold. He attempts to understand the specificity of the figurative synthesis of the transcendental imagination in its strictly temporal elaboration. For Kant, even if intuitively grasping the flow of time presupposes spatializing it—e.g., conferring a spatial extension on time by representing it through the activity of drawing a straight line—in this work of the imagination inherent in the pure intuition of time we find an articulation of two levels of synthesis. To intuit time is not just to synthesize and bring the various parts back to a whole; it is also to apprehend the parts as being articulated according to a succession, or linking the parts successively to each other to create the whole. This enables us to understand that the *a priori* intuition of time is not the observation of a content immediately appearing in our consciousness, but the *product* of our imaginative activity. Thus, the temporality of our representations of the world is carried out *in* and *through* the imagination.

Günter Zöller's contribution, "'The Faculty of Intuitions *A Priori*.' Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination," focuses on the unstable positioning of the

imagination between sensibility and understanding. His article broadens the previous perspectives in Part I by considering, in addition to the first *Critique*, the text *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. His goal is to reexamine the functional relationship of homogeneity or affinity—the *Anthropology* uses chemical affinities as a metaphor for the synthesis of the productive imagination—that the imagination maintains on the one hand with understanding, on the other hand with sensibility. The functionalist treatment of the status of the imagination is contrasted with a substantialist reading: the former avoids the pitfall of an old dogmatic psychology of a substantial self or soul, but also avoids the enigmatic difficulties encountered when thinking about the status of the imagination in more substantial terms. In this regard, Zöller strives to demystify what he considers to be the misleading and nevertheless tenacious image (because it is apparently confirmed by the "letter" of the first *Critique*) of the imagination as the original unity of the cognitive faculties of the human mind in which the two heterogeneous sources of knowledge—sensibility and understanding—are obscurely rooted. Stripping away the productive power of the imagination, as Kant conceives it, from the roles of foundation or mediation between the finite and the infinite that it assumed after him in the systems of Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel, Zöller reminds us that for Kant it is the *original separation* of intuition and understanding—an essential manifestation of human finitude—that renders the work of the imagination necessary. With the specific notion of the productive imagination, Kant therefore seeks to place at the heart of his epistemology another mode of congruence between sensibility and understanding, which is neither a reduction of duality to the underlying unity of a "common but to us unknown root" (*CPR*, A15/B29), nor a dialectical reconciliation of the duality by means of a third distinct term. On the contrary, this new product of the imagination results from combining the two "elements" or sources, sensibility and understanding, into a *compound*. The imagination must rely on the particular (pure or empirical) data of sensibility that it fixes and synthesizes into a whole: this generates an *image*. Conversely, it also depends on the general forms of understanding and its spontaneity and guiding force to be more than a simple receptivity or passive capacity (*Fähigkeit*) of perception, i.e., in order to become an *active* faculty (*Vermögen*) of intuition.

The originality of Zöller's contribution is not just that it furnishes an account of the

positioning of the imagination between these two sources of knowledge, but that it differentiates the "productive" imagination from a so-called "creative" imagination in Kant's philosophy (80–81)—a distinction disappearing in Fichte, insofar as he often uses the two adjectives interchangeably. Kant's epigenetic metaphor of "production" or generation is an integral part of this metaphorical network of associating the imagination with chemistry and biology, both in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. The conceptual implications of this metaphor are: the imagination in Kantian epistemology is productive rather than creative because the imagination does not form an original synthesis starting from nothing, a creation *ex nihilo*, but it develops the dispositions contained in germ in the double source on which it depends into new forms.

Equally enlightening is the further broadening of the perspective in Keren Gorodeisky's contribution, "Unity in Variety: Theoretical, Practical, and Aesthetic Reason in Kant." It concerns the transition from the question of the unification of the two heterogeneous sources of knowledge to that of the unification of the three heterogeneous (theoretical, practical, and aesthetic) uses of reason. According to the author, the imagination is the common element among these uses of reason that Kant considers to be of an essentially different order and nature. Each of them respectively follows different norms and is constituted by a specific act—assent or belief (theoretical reason), intention or determination of the ends of an action (practical reason), or feeling of pleasure or displeasure (aesthetic reason). This series of the different deployments of reason is nonetheless homogeneous in that it relates to the same principle of transcendental, and therefore universal, lawfulness, i.e., to the same imaginative dimension of shaping the particular according to laws.

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Part II of the book concerns the imagination in German idealism and opens with an article by Johannes Haag: "Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early *Wissenschafts-lehre*." This brings us back to the key question of the role of the imagination in the constitution of the objects of experience treated in the Part I by Clinton Tolley in relation to Kant's epistemology. For Johannes Haag, it is precisely this paradox that every

transcendental philosophy must account for: if the concept of the object can only be derived from that of the subject, what happens to the object? Haag refers to the problem as it was first formulated in Salomon Maimon: "How can any philosophy validate a reference to objects that are taken to exist independently of subjective experience … while, at the same time, maintaining that there is ultimately nothing but the activity of an experiencing subject as a ground for the objective reference?" (109). As in Kant, the Fichtean solution to this paradox requires a more accurate appreciation of the role played by the imagination in our cognition. To this end, Johannes Haag provides an in-depth and technical examination of the original act of synthesis that Fichte attributes to the productive imagination in the "Deduction of Representation," which constitutes the heart of the fourth section of the 1794/95 *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (*Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) dealing with the interaction between the I and the Not-I. However, the imagination here is more than a mere "mediating" entity standing between the real and the ideal or the sensible and the intelligible: it is the spatio-temporal "medium" for the interactions of the I with the Not-I as substances and the very foundation of their concrete reality. Because of its indeterminate "hovering" or "oscillation" (*Schweben*) between two opposites, i.e., its living and acting presence underpinning logic as well as the concept and subject/object divide, the productive imagination is indeed for Fichte that synthetic power able to bring together again what the intellect separates. In so doing, it confers a concrete limit on two absolute and mutually exclusive terms in themselves (abstractly). In this respect, Haag diverges from the position of Günter Zöller, insofar as Haag considers the Fichtean analysis of the power of the imagination to be perfectly in line with the "spirit" of Kantianism.

The next two articles in the book also seek to bring out this Kantian heritage in the Hegelian conceptualization of the imagination. Meghant Sudan's well-written and engaging text, "The Kantian Roots of Hegel's Theory of the Imagination," draws a parallel between the reflections on the imagination in Kant's first *Critique* and Hegel's treatment of the imagination in the "psychology" section of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Sudan considers this rapprochement to be justified in the sense "that both theories of the imagination were equally invested in following the trail of self-consciousness to an account of integrated subjectivity" (129). In other words, this is a form of subjectivity that integrates receptivity and reflection into a single whole. Gerad

Gentry, for his part, re-examines Hegel's acknowledgment of the importance of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. According to Gentry, Hegel's pure speculative principle or "the very logical structure by which absolute reason grounds itself as a dialectically self-determining movement" (22) directly draws on the way in which Kant treats the theme of the imagination as "free lawfulness" and "purposiveness without a purpose" in the 3rd *Critique*. This chapter seeks to extend certain passages from the general introduction to the volume (sections 2.3. and 3.4. of the introduction).

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Finally, Part III of the volume is devoted to German romanticism. It considers the imagination from two complementary angles: from the hermeneutic and poetic/artistic points of view. Michael N. Forster's chapter, "Imagination and Interpretation: Herder's Concept of *Einfühlung*," directly questions the Wittgenstein-inspired and anti-psychologism of contemporary Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language. He attempts to show how the empathic imagination in Herder is of decisive importance and part of a hermeneutic method. Herder's imaginative *Einfühlung* (for instance in *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity*) plays a heuristic role in the general understanding of history and language. These reflections on the gnoseological significance of the Herderian concept of *Einfühlung* (empathy) take us from transcendentalism and speculation to a more empirical approach to philosophy. This leads from the heights of abstract and disembodied thought back down to an anthropology of the human being that takes into account a set of particular experiences of consciousness (sensations and feelings, as well as judgments). This concerns a plurality of individual experiences that are located and dispersed throughout historical periods and are entirely distinct from one individual to another. The empathic relationship by which the imagination brings us into contact with other people is far from a mere projection of our selves onto others. It allows an accurate knowledge of what is or has been immediately present to others—the "images" they have seen, what they have felt or represented to themselves. Consequently, imaginative *Einfühlung* gives us access to a *content* of consciousness without it having to be a personal experience of my own inner life: "We are capable of a type of imaginative access to another person's (perceptual and affective)

sensations that falls short of being the sort of *committed possession* of sensations that usually underlies our understanding of our own concepts, but that is nonetheless sufficient to support understanding" (187).

These considerations on empathy and imagination in Herder's work seamlessly lead to Kristin Gjesdal's chapter: "Imagination, Divination, and Sympathy: Schleiermacher and the Hermeneutics of the Second Person." Gjesdal discusses Gadamer's interpretation of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics of the "I" and the "You." Gadamer was one of the first to criticize romantic hermeneutics and the irreducibility of the second person to a cultural community, context, or tradition. According to Gjesdal, however, Gadamer is incorrect in attributing to Schleiermacher a "romanticization" or aestheticization of the understanding based on the uncritical idea of a "congeniality" outside of any hermeneutical method. It was not this supposedly distorted version of the teachings of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that contributed to the development of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory. Rather, it was the reception of Herder's empiricism and its technical conception of the hermeneutic significance of sympathy or empathy as a form of "divination" of the mind of another person. Gjesdal maintains that this imaginative and intersubjective method of divination, properly understood, could provide a philosophically viable alternative to the hermeneutics of Gadamer, which had been inspired by the Hegelian-Heideggerian thesis of the precedence of the community over the individual.

The volume concludes with an analysis of the romantic imagination from the perspective of poetry and the symbolic imagination as it is found in artistic practice. Whereas the discussions on empathy moved us out of the realm of transcendentalism and speculative philosophy, Allen Speight analyzes the specific points of convergence between German romanticism and idealism. He compares the thought of Hegel and Friedrich Schlegel in the final chapter, entitled: "Art, Imagination, and the Interpretation of the Age: Hegel and Schlegel on the New Status of Art and Its Connection to Religion and Philosophy." However, his article explores more the status of art than the actual activity of the aesthetic and artistic imagination as such. The latter is the subject of the penultimate contribution: "Poetry and Imagination in Fichte and the Early German Romantics: A Reassessment," by Elizabeth Millán Brusslan. Her chapter revisits the question of the legacy of Fichte's theory of the power of imagination in the romantic

valorization of poetry, which was reciprocally accompanied by a poetization of philosophy. This reassessment is made in the light of recent work on the debate surrounding the place of aesthetics in Fichte's work (e.g., in Claude Piché, Daniel Breazeale, or Ives Radrizzani). Elizabeth Millán Brusslan's article marks a real hesitation as to whether or not there is room for aesthetics and poetry in Fichte's philosophy, and ultimately prefers to join the camp of the supporters of a reading of Fichteanism that excludes it from his system: "For others (and this position still tempts me), the lack of an aesthetic theory in Fichte's work is the result of deeper systematic commitments that excluded the development of aesthetic theory" (213). According to Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, the Fichtean goal of grounding philosophy on an absolutely certain first principle from which the whole of knowledge could be deduced, does not leave sufficient room for the free play of the imagination (proper to poetic inspiration) with the understanding. According to her interpretation, this is the reproach that the early German Romantics, Friedrich Schlegel in particular, made against Fichte's philosophy.

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The main outcome of this collection of essays is that taking the imagination seriously ultimately comes down to defining its significance and determining its role in the various forms and multiple modes of congruence between the ideal and the real. That is to say, the manner in which we can philosophically talk about an object outside of a subject, how we intuit time *a priori*, or the way in which the receptivity of the subject integrates itself into the order of reflexivity; the links that are interwoven between two individuals allowing them to understand and speak to each other; the animation and play of the faculties of the human mind in poetic inspiration—these are just some among many examples in which this book renews and deepens our philosophical reflections on the power of the imagination. It insightfully shows that the real and the ideal are not necessarily immediately harmonious, but that an artistic and philosophical unity is often only attained after passing through the work of contradiction, distance, and tension.

Of course, a volume of this kind cannot exhaustively treat all the thinkers of the imagination in German philosophy around 1800. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that in such a volume, the conceptions of two major figures in idealism and romanticism,

Schelling and Novalis, are only marginally addressed. Although Schelling is included in the very opening words of the introduction, which devotes a short overview to the significance of the aesthetic imagination in Schelling alongside other key personalities from this period, such as Hölderlin, Schiller, and Goethe, his philosophy is not treated in more detail in the contributions. As for Novalis's philosophy, it remains a real lacuna in the book. In spite of these reservations, we can agree with the editors of the volume that the historical and systematic examinations proposed in the book form a solid foundation and introduction to an oft-misunderstood topic. It is especially heartening to see the inclusion of the romantic tradition in these essays, a movement that is frequently only integrated with reluctance into the history of philosophy.

I would argue that fruitful avenues of future research into the imagination lie precisely at the intersection of the German idealists and the romantic philosophers. For example, a reading that attempts to account for the concrete and practical work of the imagination within the system of reason should especially reexamine and return to Fichte's two published texts: the 1794/95 *Foundation* and his 1795/1800 *On the Spirit and Letter in Philosophy*. For a long time the former text was overlooked and regarded as purely abstract and speculative, while the latter text was dismissed as merely "popular" and its philosophical value underestimated. A closer appreciation of the transformed Kantian heritage of the productive imagination in these two Fichte texts provides ample textual support for the claim that there is a specific place for aesthetics and for reflections on art in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Indeed, it could be said that Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is even able to account for the particular fine arts, such as poetry, music, sculpture, and drama, in all their diversity. Admittedly, this artistic form of the imagination is initially *hidden* in Fichte's system. This is not surprising, for this strictly accords with Kant's own idea of the imagination as "a hidden art (*eine verborgene Kunst*) in the depths of the human soul" (*CPR*, B180), and also with the above-quoted characterization of the "blind though indispensable (*blind, obgleich unentbehrlich*)" functioning of its productive power, "without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious" (*CPR*, A78/B103). This unknown and misunderstood function of the productive imagination is explicitly and repeatedly underscored by Fichte. Indeed, as Johannes Haag points out in his chapter (117), the faculty of the productive imagination enters the scene in Fichte's 1794/95 *Foundation* as an anonymous or unnamed faculty,

under the periphrasis: "the most wondrous power of the self." This is because the productive imagination first works in the shadows, so to speak. Revealing what it does in broad daylight therefore presupposes the performative or pragmatic nature of an imagination in action. In other words, one must employ one's own imagination in order to grasp both the imagination and its artistic and philosophical products. It is then understandable why Fichte's aesthetics is not explicitly outlined or completely deduced in transcendental terms but is mostly an implicit form of aesthetics. That is intentional, in my opinion. This thought is then taken up by romantic philosophers such as Novalis, who strove to "Fichticize better than Fichte himself." This amounts to nothing more than making explicit the implicit and internal productive work of the imagination in the Fichtean sense, by fully externalizing it in the form of poetic works and in a more artistic style of philosophizing.

Sandra Shapshay, *Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Ethics: Hope, Compassion, and Animal Welfare*

Oxford University Press, 2019, 248pp., $78, ISBN 9780190906801

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In *Beyond Good and Evil* 186, Nietzsche jokes, "Schopenhauer, though a pessimist, really played the flute. Every day, after dinner … incidentally: a pessimist, one who denies God and the world but comes to a stop before morality—who affirms morality and plays the flute … [I]s that really—a pessimist?" At the heart of Nietzsche's joke is the suspicion that a fundamental tension is buried within Schopenhauer's system, a tension between his pessimism and his ethics. Sandra Shapshay's *Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Ethics* provides a compelling and first-of-its-kind confirmation of Nietzsche's (yet) unexplored, dormant suspicion.

Like Nietzsche, Shapshay challenges the dominant interpretation of Schopenhauer as a consistent pessimist, a "Knight of Despair." Shapshay's thesis is that alongside the familiar curmudgeon there's another Schopenhauer, a "Knight with Hope," who (a) is preferable even on Schopenhauerian grounds to his pessimistic counterpart; and (b) provides a novel moral philosophy that, suitably reconstructed, should be of "significant contemporary interest" (41). Shapshay's book, in my estimation, mounts a successful argument and offers numerous original insights and clarifications into Schopenhauer's system that repay close reading and engagement for any philosopher who is interested in ethics or German idealism. The goal of this review is to outline Shapshay's argument by explicating the main content of each chapter. I see chapters 1–3 as forming the largely "negative" part of Shapshay's project, while chapters 4–5 constitute the "positive" part. The former chapters clear the ground for Shapshay's new reading, the latter chapters develop the details of Schopenhauer's "compassionate moral realism."

First, a crucial clarification. There's a wealth of evidence for Schopenhauer *qua* Knight of Despair; and Shapshay doesn't deny this, of course. Her thesis, rather, is that we should read Schopenhauer as (implicitly) offering *two* competing and incompatible ethical ideals, especially in his post-1830 writings (39). The canonical view is that Schopenhauer has only one ultimate ethical ideal: ascetic resignationism, or denial of the

will-to-live.[98] For the canonical Schopenhauer, compassionate moral action, while better than egoism, remains epistemically and ethically deficient since it is guided by the fallacious optimistic assumption that life and existence could be significantly improved and perhaps even worthwhile. But, because all suffering is rooted in the affirmation of the will, the appropriate ethical response upon recognition of this fundamental truth is renunciation of the will itself. Compassion's primary value, for the canonical Schopenhauer, lies in its *instrumental* capacity to place us on the road toward this resignationist end, e.g., centering our attention on the immensity and depth of earthly agony prepares us for the "final act" of life-denial.

Chapter 1 provides a compelling case for the prospects of a "Two Schopenhauers" view over and against the canonical "One Schopenhauer" view. The highlight of the chapter is Shapshay's brilliant analysis of Schopenhauer's moral principle in *On the Basis of Morality* (1839/1841): "Harm no one; rather help everyone to the extent you can." If we adopt the canonical, instrumentalist reading, Shapshay argues, Schopenhauer's principle lapses into paradox, and that's because the two parts of the principle are *incompatible* with one another. If, as Schopenhauer claims, the will-to-live locks living beings inevitably and fundamentally into a painful competition with one another, then it's impossible to affirm the will *and* satisfy the principle's first half, "Harm no one." The only option is renunciation of the will-to-live. But if one renounces the will-to-live, then it becomes impossible to satisfy the principle's second half: caring about and alleviating the suffering of others ("help") as far as possible. Moreover, compassion tends to frustrate the ends of renunciation. The alleviation of suffering is far less likely to prompt denial of the will-to-live than to reinvigorate hope in the possibility of progress. Thus, the "One Schopenhauer" instrumentalist reading "*masks a fundamental conflict at the heart of Schopenhauer's ethical thought:* Renunciation is likely hindered by many acts of compassion; and compassionate action is likely undermined by renunciation" (32). Shapshay's suggestion, then, is that Schopenhauer's philosophy should be interpreted as offering two incompatible ethical ideals—compassion and resignation—rather than

[98] See for instance Julian Young, *Willing and Unwilling* (Leiden: Martinus Nijoff Publishing, 1987)*;* John Atwell, *Schopenhauer on the Character of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)*;* David E. Cartwright, "Schopenhauer on the Value of Compassion," in *A Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Bart Vandenabeele (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

claiming compassion is a mere instrument for resignation. It is essential to note, though, that Shapshay does *not* think Schopenhauer's non-pessimistic ideal signals a transition to philosophical optimism. Even for the Knight with Hope, the world is still filled with undeserved, irredeemable, profound suffering, but significant improvement is possible, though never guaranteed. Shapshay's view, therefore, preserves one of the most attractive elements (in my mind) of Schopenhauer's ethics, i.e., the significance of *recognizing or bearing witness to suffering* rather than ignoring, denying, distorting, or "explaining it away" (e.g., as "sin"), but *without* succumbing to the equally unattractive, passivity-inducing, responsibility-shirking trap of hopelessness about the possibility of alleviating this suffering.

Shapshay doesn't think Schopenhauer was aware of these tensions. The latent transition toward hope, she argues, emerges as his philosophical system develops—although these developments are implicitly present rather than explicitly acknowledged. Shapshay thus defies the common assumption that Schopenhauer's philosophy remained static and unchanged after 1819, when WWR I was published, and this adds another interesting and novel layer to the book. Chapter 2's task is to outline the developments that are most relevant to Schopenhauer's pessimism, the most important one being Schopenhauer's abandonment of the Platonic Ideas as metaphysical explanatory posits for biological phenomena (e.g., species emergence). They are conspicuously absent, for instance, in *On the Will in Nature* (1836). Schopenhauer eventually realized, Shapshay suggests, that proto-Darwinian evolutionary science better explains these phenomena, thereby rendering the Ideas superfluous.[99] As Shapshay argues, in jettisoning the Ideas, the central plank of Schopenhauer's pessimism is undercut, namely the claim that life cannot be substantially improved in time. The metaphysical Ideas are static, timeless, changeless, fixed entities that constitute the character or essence of natural kinds, including humanity itself, and hence place limitations on the possibility of change; if humanity's "essence" necessitates it to suffer endlessly from unfulfilled desire and the self-inflicted harms of egoism and malice, then there's no hope for changing humanity's

[99] Schopenhauer does not dispose of the Ideas in his aesthetic theory, however, as Shapshay notes. The Ideas in his aesthetics ("Ideas B," in Shapshay's coinage) are not meant to be understood as the timeless, changeless essences of their objects. Shapshay follows Julian Young's suggestion that the aesthetic Ideas are special *representations* of their objects.

lot. Thus, once Schopenhauer eschews the Ideas, the possibility of change—change for the better—in humanity's character (in species and individuals) becomes an open possibility. But, is eschewing the Ideas sufficient? Doesn't the irredeemable suffering of the world come primarily from its metaphysical essence as will rather than the "objectivation" of this essence in the Ideas? Here, too, Shapshay emphasizes Schopenhauer's philosophical development, i.e., the "immanent" rather than "transcendent" account of his metaphysics that he develops in chapter 17 of WWR II. Schopenhauer's immanent metaphysics of will is offered as an *interpretation* of the "riddle" of the world; it is an interpretation that is meant to cohere with and start from empirical and first-personal experience, not to capture an absolute, transcendent, foundationalist truth about the thing-in-itself. In light of these developments, Schopenhauer's system loses much of the *a priori* grounds that are necessary to support his pessimism; and, hence, the possibility of hope appears on the Schopenhauerian horizon.[100]

Chapter 3 is devoted to another challenge that faces the "Two Schopenhauers" view, or indeed, for the view that Schopenhauer offers a prescriptive ethics at all. Schopenhauer is often read as a hard determinist (FW 83). If humans are determined to act in a fixed way given psycho–physical laws, then they shouldn't be held responsible for their actions and there's no sense in expecting them to be moved or changed by moral or rational considerations. Shapshay's view is that Schopenhauer was never a hard determinist; from his dissertation onwards, he embraced a kind of Kantian compatibilism.[101] The "specter of Kantianism," in Shapshay's phrase, haunts the Schopenhauerian corpus (104). True, Schopenhauer does "officially" claim in an anti-Kantian fashion that reason is entirely subordinate to the will, but the *unofficial* view that emerges in his writing is that rationality ("intellect") can manifest a kind of free (albeit mysterious) spontaneity that bears on our empirical character, e.g., in certain cases of the

[100] Schopenhauer has another argument from pessimism that rides on the claim that desire springs from lack and is therefore always painful. Shapshay says that even on this point, Schopenhauer's system does not provide a solid footing, since desire "is not a synthetic a priori concept; it is, rather, an empirical one" (75). For Schopenhauer, the content of empirical concepts comes from intuition—and people's experience of desire is not univocally painful. So, the argument from desire fails on *Schopenhauerian* grounds as well.

[101] Schopenhauer held a "two worlds" view in his dissertation whereby the intelligible character exerts a causal influence on the empirical character, but he shifts to a "two aspect" view later on, i.e., the view that empirical character is an objectification or expression of the intelligible character.

ascetic's denial of the will and in the aesthetic experience of the sublime. The main importance of this chapter for the argument of the book, I think, is that it provides further support for Shapshay's thesis that Schopenhauer's system accommodates humanity's capacity to (freely) resist some of the main wellsprings of suffering, especially the human tendency toward egoism and malice: "Man's worst enemy is man" (WWR II, 594).

If Shapshay is right, the developments in Schopenhauer's system, along with his career-long commitment to a kind of Kantian compatibilism, explains the more hopeful tones that appear in his later works; they signal an implicit recognition of the possibility for moral progress. He comments, for instance, about the need for overturning brutal social institutions such as the slave trade and even the emergent Dickensian industrial capitalism of English factories (WWR II, 578); he even expresses hope about improving the lives of non-human animals. Chapter 4 excavates and reconstructs the moral theory that, Shapshay claims, animates the views of this "Knight with Hope." The view that emerges—compassionate moral realism—is a fascinating hybrid of Kantianism and Sentimentalism. In a sentimentalist vein, Schopenhauer grounds morality in the feeling of compassion [*Mitleid*], or the feeling of suffering *with* another. In Schopenhauer's account, compassion is an immediate, non-egoistic feeling that aims at the welfare of a particular other and reliably motivates morally good action. The core of Schopenhauer's account, though, is the "metaphysical" import that he attributes to compassion. For the "Knight with Hope," the compassionate person really is morally superior to her egoistic counterpart because compassion *tracks the positive inherent value* of its object. The feeling of compassion plays a distinctive epistemic role; it makes the phenomenal world "light up" normatively by attuning us to the "eternal essence that is present in everything that has life, and that shines with unfathomable significance from all eyes that see the light of the sun!" (OBM 162; cf. OBM 227). The compassionate person, in Shapshay's reconstruction, recognizes intuitively the inherent value of sentient beings as fellow creatures, or as beings who are *subjects*, "microcosms," beings who "have a world." Indeed, for Schopenhauer, this inherent value can only be known intuitively through the feeling of compassion (WWR I, 394). Schopenhauer, then, maintains the Kantian commitment to treating and viewing individuals as ends-in-themselves. His decisive break with Kant is that (1) feeling, rather than reason, drives his moral epistemology, and (2) he takes sentience rather than rationality to be the proper benchmark for moral

considerability; and this in turn undercuts the sharp distinction between the moral worth of humans and non-human animals.

For Shapshay, then, Schopenhauer's claim that the compassionate individual "sees through the illusion of individuation" and into the "identity" or shared essence of living beings means that she recognizes the "unfathomable significance" she accords to herself should also be accorded to other sentient "microcosms" who share the same essence as herself. This, however, conflicts with several available interpretations of the metaphysical insight that's embedded in compassion. Christopher Janaway (2007), for instance, argues that the ultimate insight is that we are all equally intrinsically *worthless* from the "point of view of the universe"; none of us have any real significance at all. This, of course, fits better with the Knight of Despair since it's the kind of insight that would pave the road to resignationism. Shapshay's response is decisive: If the compassionate agent intuits the worthlessness of all living beings, then she wouldn't, *pace* Schopenhauer's explicit claim, be motivated to act on that compassion at all (180). But, finally, what about the more common interpretation of the metaphysical insight, i.e., that compassion recognizes the unity of all beings as numerically one and the same will? Compassion pierces through the veil of *principium individuationis* and annihilates the difference between the "I" and "not-I" altogether. Schopenhauer does develop this view in several places, as Shapshay notes. Perhaps its most crucial philosophical weakness, though—and I say this in further support of Shapshay—is that it threatens to reduce compassion into egoism. If the compassionate agent ultimately just sees himself in everyone, then, *pace* Schopenhauer once more, he never acts on behalf of others at all; his concern starts and ends always only with the "dear (metaphysical) self." Thus, the common metaphysical interpretation contradicts the *moral* value and possibility of compassion itself, which, as Shapshay says, expresses "a keen sense of the *separateness* of the other" (154). Or in Schopenhauer's words, "we feel his pain as *his*, and do not imagine it is ours" (OBM, 203).

"Schopenhauer's value ontology and the epistemic role of compassion in revealing it," Shapshay writes, "is the most important contribution Schopenhauer makes to the history of ethics" (174). But her reconstruction also includes a fair bit of critique. For instance, she criticizes Schopenhauer's view that compassion is both necessary and sufficient for an action to have moral worth. Sometimes, she claims, compassion might

be entirely unnecessary (e.g., a deliberating juror); while, in other cases, rational reflection is needed in order to figure out the right action. Indeed, chapter 5 probes the role that reason plays in Schopenhauer's ethics. Although Schopenhauer's tendency is to deemphasize and demote reason, Shapshay argues that he "obliquely acknowledges" reason's essential role in morality—it is needed for the formulation of his moral principle and (often) for its proper application, for example (200). Compassion is a finite resource, and Schopenhauer's principle, "Harm no one; rather help everyone to the extent you can" is meant to function as a *reservoir* of compassion. Reason can "channel" this precious moral resource when compassion ceases to flow on its own; it can remind people to uphold morality, even in the absence of the emotion that resides in its foundation.

The greatest merit of Shapshay's *Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Ethics* is that it enables one to read Schopenhauer in a completely new way. It opens up possibilities for rethinking Schopenhauer's relevance and place in the history of ethics, e.g., as a thinker caught between Kantianism and Humeanism, as well as a progenitor for views espoused, for instance, by Cora Diamond (1978). In closing, then, I would like to pose a few open-ended questions for future research. First, I sense there could be more to say about the nature and character of Schopenhauerian *hope*. For instance, what are the distinctive cognitive and conative components of Schopenhauerian hope? How does Schopenhauerian hope square with Schopenhauer's anti-utilitarian claim that, even if "thousands had lived in happiness and joy [this] would never do away with the anguish and death-agony of one individual" (WWR II, 576) or the justification and meaningfulness of life? Schopenhauerian hope may prove to be unique in the history of philosophy: it would have to be separated from religious faith, philosophical optimism, and other pernicious forms of hopefulness that Schopenhauer identifies; and it would also need to be distinguished from the hope for salvation evinced by the "Knight of Despair" (WWR I, 439).

Second, Shapshay attributes to Schopenhauer the view that there are *degrees* of inherent value. All sentient creatures deserve moral consideration, but some deserve more consideration than others. The more "complex" sentient creatures (humans), for instance, rank above less complex sentient ones (lizard); and non-sentient beings, e.g., plants, rivers, rocks, etc., aren't proper objects for moral consideration at all. This, as Shapshay notes, fits with Schopenhauer's tendency to "rank" phenomena and with his

views on compassion—compassion is incoherent if it's directed toward beings who themselves don't "have a world," or who don't have the capacity to *care* about their condition. Yet this hierarchical view raises a difficult ethical question: what would Schopenhauer say about so-called "marginal cases," e.g., children born with anencephaly or serious cognitive disabilities? Schopenhauer, of course, *never* suggests that any person is less worthy of moral consideration than another, as Shapshay notes (190), but we're left wondering how this egalitarianism fits with his hierarchical value ontology. Likewise, if we are reconstructing Schopenhauer, perhaps it is worth further probing the prospects of a more biocentric, holistic, or an even more radically panpsychist reading.[102] Shapshay suggests that non-sentient beings can only have aesthetic rather than moral value. Perhaps, though, plants or even mountains may have morally significant positive inherent value as well? This wouldn't imply they are owed the same *treatment* as sentient creatures, but it would accommodate the intuition that there is something morally wrong with destroying plants, trees, and the natural environment independently of the effects on human and non-human animals.[103]

Third, Shapshay notes that Schopenhauer critiques the Kantian idea that ethics is "imperatival," or that there are deontic laws that people *ought* to follow. But, she claims, Schopenhauer's ethics remains prescriptive rather than being merely descriptive. Nevertheless, the sense in which Schopenhauer's ethics is prescriptive remains somewhat mysterious to me, especially in light of Shapshay's claim that living in accordance with Schopenhauer's principle may be "extremely demanding" (27). The sense in which Schopenhauer's ethics can be "demanding" is certainly worth further investigation.

Schopenhauer, as Shapshay says, did not develop a full-fledged normative theory (150); his primary concern was furnishing the foundation of morality. But Shapshay's book nevertheless successfully prepares the ground for taking Schopenhauer beyond Schopenhauer himself. Consequently, for a book that already faces the tough challenge of convincing its readers that Schopenhauer is not the curmudgeon we have all become

[102] Gary Varner, "The Schopenhauerian Challenge," *Environmental Ethics* 7 (1985): 209–229, pursues a more radical environmentalist reading of Schopenhauer, and Freya Mathews, *Love of Matter: A Contemporary Panpsychism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003) develops an interesting Schopenhauer-inspired panpsychist moral philosophy.

[103] The classic argument for this is in Richard Routley's 1973 article, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?" *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy*, Varna 1 (1973): 205–210.

accustomed to reading him as, I think that *Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Ethics* is a remarkable achievement that should revitalize contemporary interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy in an era that, surely, needs a lot more compassion—both for human and non-human animals—than is currently being shown.

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Dilek Huseyinzadegan, *Kant's Nonideal Theory of Politics*

Northwestern University Press, 2019, 216 pp., $34.95, ISBN 978-0-8101-3987-9

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In Dilek Huseyinzadegan's analysis of Kant's "impure" politics, what we have is a startling, innovative, and ultimately convincing portrait of Kant's systematic attention to the material conditions underlying the everyday world of political subjects.

Much as theorists have sought to enrich scholarly discussions of Kant's moral philosophy by way of attention to Kant's "practical anthropology"—the empirical counterpart to an *a priori* formal account of morals—in this book Huseyinzadegan provides us with a parallel look at Kant's "political anthropology." By paying close attention to Kant's systematic appeal to a teleological, heuristic, and regulative approach to the nonideal political conditions faced by political subjects, what we discover is not just a robust counterpart to his better-known ideal theory, but indeed a set of orientational tools or maps by which we might hope to better navigate the transition from politics to morals. Teleology provides reason with a "compass," as Huseyinzadegan puts it, ready to guide us as we set out on our political adventure.

Huseyinzadegan's investigation has three parts to it, with specific attention to Kant's discussion of political history, culture, and geography. There are, however, throughlines across the whole when it comes to the largest points the author is trying to make. The first of these is directed toward the specialist community of political theorists who take Kant's ideal theory as their point of departure. Regarding this set of interpreters, the author is at pains to demonstrate again and again not only the importance and centrality of nonideal considerations for understanding Kant's system, but, and in particular, to show that it is these material conditions, rather than the categorical imperative or some other form of ideal moral reasoning, that are the real-life drivers behind much of Kant's political analysis.

A separate track to follow across the contours of the book is the one that stops at each of the sites where Kant's own location becomes clear: Kant's is not a view from nowhere, in other words, and his historical context, his gender, class, and race, and especially his perspective as a European, are the nonideal conditions driving Kant's

theory. To those focused on the ideal theory to the exclusion of empirical considerations the author says: "History, culture, and geography matter to Kant." However, the proof for this lies not only in the many careful readings assembled across the course of Huseyinzadegan's investigation, but in the revelation that Kant was himself entirely beholden to his own nonideal point of view. This line of argumentation in the book was convincing and the textual evidence irrefutable. Less convincing was the positive project meant to emerge in the wake of it.

That is to say that although Huseyinzadegan is continually optimistic regarding the options opened up for politics once we acknowledge and set aside Kant's Eurocentrism—a new political space wherein multiple histories, cultures, and political points of view would be nonhierarchically counted and heard—it is hard to recognize much of Kant anywhere in this revamped version of his theory. If the takeaway here is to see that the tools that built the master's house: the "compass" provided by a teleology of progress, the universal history that requires us to adopt Europe's "culture of skill" for the moral advancement of mankind, the hospitality that demands Europe's right to trade with the global South, and so on—if these now need to be discarded for the Eurocentric perspectives they entail, then it is not at all clear what is left to be retrofitted for better purpose. Indeed, the sense that we might just need to discard this part of Kant's position while hanging on to the ideal theory might be one, albeit unintended, conclusion to draw from this well-documented account.

Of course, this type of conclusion introduces its own problems, since it invites the demand from Charles Mills and others that we plausibly defend any criteria used for determining hard boundaries between ideal and nonideal positions in Kant, while ensuring also that no cross-contamination from the so-called "tainted" parts has taken place—a demand that Kantians have so far been unable to meet, with determinate boundaries replaced instead by arbitrarily imposed lines suggested between the Critical/Precritical, Early/Late, Real/Incidental, and Published/Unpublished writings by Kant. With the easy identification of Kant's dismissive attitude toward lazy islanders on display in central works such as 1785's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* or even just the casual racism at work in his discussion of humor in the third *Critique* (5:333), a body of evidence has demonstrated that the infection has indeed spread to even

the best of Kant's works. This research has generated a new boundary, now said to hold between the racist, pro-colonialism Kant of the 1780s and the cosmopolitan Kant who shows up in the works published at the end of his career in 1795's *Perpetual Peace* and 1797's *Metaphysics of Morals*. Without repeating any part of the well-known debate between Bernasconi and Kleingeld regarding this "death-bed conversion scene," one might still justifiably wonder how even a late change of heart, while perhaps exonerating Kant-the-person, is supposed to retroactively safeguard readers from any of the now-identified racist works of the Critical period. As Kantians reflect on these matters, it should not be forgotten that while the full tally of published comments by Kant is one thing, reflecting the fact that he held these attitudes year-in and year-out over forty years of teaching—views recorded forever in the lecture notes from his courses on "Physical Geography" and "Anthropology"—this production of generations of students armed with such "knowledge of the world" is another thing altogether.

From this perspective the most valuable service offered up by Huseyinzadegan's investigation might be the negative reminder that Kant was and remains today one of the leading thinkers responsible for our inherited sense of mankind's inevitable if slow progress toward the good, of self-perfection as a task or vocation for mankind, and of faith in reason and the rationality of faith, and that these notions define the Western political imaginary to so great an extent as to have become invisible to the naked eye. We are surprised when the weight of history and hope are not enough to replace dictatorships with democracy, we are shocked when the outcome of elections reveal theocrats to be the people's choice, and we are caught off guard when universalist policies are rejected by people whose lives bear witness to just how narrowly conceived the "universal" project really is. What Huseyinzadegan's meticulously argued text brings into view for us, in other words, is the genealogy of such views and an explanation thereby for some large part of what is happening in the tumult of political discourse today.

That said, Huseyinzadegan insists that there is still positive use to be made of Kant's theory: "It is not an error to hope for such a truly cosmopolitan vision if we take Kant's political history, anthropology, and geography seriously, understanding their limits and faults so that we do not replicate their Eurocentric construction.... Such a theory of human difference and diversity, if elaborated in a nonhierarchical way and with the bottom-up methodology of nonideal theory, would allow for richer and more nuanced

political philosophies than a one-size-fits-all ideal theory could" (168). As Huseyinzadegan sees it, the key here is to use the methodological approach offered up by teleology, both for recovering Kant's own nonideal theory of politics and imagining new ones.

Demonstrating Kant's ongoing appeal to teleological principles in his philosophy thus marks the last of Huseyinzadegan's large goals for this project, and it is the description of these principles at work in Kant's account that in fact makes up the core of the book. These close, exegetical analyses of Kant's texts are extremely valuable and well done, and they make the book worth reading even if one is ultimately a bit less interested in questions of what to do with Kant's Eurocentrism.

Part 1 of Huseyinzadegan's account of Kant's employment of a teleological approach is focused on his reading of history. Here attention is on a trio of passages: the Appendix from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the 1784 essay on "The Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Aim," and Kant's 1786 response to the Pantheism Controversy, "What is Orientation in Thinking." As she reads these texts, Huseyinzadegan identifies for readers the manner in which teleology functions like a compass, one capable of providing guidelines for reason amidst a wealth of empirical data (29). Political subjects make historical analysis difficult without this tool, since the gap between what is natural and what is free in the human being is precisely that space where politics and history appear (45). While Huseyinzadegan is clear that Kant's own view of history is Eurocentric, the positive conclusion she draws from these discussions is the importance of historical awareness and context, and the value provided by a purposive view of history—understood explicitly as a heuristic device—when it comes to developing a realistic political agenda (60). One is, however, left wondering precisely how a plurality of historical narratives, ones pointing to different political goals, are to be negotiated, particularly when the ends sought after by various political actors might be entirely incompatible. Surely this is where we need to appeal to ideal theory and the principle of *Recht* in particular to make sense of disputes.

Part 2 of the project is devoted to "nature, culture, and politics" and brings together a number of texts not normally included in an account of Kant's appeal to teleology. The link between the texts discussed in chapter 3—the *Critique of Judgment,* the 1784 essay

"What is Enlightenment," and 1797's "Doctrine of Right" in the *Metaphysics of Morals*—is provided by Kant's appeal to organic vocabulary when it comes to thinking about the state (68). In these pages Huseyinzadegan leads readers from Kant's distinction between the mechanical "hand mill" of a despotic regime and the organic unity of wills in a Republic (74) to the difference between a State working deliberately on its slow reform, or "metamorphosis," and one who chooses violent rebirth, or the "palingenesis" of revolution, instead (80). Huseyinzadegan includes here a novel interpretation of Kant's well-known division between the public and private use of reason, aligning the latter with the mechanical functioning of the state and the former with the organic one (77). Chapter 4 returns us to historical questions and the central role played by inequality and war when it comes to nature's pathological enforcement of these means for human advancement. Huseyinzadegan is clear-eyed in her assessment of Kant's emphasis on work and skill as inherently moral in comparison to the rusted talents on view in the case of non-Europeans (103ff), but she ultimately draws comfort from the recognition thereby that culture must be included when determining one's future political path (109). This happy takeaway felt unconvincing, in no small part because the arguments and textual evidence marshalled by Huseyinzadegan in her indictment of Kant's Eurocentrism left little behind to be saved.

The book closes with Part 3 devoted to Kant's attention to the role played by geography for politics. Here one finds a careful account of the importance of the spherical nature of earth: a finite space separated by sand and sea, and one demanding, therefore, a realistic means of navigating global political exchanges. In chapter 5 the focus is on the Supplement to Kant's famous 1795 essay *Toward Perpetual Peace* since Huseyinzadegan sees it as a nonideal companion or rearticulation of the three ideal articles for peace: Republican government, a league of nations, and a limited right to hospitality for the purposes of commercial trade (127). Teleological method is key to this analysis so far as it allows us to think, for example, of war as a necessary part of historical progress. As she puts it: "It is not the case that we know that nature's law is war, but we hypothesize it so that we can begin where we are" (129). The last chapter of the book brings together many of the running points made against theorists who position ethics as opposed to *Recht* at the heart of Kant's political theory. By way of a careful reading of what Kant actually says about cosmopolitanism, Huseyinzadegan shows us that it means a number of things for Kant depending upon context, but nowhere is it positioned as a moral or egalitarian ideal

(164).

Overall this is a rich and engaging account of Kant's political views, and it is to Huseyinzadegan's great credit that even scholars long familiar with the contours of Kant's works—both ideal and impure—will find much to learn from this book.