SGIR Review

Published by the Society for German Idealism and Romanticism

Volume 5, Issue 1 *New York City, NY 2022*

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

The *SGIR* Review is a peer-reviewed journal published by the *Society for German Idealism and Romanticism*, registered with the *United States Library of Congress*, and sponsored by Johns Hopkins University, Emerson College, and Boston University. The aim of the *SGIR Review* is to serve as a premier venue for diverse scholarship in German idealism and romanticism.

The *SGIR Review* is structured around three major components. It publishes (i) peer-reviewed articles and peer-reviewed special issues; (ii) symposium reviews and responses written for SGIR Author-Meets-Critics Sessions at annual American Philosophical Association conferences (Eastern, Central, and Pacific); and (iii) book reviews. The *SGIR Review* occasionally provides a book review to other journals in the field such as the *Kantian Review* or *Hegel Bulletin*. In such cases, we note the copyright transfer in the bibliographic portion of the review and reproduce it here with the permission of the given publisher (e.g., *Cambridge Journals*).

————————————-

Articles should be submitted to the relevant peer-review editor: Daniel Caranza for Germanic studies; Lara Ostaric for philosophy. Submissions (i) should be prepared for blind review (all self-identifying information removed); (ii) should be between 5,000 and 12,000 words (inclusive of footnotes and bibliography); (iii) cannot have been previously published or simultaneously under review; and (iv) must use Chicago MS. If accepted for publication the author agrees to the *SGIR Review*'s exclusive rights to the material. Later inclusion of the material in another publication must first receive the consent of the *SGIR Review*.

Nominations and self-nominations for symposium reviews should be submitted to the assistant symposium editor, robb.dunphy@philosophie.uni-freiburg.de.

For any other questions or inquiries, please contact us at sgircommittee@gmail.com.

Table of Contents

SGIR Review 5, no. 1, 1–88 © SGIR Review, 2022
ISSN 2577-025X

Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Katharina T. Kraus

Kant on Self-Knowledge and Self-Formation

Oxford University Press, 2020, 288 pp., $99.99 (hbk), ISBN 9781108836647.

◇◇◇

Reviewed by:
Karin Nisenbaum, Syracuse Unviersity

Julia Peters, Universität Heidelberg

Response by:
Katharina T. Kraus, University of Notre Dame
◊◊◊

Review 1: Karin Nisenbaum, Syracuse University

Introduction

Seek to be a whole! Know thyself! These are the two imperatives that, on Katharina Kraus's view, ought to govern a person's mental life. In *Kant on Self-Knowledge and Self-Formation: The Nature of Inner Experience*, Kraus offers a novel interpretation of Kant's account of psychological personhood that reveals how observing these two imperatives brings into being the object of inner experience. When we respect the imperatives of self-formation (Seek to be a whole!) and self-knowledge (Know thyself!), we recognize that our success in realizing our personhood depends on our ability to integrate each of our commitments, values, and principles of action into a coherent mental whole. On Kraus's view, the regulative idea of the soul gives expression to this hope that "all will come together in the end and that each and every part of our lives will eventually find its proper place within the whole—a hope that can and will never be fully realized as long as we live, but which always remains the ideal towards which we as persons must unswervingly strive" (279). Through this interpretive lens, Kraus sheds new light on Kant's theoretical philosophy and shows how his universalistic conception of reason can "accommodate the notion of genuine individuality" (279).

Kraus's book is a rigorous and beautifully written interpretation of Kant's distinctive account of psychological personhood, brimming with relevance to topics in contemporary philosophy of mind and psychology. Yet what first struck me upon reading Part III of her book is how she highlights aspects of Kant's theoretical philosophy that were regarded by some post-Kantian German Idealists as *the* central insights of Kant's critical philosophy, including the demand for systematicity, the regulative role of the ideas of pure reason and their role in Kant's account of empirical cognition, and the imperatives of self-formation and self-knowledge. For this reason, the aim of these comments is to explore these connections between Kraus's interpretation of Kant's distinctive account of psychological personhood and key themes in post-Kantian German Idealism. I begin by asking a few questions about how Kraus understands the puzzle of self-knowledge described in the introduction to her book. Then I mention some reservations about the normative account of personhood developed in the final chapter of her book. Lastly, I ask

for clarification of aspects of the "context-of-intelligibility" view of the ideas of reason that Kraus proposes in the fifth chapter (focusing on the idea of the soul). This new interpretation of the ideas of reason is one of many insights that I found especially fascinating.

1) The Puzzle of Self-Knowledge

In the introduction to the book, Kraus describes the puzzle of empirical self-knowledge, a puzzle that her Kantian view on the nature of inner experience is meant to solve. My first question is about how she understands this puzzle and how her view on the nature of inner experience is meant to solve it. Kraus explains why it might seem difficult to understand the possibility of self-knowledge in a few different ways, and it is not completely clear to me that they all amount to the same difficulty. For example, she says:

> On the one hand, self-knowledge is *reflexive* in that it points back to the representing subject who has such knowledge. On the other hand, self-knowledge refers to a particular individual 'object,' namely oneself, with specific psychological features. The puzzle thus concerns the issue of how actively thinking subjects can represent themselves as passively given objects without distorting themselves or becoming estranged from themselves. That is, how can self-knowledge be self-referential at all? (3)

On this version of the puzzle, it seems that it is the *reflexive* nature of self-knowledge that is difficult to capture. For if self-knowledge is reflexive, then the two relata in the relation "I = I" should be identical; however, it seems that they can't be if one side refers to the actively thinking subject and the other to a passively given object. Yet when Kraus explains this puzzle in more detail, it seems to me that the problem she focuses on is somewhat different. First, she says, "Self-knowledge seems to involve two ways of representing oneself: representing oneself as subject and representing oneself as object" (3). That still seems to raise a question about how self-knowledge can be genuinely reflexive. Yet she then asks:

> Firstly, if I were to become the object of my own experience, what kind of object would I be for myself? Would I be a mind endowed with mental capacities, an embodied human being, a collection of mental states, or rather something else? Secondly, if my self-knowledge is primarily concerned with the subjective contents passing through my consciousness, can these contents ever become items of knowledge meeting the standards of objective validity? That is, can I objectively know myself? (3)

Here it seems that there are two separate problems. First, identifying the sort of object that is the object of self-knowledge (because we can characterize it in a few different ways: as a mind endowed with mental capacities, as an embodied human being, etc.). Second, explaining how self-knowledge can be objective, given the fleeting or passing nature of human consciousness.

In Kraus's paper "The Parity and Disparity Between Inner and Outer Experience in Kant," she mentions some objections to the view that "inner experience is empirical cognition of the same kind as outer experience" (the parity view),[1] and she says that all of them "culminate in the claim that there is no proper *mental object* to be cognized in inner experience."[2] (I recognize that Kraus is not defending the parity view; her aim is to show that this sort of objection is not fatal for an account of inner experience as empirical cognition.) This characterization of the problem affecting the parity view, together with the second way she describes the puzzle of self-knowledge in the introduction to her book, led me to think that the problem she is concerned with is how we can have self-knowledge, if knowledge is always knowledge of an object, but there is no proper mental object to be cognized in inner experience (presumably because of the fleeting or passing nature of human consciousness). I would be grateful if Kraus could spell out exactly how her view that the object of inner experience that is "first formed in the course of one's mental activity under the guidance of the unifying idea of the soul" (6) solves this version of the problem of self-knowledge and explain how she understands the relationship between the

[1] Katharina Kraus, "The Parity and Disparity Between Inner and Outer Experience in Kant," *Kantian Review* 24, no. 2 (June 2019): 171–195, 175.
[2] Kraus, "The Parity and Disparity," 177.

two different versions of the puzzle that she mentions in the introduction to the book (in the two passages cited above).

One of the aims of this panel is to highlight significant parallels between problems and views developed in Kraus's book and those developed by some post-Kantian German idealists. The puzzle of self-knowledge (or self-consciousness) is of course one of the central problems that Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is concerned to address. But Fichte understands the problem in a way that seems to me different from the way Kraus understands it. On his view, the problem is that the "reflection-model" of self-consciousness is either viciously circular or regressive.[3] On the reflection-model of self-consciousness, the self gains knowledge of itself by entering into a reflective relation with itself and, as it were, "setting its eyes on itself."[4] Yet if what it is to be a self is to be self-conscious, then the reflection-model of self-consciousness presupposes what is meant to be explained by the act of reflection, for the self that reflects on itself must already have the sort of self-consciousness that was supposed to be gained through the act of reflection. Thus, the reflection-model of self-consciousness is viciously circular. Or, if we start from the idea that whenever we represent something, we are also in some sense conscious of ourselves (for the representation is related to the subject of representation and to the object represented), and then try to represent our self-consciousness to ourselves, then we will be forced into an infinite regress, for each attempt to represent our self-consciousness to ourselves will require that there be a higher-order self-consciousness that we then again need to represent to ourselves, and so on.[5] Fichte's proposal is to abandon the reflection-model of self-consciousness and argue that we have a pure or "intellectual intuition" of ourselves; in an intellectual intuition, the self is immediately acquainted with itself, or is at once subject and object, "without any mediation at all."[6] Fichte also explains his view by saying that the I "posits itself as self-positing."[7] The notion of the self-positing subject is meant to capture the idea that the self *is* the act through

[3] See Dieter Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," in *Contemporary German Philosophy 1* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982) 15–53, and Manfred Frank, "Non-Objectal Subjectivity," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14, no. 5–6 (2007): 152–173.
[4] Frank, "Non-Objectal Subjectivity," 158.
[5] See Karin Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 154–155.
[6] J. G. Fichte, *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964) Bd. IV, 2, 3:347. Henceforth "WLnm."
[7] Fichte, WLnm, IV 3:346.

which it comes to know itself.[8] Of course, whether Fichte's model succeeds in solving the problems with the reflection-model of self-consciousness is disputed, and all the different versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* attest to Fichte's own dissatisfaction with his attempt to elucidate the phenomenon of self-consciousness. I wonder whether Kraus sees any parallels between the way Fichte understands the puzzle of self-consciousness and the way she understands it, or between Fichte's solution to the problem and her solution. For example, central to Kraus's view is the idea that the self forms itself in the act of knowing itself.

2) Committing Ourselves to the Normative Demands of Personhood

In the final chapter of the book, Kraus argues that, on Kant's view, personhood is essentially normative, and she characterizes this form of normativity as a "demand for inner systematicity" (270). This normative account of personhood implies that we should live our lives "in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole" (276); this is because for Kant a system is a "whole in which all parts have their proper place or function and in which all parts are mutually consistent such that the whole can be said to be systematic" (272). Yet I wonder what Kraus would say to a skeptic who denied the normative demand for inner systematicity. She says that: "as rational beings we cannot conceive of ourselves other than in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole," and she suggests that painful feelings such as shame or disgust that accompany the discovery of inner incoherence provide the "incentive for activity"—the incentive to live our lives in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole, and to "revise those psychological features that stand in conflict with one other" (276). Yet what if I don't feel shame or disgust when I discover that I have inconsistent beliefs or conflicting desires? (Our former president is a case in point.) What argument might Kraus provide in support of her claim that as rational beings we *cannot* conceive of ourselves other than in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole?

Christine Korsgaard provides an argument for the view that we *must* constitute ourselves as persons or unified agents that runs roughly as follows: If we agree that the

[8] See Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics*, 156, and Henrich, "Kant's Original Insight," 25.

plight of a human being is to have reasons to act, then our need to have reasons to act is itself a reason to value ourselves as rational beings: our need to have reasons to act is a reason to commit ourselves to the value of our humanity or rationality, and valuing our humanity or rationality consists in endorsing the obligations to which that way of identifying ourselves gives rise—for example, valuing our rationality gives rise to the requirement that we give our maxims the form of a universal law, and in doing so constitute ourselves as unified agents or persons.[9] I wonder how Kraus would spell out the argument in support of her view that as rational beings we *cannot* conceive of ourselves other than in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole.

Kraus also speaks of a "commitment" to being a person, and she suggests that it is *this* commitment to being a person that then generates the commitment to living in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole. As she says: "In committing to being a person, we commit to revising those parts of our mental life that are reflected in those incoherencies and strive to live up to a more internally coherent concept of ourselves." But a commitment is not something that I can't not do. If someone asks me to commit to running a marathon with them, I can of course refrain from committing myself; but if I undertake the commitment, then I should also commit myself to training with them, etc. So, is it the case that we *cannot* conceive of ourselves other than in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole? Or is that the case only after we have undertaken the commitment to value our personhood? How would Kraus describe what is wrong with a human being who fails to undertake this commitment? Sadly, seeming unperturbed by incompatible beliefs or commitments is a common phenomenon.

If it is a commitment to being a person or to valuing our personhood that then generates the commitment to living in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole, then there is another parallel between Kraus's view and views developed by some post-Kantian German idealists that is worth noting. Central to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is the idea that any person wishing to inhabit a philosophical system must first actualize or realize it in themselves. (I have argued elsewhere that this demand

[9] See Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22–26, and Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics*, 124–125.

can be traced back to Salomon Maimon's 1790 *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* [*Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*]).[10] For example, in his 1794 *Rezension der Aenesidemus* (*Review of Aenesidemus*), Fichte argued that we should understand Kant's famous "fact of reason" as an "act" of reason: as the active taking up of the standpoint of freedom. As Fichte explains the point, the first principle of a philosophical system "does not have to express a fact just as content [*eine Tatsache*, an actual fact]; it can also express a fact as performance [*eine Tathandlung,* an actual deed]."[11] So when Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason* appeals to the "fact of reason"—to the givenness of the moral law as apodictically certain—and then uses that fact to prove the reality of freedom, Fichte gives us the conceptual resources to avoid reading Kant's argument as an unfortunate regress to dogmatism, and instead to read it as an invitation to actively adopt or inhabit the standpoint of freedom. What that would involve would be committing ourselves to living under the idea of freedom: to considering the concept of transcendental freedom as an ideal or standard of perfection that we take to be normative. And since the moral law is the law of free beings, committing ourselves to living under the idea of freedom would also involve committing ourselves to being governed by the moral law.[12] I wonder whether one could read Kraus's view that we *must* commit ourselves to living under the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole along the lines of the Fichtean view that the first principle of a philosophical system expresses an act of reason [*eine Tathandlung*], and not a fact of reason [*eine Tatsache*]? Of course, the "first principle" of her system wouldn't be the idea of freedom, but the idea of the soul.

3) The Context-of-Intelligibility View of Transcendental Ideas

In the fifth chapter of the book, Kraus offers a new way of understanding the transcendental, yet regulative status of the principles of systematic unity to which the ideas of reason (including the idea of the soul) give rise. She calls her view the "context-of-intelligibility view" of the ideas of reason and explains it as follows:

[10] See Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics*, chapter 2.
[11] J. G. Fichte, "Rezension der Aenesidemus" in *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* Bd. I,2 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964), 46. Henceforth "RA."
[12] For further discussion, see Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics*, chapter 3.

> [T]he function of these ideas is to mark out contexts of intelligibility within which the understanding can first meaningfully operate. More specifically, reason's regulative use is understood as an a priori act of outlining to the mind a systematic whole, defined by an idea, within which a certain kind of experience first becomes intelligible. (173)

I found this part of the book especially interesting, but I am not sure if I fully understand certain aspects of the view she defends.

First, it is not clear to me why she sometimes describes the function of ideas of reason as "generating a context" within which "a certain kind of **experience** becomes intelligible" (194). Earlier in the chapter, she says that "an idea of reason outlines the context of intelligibility for a particular kind of **cognitive practice**" (173), and I believe I understand that view. I take it that the latter view is that an idea of reason presents to the understanding something like an image of systematic unity that then guides, focuses, and informs its activity within a certain domain. For example, Kraus says that a transcendental idea "is precisely the concept of the unity that would be attained, if the empirical synthesis for a given appearance were to be completed and yielded the totality of the appearance's conditions" (195), and she mentions that "in presupposing a 'transcendental thing' we entertain the content of the idea and exhibit this content as an intentional object to the mind" (200); an idea, on her view, "gains objective purport by offering procedural rules for the understanding to attain systematic unity among its cognitions" (201). All of these locutions suggest that she takes ideas to be a priori presentations of an "intentional something to be attained" (201). But if so, how do they make a certain kind of **experience** intelligible (and not just a particular kind of **cognitive practice**)? Is it because, on her view, inner experience is in a sense formed or brought about by keeping the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole continuously present before our mind's eye? And does she believe that the same should be said of empirical cognition, as conceived by Kant—i.e., that outer experience or empirical cognition is brought about by keeping in view the "systematic unity . . . of the manifold of the understanding's cognition" (A648/B676)? If so, that would mean (as Kraus also notes) that the ideas of reason "play a fundamental role for empirical cognition" (174), one that is often overlooked by readers of Kant that focus on the Transcendental Analytic,

where Kant develops his account of empirical cognition, and ignore the Transcendental Dialectic, where Kant develops the regulative role of the ideas of reason.[13]

Two other questions that I have about this part of the book concern: 1) the difference between Kraus's context-of-intelligibility view of the ideas of reason and the "methodological" (or "fictional") view she attributes to Allison, Grier, and Willaschek (181n23), and 2) how she understands the problem with the "noumenal" view. So first, Kraus distinguishes her context-of-intelligibility view from what she calls the "methodological" or "fictional" view, according to which "transcendental ideas serve for the generation of hypotheses that can never be proven, but which are useful to derive further cognitions and hence achieve, or at least approximate, a higher unity among cognitions" (181). I am not sure that I see how this characterization fits Allison's account of the regulative role of ideas, and I am not sure that I see the difference between Kraus's view and one like Allison's. For example, Allison says the following about the principle of thoroughgoing determination (which arises from the ideal of pure reason): "The point is that as a condition of engaging in the project of exhaustively defining an individual, the understanding necessarily presupposes the sum total of possible predicates as available for the task."[14] I am not sure why we can't understand what Allison means here when he says that the understanding "presupposes" the sum total of possible predicates along the lines of what Kraus says, namely, that "the presuppositions of reason are "expressions of normative demands that are binding for any act of the understanding" (182). It seems to me that Allison suggests a similar idea when he says that: "Kant gives to the principle of throughgoing determination the status of a rule, itself stemming from reason, for the complete use of the understanding (A573/B601)." Granted, Allison is here speaking about the ideal of pure reason, and not specifically about the transcendental ideas of reason (the soul, the world-whole, and God), but his general approach seems to apply to both (the ideas of reason and the ideal of pure reason).

Kraus also distinguishes her context-of-intelligibility view of the ideas of reason from what she calls the "noumenal" view, according to which "reason's regulative use

[13] See Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics*, chapter 2, for a reading of the Transcendental Deduction that is informed by Maimon's reading of Kant, which focuses on the role of the ideas of reason in Kant's account of empirical cognition.
[14] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 398.

consists in a real use with regard to things-in-themselves. In order for our principles of systematicity to be well founded, we have to presuppose that the corresponding transcendental ideas truly describe an underlying noumenal reality, even though we cannot prove their truth" (181). I would find it helpful if she could provide an example of this view, because the way she describes it sounds like what happens when we are deceived by transcendental illusion (viz., that we take certain subjective principles of reason to be objective).[15] Given that the regulative view of the ideas of reason is designed to help us avoid being deceived by transcendental illusion, that strikes me as an obviously false reading, so I wonder who might defend it?

This brings me to a final question about Kraus's context-of-intelligibility view of the ideas of reason: how does it solve the "conflict of reason" that she describes in the second section of this chapter (the conflict that gives rise to transcendental illusion)? As Kraus mentions, Kant holds that reason is affected by an internal conflict, because of its "propensity to make up concepts of the unconditioned, such as those of the soul, the world-whole, and God, yet *without* being able to prove that these concepts refer to real things and imply true descriptions of such things" (178–179). Reason has this propensity, because it takes the *subjective* principle for the *logical* use of reason, "find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed," for an *objective* or *metaphysical* claim, "when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e., contained in the object and its connection" (KrV, A307/B364). Yet as Kraus also explains, there is a good reason why reason tends to do this, namely that reason's own demands and interests "lead us to strive towards theorizing about these things" (179). Presumably, this is because if a subject rationally intends to ϕ, she is committed to being able to ϕ: if a subject intends to search for the conditions for a given conditioned, she must implicitly be committed to those conditions being there to be found.[16]

[15] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A297/B354: "Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism . . . The cause of this is that in our reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition) there lie fundamental rules and maxims for its use, which look entirely like objective principles, and through them it comes about that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves."

[16] For further discussion of this point, see Nisenbaum 2018, 2–3, and Allison 2004, 331–332.

The distinction between appearances and things in themselves seems to be part of the solution to this problem because this distinction helps us realize that reason's search for the unconditioned applies to things in themselves and to appearances in different ways. As Eric Watkins explains the point, Kant holds that "for things in themselves it is the case that the totality of conditions and thus the unconditioned as well must exist if the conditioned exists."[17] Yet this is not the case if we are considering the situation for appearances. As Kant explains:

> On the contrary, if I am dealing with appearances, which as mere representations are not given at all if I do not achieve acquaintance with them . . . then I cannot say with the same meaning that if the conditioned is given, then all the conditions (as appearances) for it are also given; and hence I can by no means infer the absolute totality of the series of these conditions . . . But in such a case one can very well say that a regress to the conditions, i.e., a continued empirical synthesis on this side is demanded or given as a problem (KrV, A499/B527).

In other words, the distinction between appearances and things in themselves helps solve the conflict of reason, because it helps us recognize that "reason can require that its demands be satisfied for things in themselves, though it has no way of knowing how they are, but it cannot require that this very same demand be satisfied for appearances as a result of their essential lack of complete determinacy."[18] The ideas of reason are thus recognized as regulative for appearances. Given that, on Watkin's view, the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is central to Kant's solution to the conflict of reason, I wonder whether Kraus would characterize his view as a version of the noumenal view, according to which "reason's regulative use consists in a real use with regard to things-in-themselves" (181)? If so, then I think I see how the noumenal view does not amount to being deceived by transcendental illusion. But I have been broadly in agreement with Watkin's view, and so I would find it helpful if Kraus could say more about why she might object to a view like his (if it is the case that Watkin's view is a version of what you call the noumenal view). Moreover, given that her view does not seem to make any essential reference to the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, I wonder if she could say more about how it solves the conflict of reason described above.

[17] Eric Watkins, "The Antinomy of Practical Reason: Reason, the Unconditioned, and the Highest Good," in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 150.
[18] Watkins, "The Antinomy," 150.

Bibliography

Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "Rezension der Aenesidemus." In *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, edited by Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, Hans Gliwitzky, and Eric Fuchts, Bd. I, 2. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo." In *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, edited by Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, Hans Gliwitzky, and Eric Fuchts, Bd. IV, 2. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964.

Frank, Manfred. "Non-Objectal Subjectivity." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14, nos. 5–6 (2007): 152–173.

Henrich, Dieter. "Fichte's Original Insight." Translated by David Lachterman. In *Contemporary German Philosophy, Vol. 1*, edited by Darrel E. Christensen. 15–53. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982.

Korsgaard, Christine. *Self-Constitution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Kraus, Katharina. "The Parity and Disparity between Inner and Outer Experience in Kant." *Kantian Review* 24, no. 2 (June 2019): 171–195.

Nisenbaum, Karin. *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Watkins, Eric. "The Antinomy of Practical Reason: Reason, the Unconditioned, and the Highest Good." In *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: A Critical Guide,* edited by Andrews Reath and Jens Timmermann, 145–167. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Review 2: Julia Peters, Universität Heidelberg

Introduction

The central aim of this symposium is to bring into view points of connection and potential dialogue between the ideas developed in Katharina Kraus's recent book on Kant's notion of the self, on the one hand, and post-Kantian developments, on the other. The idea for the symposium itself was born out of engagement with the views put forward in Kraus's book. Especially in the last three chapters, Kraus lays out her original interpretation of Kant's notion of the self. She argues that for Kant, the self takes shape in a process of self-formation guided by the regulative and normative ideal of the soul. Though developed as an interpretation of Kant, this view resonates in striking ways with theories of the self that we find in German Idealist thinkers, notably in J. G. Fichte. Specifically, Kraus's suggestion that for Kant, the self is best thought of as a process of striving, rather than as a substance, and the observation that this approach brings the theoretical and the practical aspect of the self into closer alignment with each other than Kant's view may seem to suggest at first sight, find close counterparts in Fichte's theory.

In my contribution to the symposium, I want to do the following. I am going to raise three potential problems or questions that may arise for Kraus's self-formation view of the self. Furthermore, I shall indicate how Fichte can be read as dealing with similar issues in his conception of self-formation and also as potentially offering resources for addressing them. I shall also bring Hegel's philosophy of mind into the picture as a source that may be helpful to turn to in this context. On a more general level, I hope that what will emerge from this discussion is the following. By reading Kant's theory of the self as being organized around a conception of the self as a regulative, normative ideal that guides a process of self-formation, Kraus sheds novel light on central aspects of Kant's view. At the same time, if the notion of self-formation is brought forward and put center stage in Kant, this may also point to potential limitations of the Kantian framework—such that if one approaches Kant's theory of the self through the lens of the topic of self-formation, one may thereby be pushed beyond Kant and toward post-Kantian thinkers.

1) The Idea of the Soul and Systematic Unity

On Kraus's reading, the idea of the soul in Kant contains three a priori predicates: substance, fundamental power, and personal identity. These turn out to generate three regulative and normative principles that guide a gradual process of self-formation aiming at the emergence of a complete system of rational self-knowledge. The most general predicates of this system are then said to be the a priori predicates that describe the basic mental faculties according to Kant: cognition, volition, feeling.

Now, even if the fact that we have these three basic mental faculties can be known a priori in Kant, I wonder whether we can also know a priori that it is possible to integrate them (or rather the more specific psychological predicates falling within these three categories) within one unified system of knowledge.

After all, the specific psychological predicates that may apply to a human subject are heterogeneous, especially due to the fact that they may stem from two different sources in Kant's view: our rational, intelligible, free nature, and our sensuous nature. Some volitions, for instance, stem from our rational nature; feelings belong to our sensuous nature. Against this background, one may wonder what justifies the expectation that they can all be included within the same coherent system. One might think that as long as we stay within the Kantian framework, we actually need two systems here, rather than one: one system for the rational mind and one system for the mind insofar as it belongs to sensuous nature.

Alternatively, one might attempt to show that these two aspects of the mind are actually ramifications of one and the same fundamental feature. This is a project in which Hegel is involved in his philosophy of mind in the third part of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, where he seeks to show that all human cognitive faculties and psychological predicates are manifestations of *Geist* (*Geist* being self-conscious, self-expressive, and rational activity). Arguably, Hegel does this precisely in order to secure the possibility that the soul can constitute a complete and coherent system. Something similar is true of Fichte, who tries to derive the entire system of the self, including all its different types of psychological predicates, from the very notion of self-consciousness or self-positing. But would Kant be willing to move in this direction?

2) Conflicts between Theoretical and Practical Normative Demands?

I wonder whether on the self-formation view, as Kraus ascribes it to Kant, theoretical and practical (i.e., moral) normative demands arising from the idea of the soul can ever come into conflict. I have in mind especially Kant's thought that, in the moral sphere, we ought to undergo a revolution of character at some point, since (according to the doctrine of radical evil), we all start out as evil but are subject to the moral demand to change our character.

Such a revolution of character amounts to a radical rupture in one's practical identity. There is a moral demand to undergo such a rupture, yet it would seem to conflict with the theoretical demand to accomplish the greatest unity and coherence possible in one's system of self-knowledge. Specifically, the predicate of personal identity generates the normative demand to realize oneself as a unity in a qualitative sense. That is, Kraus explains, "the variety of psychological qualities [applying to a subject, J. P.] should be subject to a single inner principle" (267). To give a concrete example: After having served as the head of a powerful criminal organization for decades and committed as well as commissioned countless immoral actions, Vito Corleone suddenly decides to change his ways and never to become guilty of moral transgression again. He decides to undergo the Kantian revolution of character, in other words, or at least aspires to do so. Should we say, following Kraus's account, that there is a theoretical normative demand pushing against this revolution? After all, if Don Corleone really performs the revolution of character, his future volitions and actions will be subject to a radically different inner principle than those he performed in the past: he now acts out of respect for the moral law, while in the past he was either indifferent toward or contemptuous of the law. Thus, if he carries out the moral revolution, his different psychological predicates will no longer be subject to a single inner principle. Alternatively, if there is no pressure not to carry out the revolution, the theoretical principle of personal identity at least would seem to generate pressure not to *acknowledge* that a revolution has taken place, in order to preserve the unity of future and past volitions. However, again, this would be a dissatisfactory outcome, as on this view the principle of personal identity would require us not to acknowledge something that is actually the case.

Such considerations would seem to speak against Kraus's suggestion that theoretical and practical reason are unified in the Kantian idea of the soul. Again, Fichte is one of the authors one might turn to at this point for a solution to this problem: in his

System of Ethics, Fichte seeks to show that our ultimate reason for following the categorical imperative is that this is a necessary condition in order for us to be an I, i.e., a self in the full sense of the term.[19] Since being an I essentially also involves a cognitive element for Fichte—being an I is essentially being aware of oneself as a self, or in short, being self-conscious—one can conclude that the theoretical and practical imperatives both point towards the same end of self-realization on Fichte's account. This alignment of the theoretical and practical imperative eliminates the potential tension between the two aspects of the self that may arise within the Kantian position.

3) The Idea of the Soul as a Normative Standard

Do I become a self just by *committing* to strive to become a complete and unified system of self-knowledge, or is the self that *toward which* I am striving when making this commitment? One can find formulations in Kraus's book that suggest either interpretation. For instance, she writes: "in being a person, I commit myself to realizing a certain form" (265); at the same time, she writes that "the person is construed as the mental whole that is first and only gradually realized through the exercise of self-formation and hence as the *result* of such self-formation" (269, my italics).

In the former case, a circularity problem may arise:[20] if being a self is already constituted by making the commitment to striving, and the striving is understood as a striving toward being a self, what is it that we are striving toward in this case? It seems like the answer would have to be that we are striving toward making the commitment to striving—i.e., we end up with a circular structure. Furthermore, here the danger of a "staccato mind" may reappear, a possibility that Kraus mentions earlier on in the book (see 193), and which she wants to rule out by understanding the striving toward complete self-knowledge as a continuous process: I might make the commitment in one moment and abandon it in the next moment. Thus, there is no guarantee here that the commitment to strive itself generates something in the way of personal identity across time.

[19] J. G. Fichte, *Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, 11 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 4:54. Henceforth SL.
[20] Kraus mentions and discusses a potential circularity objection for her view on p. 269, but I am not sure that this is the same problem which concerns me here.

In the latter case, the notion of the self—the ideal that we are striving toward—is supposed to be that of a subject who is in possession of complete, systematic, rational self-knowledge. Now, as Kraus points out, the ideal of complete, systematic, rational self-knowledge can never be actualized by us human beings. Even if we gradually progress toward greater unity and systematic integration of our psychological predicates, the resulting system will never be one of complete rational self-knowledge, since we will never be fully rational creatures, but subject to contingencies arising from our sensuous, spatiotemporal nature. But then, why should we have a reason to strive toward this ideal, and why should we be motivated to do so, if at the same time we know that our striving is not an appropriate means to accomplish what we are striving for (because, plainly, it will never get us there)?

Kant faces a similar problem in the practical sphere in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where the ideal of virtue is construed as the holy will, and we are said to be obligated to approximate this ideal. But we human beings can never be holy wills, since a holy will is one that cannot even potentially be subject to a sensuous desire that may tempt them to transgress the moral law. Thus, here one can raise a similar question: Why should we be obligated to approximate this ideal, and why should we be motivated to do so, if we know that approximation is not an appropriate means to reach the ideal? Another way of raising the same question: would not the ideal have to be conceived in such a way that it is in principle possible for us to reach it in order for it to have normative command over us, and for us to be motivated to try to reach it?

Fichte addresses a related problem concerning his own conception of the self and its striving toward self-completion, which on Fichte's account is the same as a striving toward freedom. Thus, in §12 of his *System of Ethics*, he raises the question: "How can one approximate an infinite goal [*wie kann man einem unendlichen Ziele näher kommen*]?"[21] The infinite goal Fichte speaks of here is the self insofar as it has achieved complete independence or freedom, such independence being, on Fichte's account, the final aim toward which the self is commanded to strive by the moral law, but which can never be accomplished by a human subject. Fichte's question is how it is possible for a

[21] Fichte, SL, 4:150.

subject to fulfill this command, if at the same time it is impossible for a subject to literally come closer to fulfilling it, since infinity always remains equally far out of reach.

But in this passage, Fichte also offers a solution to the problem.[22] I want to close my contribution by briefly considering this solution—I wonder whether this suggests a direction in which Kant could have moved as well, on Kraus's view. Fichte's solution is to propose what one might call a "perspectival" conception of the infinite goal, specifically of the infinite goal's infinity. On this conception, the infinite goal toward which we are striving is conceived as it presents itself from the perspective of the human standpoint. The human mind cannot grasp infinity as such. Thus, from our human perspective, the infinite goal of completion always presents itself as a definite goal, attainable through a definite step or series of steps that we can actually take. In any particular situation, one's striving toward completion always consists in a (series of) definite, concrete, particular step(s). However, once we have taken that step or series of steps, the goal slips away again—like a horizon toward which we are walking. Applying this to the Kantian self-formation view, we end up with a position on which the complete and unified system of self-knowledge that I strive to be is the self that I strive to be at this particular point in time, in this particular situation, given my particular, definite set of psychological states.

This perspectival construal of the ideal of complete self-knowledge would seem to avoid the two problems just sketched: of either reducing the notion of the self to a mere commitment or understanding it as a normative standard that is beyond reach. For if we follow this Fichtean suggestion, the notion of the soul or self maintains its status as a normative standard, by not being reduced to the mere act of committing. At the same time, the normative standard is understood in a perspectival fashion—consisting in a complete system of self-knowledge, as it is to be attained by this particular subject, at this particular time, given these particular psychological predicates—hence, it is not beyond reach. Thus, we can understand how the idea of the soul as a complete system of rational knowledge can have both normative and motivational force for a human subject.

Bibliography

[22] Fichte, SL, 4:149–150.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. *Fichtes Werke*. Edited by I. H. Fichte, Bd. IV. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Gesammelte Werke*. In Verbindung mit der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft herausgegeben von der Rheinisch–Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd 20. Hamburg: Meiner, 1992.

Kant, Immanuel. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Edited by the *Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1907–1983.

Author Response: Katharina T. Kraus, University of Notre Dame

Introduction

Let me begin by thanking Karin Nisenbaum for proposing and organizing this panel, and both Karin and Julia Peters for their extremely insightful and valuable comments. I thank both of them in particular for inviting me to explore a fruitful comparison of my interpretation of Kant with central ideas of German idealism. To begin with, I give a brief outline of the book, summarizing its main claims and arguments.

My original aim was to explore the *nature of inner experience*, as the subtitle of my book suggests. *Inner experience* is a term that Kant uses frequently in his Critical writings, but which has rarely been explored in more detail or in a rigorously systematic manner. My initial question of *what inner experience is for Kant* split into the two main questions of the book: What is the *very object* of inner experience, and what is the *way of representation* in inner experience?

The first question concerns *what* inner experience is *about*. *What* or *who* am I experiencing in my inner experience? Primarily, I experience *myself*, or, more specifically, the *mental states* passing through my mind (such as perceptions, thoughts, memories, imaginings, feelings, and desires). I may also experience my temporally more stable *psychological properties* (such as character traits, commitments, values, and aspirations in life): basically, all the items that make up my personal life and that make me the *unique person* I am. The first question could thus be formulated as follows: What *kind of "object"* am I for myself in inner experience?

The second question concerns the *way*, or *mode*, in which I represent myself to myself. Specifically, can I experience myself in an *objectively valid way*? That is to ask whether inner experience can ever amount to *empirical cognition* (in the Kantian sense), as the outer experience of spatio-material objects does. Does inner experience yield representations that are valid in light of the distinctive "object" and hence valid for everyone, rather than being merely subjectively valid for the one having such experience?

As a result, the book offers a theory of *psychological persons* as the kinds of beings referred to in inner experience. One may call such a theory an "*immanent" ontology of*

psychological persons.[23] Such ontology is immanent in that it concerns such beings only insofar as (and to the extent that) we can experience (aspects of) them. Such ontology, therefore, remains within the limits that Kant's transcendental philosophy places on any such endeavor. A central task is to spell out what characteristics psychological persons have and how they differ from ordinary material objects of experience. An important issue here is to understand Kant's account of *human individuality*—an issue about which he is surprisingly silent, since he focuses on a theory of universal human reason, that is, a theory of reason insofar as it is universally realized in all human beings.

I have approached this task in a distinctively Kantian way, asking about the conditions of possibility of inner experience: What are the conditions under which I can represent myself at all, or even cognize myself in an objectively valid way? The first main thesis of my book is that *inner experience is empirical cognition* (in the Kantian sense). Since it is, more specifically, *cognition of myself as a psychological person, rather than as a mere object*, I cognize myself *only qua* my psychological features, not as a persistent mental substance. Such psychological features are broadly construed so as to include occurrent mental states, more temporally stable psychological properties, and even autobiographical narratives.

In exploring the conditions of inner experience, the book follows the synthetic method of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, building up the conditions of representing oneself *bottom-up*. Each of the three parts of the book examines these conditions with regard to one of the three main faculties of cognition: sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*], the understanding [*Verstand*], and the faculty of reason [*Vernunft*]. Chapters 1 and 2 start with the most basic sensible conditions, focusing on self-affection (i.e., affecting oneself in inner sense), and develop a theory of inner perception as the empirical consciousness of my mental states in time. Moving "up" to the conceptual conditions, chapter 3 offers a theory of transcendental self-consciousness as the mere form of reflexive consciousness, and chapter 4 inquires into the conditions of referring to oneself in judgment. It turns out that there is a fundamental difference between *self-reference* (in I-judgments about myself) and *object-reference* (in judgments about ordinary spatio-material objects): the cognition-constitutive categories of the understanding cannot be used in I-judgments in

[23] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A845/B873. Henceforth "CpR."

the ordinary way, especially the categories of relation. Specifically, there is no cognizable mental substance underlying all my mental states and endowed with mental powers. If there were, I argue, Kant would fall prey to a dogmatic metaphysical foundationalism (regarding the existence of souls with personal identity through time), which he so fiercely criticizes in the Transcendental Dialectic. Hence, I conclude in chapter 5 that we need an analogical application of the categories of relation, on the basis of the idea of the soul, which—if used in a regulative way—substitutes precisely those schemata (i.e., schematized categories) that cannot be employed in inner experience (e.g., the schema of substance as persistence through time). The idea of the soul defines a *context* within which the principles of the understanding can be operative, though only in a reduced form, to yield cognition of my mental states. The idea thus defines the *context of intelligibility* within which inner experience can first be understood as truth-apt cognition of the psychological features that belong to one and the same person. Chapter 5 closes my argument for my *first thesis that inner experience is—in this qualified sense—empirical cognition of myself as a psychological person*, though it still leaves open what, exactly, a psychological person is.

Chapters 6 and 7 finally turn to the crucial question regarding the *kind of "object"* referred to in inner experience. Chapter 6 offers a *theory of self-knowledge*: in addition to the conditions of inner experience, we require a normative standard of epistemic justification. Only then can I assess whether my self-related cognitions (i.e., inner experiences) are indeed true in light of the represented "object," that is, in light of who I really am. It turns out that the idea of the soul is best understood as providing a normative guideline for assessing my empirical self-knowledge claims by requiring that all the cognitions I hold to be true of myself must systematically cohere with each other. A criterion of truth for empirical self-knowledge, then, is systematic unity, and the idea of the soul defines such systematic unity specifically for the domain of what may simply be called "*inner nature,*" that is, the domain of nature that concerns the psychological reality of persons.

Chapter 7 finally turns to the question of what, exactly, the "object" of inner experience is. Here my *second main thesis* comes into play, which concerns the distinctive ontology of psychological persons: I argue that *persons form themselves in the course of realizing their mental capacities under the guidance of a unifying idea, the idea of the*

soul. As persons, we are an *empirical reality in the process of becoming*: we are empirically real by virtue of the mental states that occur in our empirical consciousness, such as perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and desires. Yet we also always require—at least during life—further self-realization according to an *a priori* form, the form defined by the idea of the soul. I call this process of continued self-realization according to an idea of reason *the self-formation of an individual person*. It is understood as an overarching mental activity carried out throughout life, constituted by the multiple first-order mental acts performed every day (e.g., acts of perceiving, thinking, judging, and willing). For the practical purpose of self-formation, the idea of the soul plays out as a set of norms that govern these first-order mental acts, so that the mental whole thereby realized approaches the rational ideal of systematic unity.

Replies to Nisenbaum's and Peters's Comments

My replies to Nisenbaum's and Peters's excellent comments, which have also led me to an extremely valuable dialogue with the ideas of selected German idealists, will come in three parts: I address first the puzzle of self-knowledge (1), then the commitment to the ideal of personhood and the problem of its realizability (2), and finally the context-of-intelligibility view of the soul and the perspectival nature of human self-knowledge (3).

1) The Puzzle of Self-Knowledge

Nisenbaum has highlighted a significant parallel between the *puzzle of self-knowledge* that I identify in Kant and Fichte's *puzzle of self-consciousness*, but she has also detected fundamental differences between the two puzzles. In what follows, I argue that a fundamental difference stems from the fact that for Kant—according to my interpretation—the conditions of a *reflexive consciousness* and the conditions of *self-reference* (in judgment) are *not* identical (the former is only a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of the latter), whereas Fichte fully identifies these conditions in his theory of a *self-positing I* (according to his *Wissenschaftslehre*).

The two formulations of Kant's puzzle of self-knowledge that I offer in the book (and which Nisenbaum has helpfully quoted) bring out two levels of the problem. The second formulation can be seen as a specification of the first. The first formulation

introduces three central notions: *reflexivity, reference*, and *self-reference*. Starting from Kant's basic model of consciousness, each representation has a relation to the subject who has it (i.e., reflexivity) and a relation to the object that it represents (i.e., reference). Take, for instance, my occurrent perception of *a red apple*. The perception is related to an object, namely the particular red apple in front of my eyes. And it is related to me, the subject for whom the representation can mean something. I can, for instance, form beliefs about the object, act on the basis of this perception, or simply become aware of myself as having this perception. In ordinary cases of representation, the subject is neatly separated from the object.

The puzzle of self-knowledge begins from the fact that in self-knowledge these two fundamental relations—that to the subject and that to the object—seem to be inevitably intertwined: self-knowledge is a representation that *refers* to the *subject itself*; more specifically, it is *about the particular individual* who has this self-knowledge. This *being about oneself* is precisely what I call *self-reference*. The puzzle of self-knowledge, at the first, basic level, simply amounts to the question: *How is self-reference possible at all?*

The second formulation specifies this general question in that it distinguishes the following two aspects: firstly, the question concerning the *kind of "object"* that is referred to by self-knowledge and, secondly, the question concerning the *way*, or *mode*, in which that "object" is represented (asking specifically whether the object is determined in an objectively valid way). The first issue may be understood to concern the immanent ontology of psychological persons as the beings that are represented through self-knowledge, and the second to concern the conditions under which particular self-knowledge claims can be said to be *true* of the "object" thereby represented (rather than an artifact of the representing subject). Both questions are, again, very puzzling in the case of self-knowledge, since the subjective and the objective side are intricately intertwined.

There are two basic positions one may adopt with regard to the puzzle of self-knowledge, which I call the *parity view* and the *disparity view*. On the parity view, there is parity between self-knowledge and object-knowledge. Accordingly, self-reference simply works like object-reference, and inner experience refers to a "mental object" in time, as outer experience refers to a material object in space and time. On the disparity view, this parity does not hold, and self-reference is in a fundamental sense different from

object-reference. In contrast to both these views, I argue that Kant steers a middle course in *keeping some parity—or, perhaps better, keeping an analogy—while explaining the distinctive disparities*. My interpretation is thus able to make sense of the thought that self-reference is in some sense analogous to object-reference, while at the same time recognizing that in inner experience we are dealing with very special "objects," namely with psychological persons—a fact that mandates crucial qualifications.

How does Kant's puzzle of self-knowledge relate to Fichte's puzzle of self-consciousness, as Nisenbaum has presented it? In his *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte adopts a path that closely resembles Kant's transcendental philosophy. Yet, for this reason, it is particularly important to understand where and how he departs from Kant. Both Kant and Fichte are trying to explain the nature of consciousness of beings like us who are also capable of self-consciousness, and both are puzzled about the *possibility of self-reference*, that is, how I can be an object for myself. Kant keeps the conditions of how representations can be conscious and thus mean something *for me* (i.e., the conditions of reflexivity) and the conditions of how I can represent myself as an object (i.e., the conditions of self-reference) separate, since he distinguishes between acts of consciousness *per se* and acts of self-reference (leading to representational self-determination). The former are explained by his theory of *transcendental apperception*, which accounts for the reflexivity (or *for-me-ness*) of consciousness in general, whereas the latter are specifically accounted for by his theory of *inner experience*, which explains the possibility of determined self-reference. By contrast, Fichte identifies both reflexivity and self-reference as necessarily resulting from one and the same act of self-positing and develops a single theory only, the theory of the *self-positing I*.

According to Fichte, "the I posits itself purely and simply (*schlechthin*)," and, in doing so, the I "is at once subject and object."[24] Self-positing is a "self-reverting activity" that is "directed back upon the I."[25] In self-positing, the I finds itself, on the one hand, as an absolute subject (or pure I), a subject that exists *for itself* in every act of thought with absolute necessity and without reason beyond itself. On the other hand, the I posits itself as the object of its own consciousness such that "the identity of the posited object and the

[24] J. G. Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1797), 3:347. Henceforth "WLnm."
[25] Fichte, WLnm, 4:278.

positing subject is absolute."[26] The I is thus not simply a "mere subject", but a "subject-object", and all consciousness necessarily presupposes this self-referential structure.[27]

Fichte calls the activity of self-positing a "Tathandlung," since the *act* of producing consciousness is taken to be identical with its product, the *fact* of consciousness. The absolute subject is therefore understood both as the formal condition underlying all consciousness and as the first actualization of this formal condition, the first realization of a state of consciousness. This is expressed in the formula "I am I (*Ich bin ich*)," whereby the former "I" expresses the formal condition of self-positing and the latter "I" the existing I that realizes this condition and thus has *being for consciousness*.[28] In consequence, Fichte allows that in the act of self-positing Kant's form of apperception becomes the absolute standpoint of transcendental reflection (within consciousness), from which the subject conceives itself as identical with itself as an object, i.e. as a fact of consciousness, and from which it can then determine its own being for consciousness (i.e. its being for itself) in absolute terms.[29]

By keeping the conditions of reflexivity and those of self-reference separate as belonging to different kinds of acts, as I argue in the book, Kant avoids such an absolute standpoint (within consciousness). Let me sketch how Kant's two theories account for two separate sets of conditions that together explain the possibility of inner experience.

---

[26] Fichte, WLnm, 4:347.

[27] Fichte, WLnm, 3:347. Dieter Henrich, "Selbstbewußtsein. Kritische Einleitung in eine Theorie". In: *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*, edited by Rüdiger Bubner, Konrad Cramer, and Rainer Wiehl (Tübingen: Mohr, Vol. 1, 1970), 257–284, therefore, calls Fichte's model of consciousness a "knowing self-reference," but then criticizes Fichte for leaving this self-relation between the I as subject and the I as object unexplained.

[28] See J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), SW I: 94. On this point, see Günther Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 37. In various passages, Fichte shifts seamlessly from "*Seyn*" as essence (*Wesen*) to "*seyend*" as existing (*existieren*), that is, he passes from a formal condition to the existence of a real act and hence to the content of a real proposition about the subject.

[29] Although Fichte repeatedly asserts that the I can posit itself only as a finite I and thus as limited and determined, Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy,* 39, argues convincingly that Fichte's theory of self-positing drives him to recognize "the Absolute" as an "unfathomable ultimate ground" of all reality. Eckart Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) offers a Spinozistic reading of the self-positing I, according to which "the I can be simultaneously active and passive to the extent that we consider it by turns first as an absolute I and then as a finite I—as a quasi Spinozan substance (*causa sui*) and then as the limitation of that substance" (192). For a defense of Fichte against such absolutist readings, see Allen Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 38–40.

Kant first develops his theory of transcendental apperception in order to account for a distinctive feature of any consciousness of rational beings like us, namely for the distinctive reflexivity of such consciousness. This theory replies to the question of *how there can be a conscious subject at all capable of representing objects*. That is, how I can be a subject with representations that mean "not nothing *for me*" and which I can subsequently become conscious of as *"my own"*?[30] Like Fichte, Kant does *not* propose a higher-order reflection model to explain this basic reflexivity.[31] Rather, according to my reconstruction in chapter 3, Kant's theory of apperception first grounds the *subject-object* model of representation, which a reflection theory would already have to assume as well-grounded (110–115). Transcendental apperception is understood to supply only the general form that is realized in any mental act that results in a conscious representation of an object in the generic sense (including perceptions and judgments) (109). All representational matter involved in this mental act must then be unified in relation to the subject according to this general form of reflexivity. The resulting representation is then in the required sense *reflexive*: it is significant *for the subject* and *can subsequently* be called "*mine*" by the subject (although such calling it "mine" does not have to be realized in a mental act). Hence, the form of reflexivity, which can be conceptually expressed by the phrase "I think," is a necessary condition of any referential relation to an object and *a fortiori* also of self-reference. This form is thus a transcendental condition of both inner and outer experience alike—it must be realized whether I cognize the apple or myself.

It has been acknowledged in the literature that Fichte's act of self-positing, which he considers to be a *Tathandlung*, shares similarities with Kant's act of apperception.[32] Like Fichte's *Tathandlung*, we can understand an apperceptive act in Kant as the first and most general kind of self-realization and hence as the anchor for all kinds of self-

[30] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.
[31] See Dieter Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," in *Contemporary German Philosophy 1* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 15–53, and Manfred Frank, "Non-Objectal Subjectivity," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14, nos. 5–6 (2007): 152–173.
[32] For example, Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, 34, and Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought*, 50–51. These commentators detect a similarity between Kant's apperceptive "I think" and Fichte's "intellectual intuition" of oneself in self-positing. Yet in arguing that the subject becomes an *object* of intellectual intuition, Fichte already departs from Kant in an essential point, as my considerations below show. (Fichte's appeal to intuition has similarities with the psychological reading of Kant's apperception, which also assumes the necessity of self-intuition for apperception; for my critique of the psychological reading, see Katharina Kraus, *Kant on Self-Knowledge and Self-Formation* [Cambridge University Press, 2020], 96–98).

determination (129). Yet, importantly, transcendental apperception itself is *not* a kind of self-determination. Transcendental apperception *alone* does not yield self-reference, nor does it yield a representation that is *about oneself* (not even a representation of oneself as the logical subject of an I-judgment, see esp. 101–105). Unlike in a Fichtean act of self-positing, in a Kantian act of apperception the subject does *not* posit itself as a determined object, since it does not turn itself into an object at all. Rather, the notion of the thinking subject that emerges from Kant's theory of apperception is a merely formal and fully indeterminate one: it stands in as a placeholder for whoever realizes the transcendental form of apperception through distinct, determining mental acts. As such, the subject of apperception remains a theoretically elusive notion, which by itself does not give rise to a theory of self-reference. For Kant, any theory of self-reference must additionally consider the conditions of sensibility through which we are first able to relate to something *real* and *in concreto* and specifically the conditions of how mental states arise via *empirical* intuitions in our temporal consciousness (see chapter 2, esp. 49–80, and chapter 4, esp. 143–167). Hence, I see the following major difference between Fichte's self-positing and Kant's transcendental apperception: Fichte analytically derives a complete theory of the I as a finite cognizer and agent from his notion of the self-positing I, whereas Kant requires further synthetic elements to fill out a complete theory of human individuality.

One such element is Kant's theory of inner experience, on which the book focuses. This theory primarily answers the question of *how a subject can be the object of its own consciousness at all*, or, more precisely, *how a subject can determine itself as a psychological person in an objectively valid way*. This theory aims not at the conditions of consciousness in general and the formal notion of the thinking subject per se, but rather at the conditions of self-reference in experience and the notion of *a full-blown psychological person*—a person who has a past and a future; who recalls memories and projects herself into a future; who exercises a million distinct mental acts every day, each of which realizes the conditions of transcendental apperception; and who lives through a million different mental episodes resulting from these acts in her empirical consciousness.

As a result, Kant's theory of inner experience, as I construe it in the book, reveals, in addition to the conditions of apperception, further *sensible* and *rational conditions*.

Specifically, it reveals *regulative demands of reason*, which are required for us to conceive of ourselves as psychological persons. These demands are normatively binding both for the theoretical purpose of self-knowledge and for the practical purpose of forming ourselves as such persons in time.

In sum, both Kant's notion of a thinking subject and his notion of a psychological person crucially differ from Fichte's notion of the *self-positing I*. Neither the thinking subject nor the person is self-positing in a pure sense (resulting in the unmediated unity of subject and object). Determined self-reference is possible only with respect to the person and necessarily involves mediation by *empirical* intuition. Kant's theory of inner experience thus offers an original theory of human individuality, whilst remaining within the boundaries of his transcendental philosophy. We would overstep such boundaries, however, if we assumed the existence of *a noumenal self* that underlay *all* empirical consciousness and that could be known independently of experience.

2) The Normative Ideal of Personhood, Commitment, and Conflict

According to the self-formation view, a person is understood as forming herself in the course of realizing her mental capacities under the normative guidance of a unifying idea, the idea of the soul. Peters and Nisenbaum have both raised important questions regarding the kind of normativity at play, the possibility of failure, the problem of irresolvable conflicts, and the realizability of such a normative ideal.

Let me begin with the problem of failure. As Nisenbaum has rightly pointed out, we are often just not bothered by incoherent beliefs or incompatible commitments. It seems a common feature of human life that we keep living with mental dissonances and inner conflicts. This observation suggests that humans may simply *not* be committed to the normative demand of becoming a harmonious mental whole, to the demands of coherence and consistency. Doesn't that show that the self-formation view is not only empirically false, but also—and perhaps even worse—helplessly naïve or idealistic?

A major point of the self-formation view is precisely that we require the notion of an *ideal* person to be a person at all. Let me explain by drawing an important distinction between the *kind of being* we are and the way in which we in fact *realize* such being in life (that is, if you wish, a distinction between *ideal essence* and *real existence*—a terminology

that, of course, has to be used with caution). Our kind of being is defined by a certain *capacity*, or *potential*: *qua being persons*, we have the capacity to unify all our mental acts in accordance with an idea of reason and hence to live up to the normative standard set by this idea. Yet having such potential does not mean that we fully (or adequately) *actualize* such potential, that is, that we do in fact (or will ever) meet this ideal standard of personhood *in life*.

If I argue that "as a rational being we *cannot conceive of ourselves other than in accordance with the idea of the soul as a coherent mental whole,*" then I mean that the idea of the soul (as the concept of a mental whole) is a necessary component of our *conception* of personhood per se. If you were to stop conceiving yourself according to this idea, you would stop understanding yourself as a person and hence stop being a person altogether (that is, you would renounce your personhood, if that were possible at all). The argument I offer for this conception of personhood consists in detailed analyses of the functions that the faculty of reason [*Vernunft*] plays with regard to the cognition of the psychological features of persons (chapter 5), the acquisition of self-knowledge (chapter 6), and finally the realization of oneself as a person (chapter 7). Kant's conception of (human) personhood is thus rooted in the very structure of (human) reason. It turns out that reason—by virtue of the idea of the soul—plays an indispensable role in providing a *context of intelligibility* within which inner experience can first be understood as truth-apt cognition of one's psychological features (chapter 5; see next section). In theoretical respects, reason provides normative principles for assessing these self-related cognitions within an inferential system and hence for obtaining criteria of truth required for self-knowledge (chapter 6).

In practical respects, to be a person, for Kant, is to engage in a particular activity—the activity of *self-formation*. In this respect, the idea serves as a normative guideline for carrying out this activity and, hence, for actualizing oneself as a person. That is, the idea sets norms for becoming and for maintaining to be a person. These are requirements that we cannot opt out of without losing our personhood altogether. A central rule concerns the requirement to view oneself as a "substance that, with personal identity, persistently exists"[33] (A672/B700). According to the self-formation view, this requirement should not

[33] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A672/B700.

be understood as the true (or hypothetical) description of an underlying given reality, but as the normative demand for exercising one's self-activity such that one makes oneself actual as a continuously existing person. It is therefore not sufficient to be a "staccato mind" only—a mind that now and then exercises mental acts, each of which is unified by transcendental apperception, yet without any coherent relation between the distinct acts that occur in different mental episodes (193). Rather, in being a person, we are bound to the normative demand to bring our mental acts into a systematic order. Self-formation consists in the overarching activity of reason to bring distinct mental acts, occurring at different times, into such an order.[34]

In this sense, the self-formation view shares similarities with Fichte's proposal that we understand Kant's theory of reason in terms of an "act" of reason, as Nisenbaum points out. The use of the idea of the soul should, however, not be misunderstood as a retreat into the residues of a dogmatic metaphysics. Rather, related to Fichte's idea of taking up a standpoint, the idea of the soul, on my reading, provides us with a *context of intelligibility* within which a certain kind of intellectual activity can first be meaningful for us. Acting in this context then entails certain norms for this activity of self-formation that we exercise qua our rational nature.

Yet, I believe that there is a fundamental difference between Kantian self-formation, on the one hand, and both Fichte's self-positing *I* and Hegel's *Geist*, as Peters suggests, on the other hand. On Kant's view, there is the real possibility of failure, whereas Fichte and Hegel seem to ward off such a possibility by invoking an absolute standpoint from which the reality of the I can be viewed—either in the sense of Fichte's *pure I*, viewed from the absolute standpoint of subjective consciousness as a being-for-itself or in the sense of Hegel's *Geist* as objectively manifested, self-expressing, rational activity. From

[34] My emphasis on the idea of the soul and its corresponding regulative demands shows crucial similarities with Salomon Maimon's account of the *I*. For Maimon, "my *I* is a mere idea […], but it is at the same time a real object" (Salomon Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy* [London: Continuum, 2010], 89). That is, I am intelligible to myself only if I conceive of myself according to the rational standards of thought as they are defined by the idea. At the same time, through a continuous self-determination, I "approach[] a determined object ever more closely to infinity" in accordance with that idea (ibid., 89). "The reason is […] that the more universal the modifications of our I become, the more we become substance (subject of our representations), and the more universal these become, the more interconnected they become, and hence the simpler we become; and the longer the series of representations thus connected becomes, the more we become identical with ourselves at different times. That is to say, we achieve a higher degree of personality" (ibid., 89).

this absolute standpoint, the I is then conceived of as a kind of supersensible (and possibly supra-individual) reality, which is supposed to guarantee a priori not only the real possibility, but also the actuality, the ultimate success in bringing about such a systematic whole.

What, for Kant, would it mean to fail in one's self-formation? It would mean exercising this activity poorly or inadequately, persisting in mental dissonance and holding on to conflicting beliefs and irreconcilable commitments, and thus simply not even approaching a systematic whole. It seems an all too common matter that we lose sight of the normative standards that come with our personhood, or that we do not properly care about them. Nonetheless, they are inevitably demanded of us qua being persons.

But can, for Kant, all conflicts ever be resolved? Are there irresolvable conflicts between the rational and the sensuous parts of our nature? For Kant, there is an a priori guarantee that we *can* approach the state of perfect harmony within us, if we follow the norms of reason, but *no* guarantee that we *will de facto* exercise our self-formation *well*. A person's life is an open-ended process, the outcome of which depends on the person's actual doings. Self-formation cannot be completed within one's lifetime and, hence, the idea of a mental whole cannot be fully (or adequately) reached *in life*. The idea remains a practical demand that governs a person's life as a whole.[35]

It would be a mischaracterization of the view to understand the demand for systematicity as a one-time act of commitment that occurs only at a particular time, or as a commitment that a person must aspire to but that she accepts only from a particular moment in life—two interpretive options that Peters raises. Rather, the demand is a *time-independent* characterization of any person, understood as an empirical reality in the process of becoming: I make myself actual through mental acts moment by moment *in time*, and, in doing so, these acts are normatively guided by a *time-independent* idea of

[35] Again, there is an interesting parallel with Maimon's account of the I, despite his fundamental critique of Kant (see Karin Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chapter 2). Although Maimon adheres to what he calls a rational dogmatism, he also advocates empirical skepticism, since from an empirical perspective we can never know whether we will ever meet our rational standards. Similarly, according to my interpretation of Kant, the idea of the soul defines a rational standard of intelligibility, truth, and self-formation and yet we always remain vulnerable to empirical deviations, even radical ones, from that standard.

the whole that is to result from this process. A person is empirically real to the extent she has made herself actual in time.

The self-formation view attempts to defuse a sharp conflict between rational and sensuous human nature—an issue raised by Peters. The view offers an integrative account of personhood that shows how our sensuous nature is inevitably normatively governed by our rational nature, while reason always needs to be supplied by the lower, sensible faculties with the material that constitutes an individual's life. Following the ideal of personhood should not be misunderstood as simply denying having certain sensations and feelings, emotional upheavals or conflicting desires. Rather, it concerns our choices about how to respond to these "lower" states of sensation, raw desire, or feelings of pleasure and pain that we undergo. The normative ideal requires us to seek systematic order in our rational attitudes toward such states, such as in our epistemic beliefs and principles of action. Chapter 7 shows how the demand for inner systematicity plays out in each of three distinct but interrelated subsystems, each corresponding to one of the three basic faculties of cognition, will, and feeling. Accordingly, inner systematicity can be understood, respectively, as the epistemic coherence of a person's system of beliefs, as the practical consistency of her system of principles of actions, and as the mental harmony evident in her overall emotional state (272–276).

The self-formation view also attempts to mitigate a potential conflict between theoretical and practical reason by showing that coming to know oneself (through inner experience) and forming oneself as a person (through the self-activity of reason) are two co-dependent activities, each of which can be characterized by an imperative (277). If the view is extended to account for moral personhood, as I indicate in the epilogue, then it can be seen that the imperative to seek self-knowledge is a condition for the development of a moral character: only by knowing our current mental states and more general psychological properties, including all momentary inconsistencies, can I understand which ones I need to change, revise, or even reject, in order to act from moral principles and hence to become a moral character overall. Knowing one's inconsistencies is the engine of change, not a way of preventing change. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant himself recognizes the command to "know (scrutinize, fathom) yourself" as a "dut[y] to

oneself" (278).[36] In construing personhood as guided by a *normative* demand for overall coherence, the self-formation view not only allows the possibility for psychological and moral change, but also offers an explanation for the temporal dynamics of such change.

Does it also allow the possibility for a radical change, for a revolution of character, a change of our *Gesinnung*, as Peters suggests? I would like to reply to this question with an analogy from the natural sciences. Physics has offered us the most detailed theories of so-called many-particle systems, such as gases or condensed matter. By means of these theories, physicists are able to calculate the macrostate in which a system as a whole will be, given a certain distribution of microstates of the particles and the general, time-independent properties of the system (e.g., constants of the differential equations describing the dynamic evolution of the system). Take, for instance, the example of a state of matter: at some point, the distribution of microstates has changed to such an extent that the overall system changes its fundamental characteristics, and we have a veining of the aggregate state. At a certain temperature, water turns to ice; at another temperature, it turns to steam. Similarly, climate scientists frequently refer to the *tipping point* as the point when our climate system dramatically changes its fundamental properties. I suggest that we can understand a moral revolution along these lines: at a certain point, the microstates that result from our first-order mental acts have changed sufficiently such that there is a fundamental change in our overall character. This is the revolution. This analogy from system theory helps to explain how such a radical change can be observed *in time* without undermining the rational demand for systematicity as a *time-independent* property of the whole person-system. Yet it remains to be discussed how such a revolution can be brought about causally, which additionally requires a theory of *freedom*.

3) Ideas as Contexts of Intelligibility and the Perspectival Nature of Human Self-Knowledge

The context-of-intelligibility view is intended to explain the "indispensably necessary regulative use" of transcendental ideas primarily for the theoretical purpose of

[36] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:441. See also Kraus, *Kant on Self-Knowledge*, 278.

gaining empirical knowledge (see chapter 5).[37] According to this view, the regulative use of an idea is understood to generate a context of intelligibility within which we can first make sense of our experience as truth-apt, inferential cognition. By reflecting our experience under such an idea, we make sense of it as a certain *kind of cognition* that is available with regard to a particular *domain of nature*. In turn, the idea prescribes normative guidelines for our cognitive activities to operate within that context and thus achieve the corresponding goal, which in the theoretical case is knowledge.

The view responds to a need in Kant's account of theoretical cognition: experience is in a fundamental sense *underdetermined* without the regulative employment of reason. In several places, Kant indicates that experience remains rhapsodic, scattered, or sporadic without ideas—a claim that parallels his claim that intuitions remain blind without concepts.[38] That is, experience per se is possible without ideas, but it may not be *intelligible or meaningful for us*.

For experience to represent an object in an objectively valid way (i.e., to be cognition), it must fulfill at least some of the cognition-constitutive conditions of the understanding (i.e., the principles of the understanding). While these conditions are necessary for the possibility of cognition per se, they are not sufficient for a particular cognition to be sufficiently determined regarding its empirical content. Take the example of my red apple again. The mere experience of something red over there in a certain shape, based on an occurrent perception, may yield a minimal cognition of something red, but not the more complex cognition of a *red apple*. To accomplish this, I must additionally understand—to some extent—what the concepts <red> and <apple> mean, how they relate to other concepts (more general ones, more specific ones, and neighboring concepts), and what kind of object would support (i.e., make true) such a cognition. Thus, in order to make sense of my experience of the red apple, I must contextualize it within an adequate context (e.g., the context of spatially extended objects, the context of plants, or the context of edibles). I must consider it within an appropriate conceptual system and in principle be able to derive entailment relations from it. Only then is my experience

[37] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A644/B672.
[38] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A832/B860, A92/B125.

intelligible for me: It has a sufficiently determined and inferentially connected content for the subject and it is truth-assessable with regard to the object.

According to the context-of-intelligibility view, this deficit of the understanding must be filled by reason. Specifically, the ideas of reason define the contexts of intelligibility within which the understanding can properly operate and make out objects of experience in the first place. In their regulative use, ideas *generate* such contexts: they present (*darstellen*) a projected whole within which single experiences can be considered as related to one another and thus as sufficiently determined. Viewed from the objective side, an idea provides an outline, or sketch, of the domain of reality to which this experience refers. For example, the idea of an *absolute space* outlines the domain of physical nature, within which we can first cognize spatio-material objects as interacting according to mechanical laws; the idea of the *soul* outlines the domain of psychological nature, within which we can first cognize inner appearances as belonging to and causally arising from *one and the same person*; the idea of *purposiveness*—to name another idea from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*—outlines the domain of living nature, within which we can cognize distinct parts (e.g., organs) as constituting a *living being*. Without these ideas, any cognition of spatio-material objects, mental states, or organic parts would remain blind and rhapsodic.

Hence, reason's regulative use consists not in determining objects of experience (which is the real use of the understanding) or any other *things* per se. Rather, it consists in directing the understanding towards its proper use and hence in *determining the limits of experience:* reason determines the domain (or scope) within which the acts of the understanding can operate properly, make out objects of experience, and generate truth-apt cognitions of these objects. An idea of reason is itself productive in defining the rational context (and order) within which a certain *kind of cognition* is first intelligible for rational beings like us, for example, as the cognition of physical-material, psychological, or organic beings.

The transcendental twist is that, for Kant, not only does the understanding provide the most general a priori determinations of the objects of experience, but reason, by means of its ideas, projects the most general a priori "determinations" of the domains or contexts within which we can make sense of our experience, although such "determinations" cannot be known to be instantiated. Reason supplements the deficits of

the understanding by projecting *"local ontologies"* to give guidance to our cognitive practice. Inner and outer experience can then be understood to belong to two different contexts of intelligibility and lead to two different kinds of cognitions: cognitions about spatio-material reality and cognitions about psychological reality.

In chapter 5, I consider two alternatives to the context of intelligiblity view, which I call the noumenal view and the fictional view. Both views, as I construe them, have in common that they take the regulative use of ideas to amount to descriptive propositions about a given reality. The noumenal view takes the idea of the soul to amount to propositions about a really existing entity—a noumenal soul-substance (or a thinking thing-in-itself)—and asserts them as true, though it denies cognition of such an entity. The fictional view understands these propositions as heuristically useful working hypotheses that promote some kind of self-knowledge but concedes that these hypotheses might turn out to be false. If they were indeed false, the soul would be an untrue fiction (or mere illusion) to which nothing real corresponds, but which can apparently motivate certain epistemic enquiries.

The noumenal view simply goes one step too far by accepting an existential claim on the basis of an idea. Remaining true to Kantian humility, we cannot make such claims regarding a reality existing as a whole (or as such). We can only project the whole and use this projection as the context within which experience can be understood as the sufficiently determinate cognition of appearances that arise within that context. Any existential claim based on an idea would lead into a reification and hence into a transcendental illusion. I acknowledge in the book that the noumenal interpretation of ideas is rarely explicitly endorsed in the literature (188). Nonetheless, it is sometimes assumed that the regulative use of reason is based on certain ontological commitments. Watkins, for instance, argues that certain "ontological claims" must be assumed as "regulative principles that serve to satisfy the explanatory demands of reason" and that "regulate the use of our understanding so as to satisfy reason."[39]

[39] Eric Watkins, *Kant on Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 210–211. With respect to ontological claims regarding the existence and substantiality of the soul, see also Julian Wuerth, *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 183, and Eric Watkins, "Kant on Materialism," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 5 (2016): 1035–1052.

The fictional view—and most methodological interpretations subscribe to a kind of fictionalism—is too weak to justify the normative bindingness of the regulative use of ideas for our cognitive practice. In his version of fictionalism, Allison identifies the hypothetical use of reason with the regulative use of reason based on the subjective demand for systematic unity.[40] He acknowledges that such regulative use presupposes a *transcendental* principle of systematic unity, which he, however, identifies with the transcendental illusion that arises from "taking the subjective demand to seek unity [...] to reflect an objective necessity pertaining to the things themselves."[41] Despite its illusory nature, Allison argues, the transcendental principle is an indispensable "application condition of the understanding."[42] Yet by constructing the transcendental principle as an illusory description to which no reality can (or ever will) correspond, the fictionalist view, I argue in the book, offers no plausible explanation of why the regulative use of ideas should be normatively binding in order to make *intelligible* the acts of the understanding in inner experience and hence to approach *true* self-cognition (190–193). Why should a principle be binding at all if it is based on an untrue fiction without real underpinning? By contrast, on my view, an idea presents (rather than truth-aptly describes) a mental whole that is partially (empirically) real and towards the completion of which the corresponding principles normatively guide us.

The context-of-intelligibility view, I believe, fits well with Peters's suggestion concerning Fichte's "perspectival" conception of an infinite goal. Kant's ideas are the ideas of *human* reason and hence they generate the contexts, or the "horizons," as Kant himself sometimes puts it, of the *human*-specific perspective—the perspective that we have onto the world.[43] In chapter 5, I show in detail how a regulative use of an idea generates a context by analogy with the schematic rules provided by the understanding and in light of our temporal existence. In this sense, an idea provides us with a context—moment by moment—to perform our cognitive (and other intellectual) tasks and to make sense of the demand of systematicity anew at every moment in life.

[40] Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 423–448.
[41] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 432–433.
[42] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 436.
[43] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A658/B686.

Hence, we could understand my book as exploring the conditions of *human* self-knowledge in two senses: as the kind of knowledge that we have of ourselves as *human* persons *and* from a distinctively *human* perspective. We can only ever see ourselves as finite persons unfolding moment by moment in time.

Bibliography

Allison, Henry E. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (1796-99/1992). *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo* (1796–99). Translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale. Ithaka: Cornell University Press.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (1794/2021). *Foundation of the entire Wissenschaftslehre and Related Writings (1794–95)*. Translated and edited by Daniel Breazeale. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Scholarly Editions Online).

Förster, Eckart. *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy. A Systematic Reconstruction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Frank, Manfred. "Non-Objectal Subjectivity." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14, nos. 5–6 (2007): 152–173.

Henrich, Dieter. "Fichte's Original Insight." Translated by David Lachterman. In *Contemporary German Philosophy, Vol. 1*, edited by Darrel E. Christensen, 15–53. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Kant, Immanuel. *Practical Philosophy*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Maimon, Salomon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*. Translated and edited by Alistair Welchman, Henry Somers-Hall, Merten Reglitz, and Nick Midgley, London: Continuum, 2010.

Nisenbaum, Karin. *For the Love of Metaphysics: Nihilism and the Conflict of Reason from Kant to Rosenzweig*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Watkins, Eric. “Kant on Materialism.” *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 24, no. 5 (2016): 1035–1052.

Watkins, Eric. *Kant on Laws*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Wood, Allen. *Fichte’s Ethical Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Wuerth, Julian. *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Zöller, Günther. *Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Symposium: Author Meets Critics

Katalin Makkai

Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life

Oxford University Press, 2021, 210 pp., $99.99 (hbk), ISBN 9781108497794.

◇◇◇

Reviewed by:
Richard Eldridge, University of Swarthmore

Espen Hammer, Temple University

Response by:
Katalin Makkai, Bard College Berlin
◊◊◊

Review 1: Richard Eldridge, Swarthmore College

Katalin Makkai's book is governed by two closely related thoughts: she finds both in Kant and finds both to be important in life but little understood. The first thought is that there is, as Kant puts it, something "strange and anomalous [*Das Befremdende und Abweichende*]" about the judgment of taste, in its being both based on individual feeling alone and nonetheless such that agreement with it can rightly be both expected [*zugemutet*] and demanded [*fordert*] from everyone.[44] The second thought is that the experience of making such a judgment is vitally important for human life. Epiphanically, as Makkai puts it, "the work of art that is (along with natural beauty) the object of the judgment of taste . . . seems to animate me, to bring me to life" (86), thus raising me out of dull and inert (in)activity. In a trope that is central to modernism, the experience of beauty, especially of artistic beauty, is central to what makes life (more) human, interesting, and worth living.

I am happy to join Makkai in finding these two thoughts both central to Kant's thinking in *The Critique of Judgment* and compelling on their own account. Makkai's elucidation and defense of them, both as Kant interpretation and as important contributions to an understanding of the value of art, are powerful and compelling. Her clearly written and frequently moving book does a lot to make these thoughts more available and more attractive to wider audiences than they mostly are in the contemporary world. That is an important achievement. *Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life* has now productively informed and shaped my own thinking about Kant and art and life.

I am going to focus on two closely related issues about her account: the nature of the transcendental deduction of the intersubjective validity of judgments of taste, and Kant's account of the value of the experience of art. Roughly, I think there is something that is not quite right about her account of the deduction, though there is much that is

[44] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Ak. V: 191, 77; Ak V:213, p. 98; *Kritik der Urteilskraft,* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 101, 126. In "Aesthetic Rationality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 115, no. 3 (2018), 113–140, Keren Gorodeisky and Eric Marcus have ably described and defended how this strange anomaly continues to be manifested in ordinary contemporary critical practice.

illuminating in it. I think that just about everything is right—and important and so far ill understood—in her account of the value of the experience of art and that most, but not quite all, of that account that is important on its own is Kantian. (It is certainly Kantian in inspiration and in many details, but not all.)

In describing Kant's account of the judgment of taste, Makkai focuses much more on the aesthetic encounter or aesthetic experience than on any assessment or verdict that is about or based on that experience. In many ways, this is all to the good. This encounter may, in the end, be what matters most for human life. Kant, however, distinguishes between the aesthetic encounter, for which his term is *Beurteilung,* or the estimation of the object, and a verdict based on that encounter, for which his term is *Urteil,* or judgment.[45] One natural way to understand the argument of the transcendental deduction is to take it as arguing that that verdict is logically universalizable, or truth evaluable, or true or false for everyone. It is, as Kant puts it, *as if* we were making a cognitive judgment about an object, in that the judgment "x is beautiful" is true or false about x. It is this verdict, this judgment, with which one demands the agreement of everyone. Or, as the heading to §22 puts it, "the necessity of . . . universal assent [*Beistimmung*] . . . is thought in [that is, is part of the content of] a judgment of taste [*Geschmacksurteil*]," that is, in an asserted verdict.[46] This is what is so strange and peculiar: that with nothing other to go on than a free encounter that sustains a feeling, we nonetheless make an overt as-if

[45] Section 9 of *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* is entitled "Investigation of the question whether in the judgment of taste [*im Geschmacksurteil*] the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging [*Beurteilung*] of the object or the latter precedes the former." "The solution of this problem," Kant tells us, "is the key to the critique of taste and hence worthy of full attention," and the answer is that "this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging [*diese bloß subjektive (äesthetische) Beurteilung*] of the object . . . precedes the pleasure in it," which then serves as the ground for the overt judgment [*Urteil*] that the object is beautiful. Only in virtue of this two-part structure—activity of estimation [*Beurteiling*] plus judgment [*Urteil*] about pleasure—is it possible to understand how "an erroneous judgment of taste [*ein irriges Geschmacksurteil*]" is possible: namely, by feeling pleasure in an object, making the judgment [*Urteil*] that it is beautiful, but in doing so misascribing that felt pleasure to the activity of estimation [*Beurteilung*]. This amounts to "offend[ing] against" the conditions for making a judgment of taste [*Geschmacksurteil*] by taking oneself to have engaged in free estimation [*Beurteilung*] without in fact having done so. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Ak V: 216–218, 101–103; *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 131–132.

[46] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* Ak V: 239, 123; *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 158.

cognitive judgment—we issue a verdict—that is true or false for everyone: or so the deduction argues.

Makkai does not deny any of this. But all her attention goes to the estimation or *Beurteilung*, or to what she calls the aesthetic encounter.[47] Her account of this encounter—of what is going on in estimating an object or in freely attending to it while bracketing any rule-based bases for judgment—is rich and original. It involves a kind of surrender or opening oneself to the object and to the feelings that are engendered in attending to it freely, rather than having the experience over and done with by simply reaching a cognitive judgment ("Oh, that's a Rembrandt"). This attending is temporally sustained—in fact, self-sustaining in virtue of being pleasurable—and involves a mix of actively doing something (really looking, listening, reading, or otherwise paying attention but without simply classifying or recognizing) and letting something happen. As she puts it, there is a kind of "passivity that is not opposed to activity"[48] in allowing oneself to be acted on and animated by the object through actively paying attention to it. My agency is in play,[49] but in a way that is different from the role it plays in either means-end practical judgment or cognitive judgment. "The judgment of taste is or expresses an act of *appreciation*, [or] even of *praise*, or of (praising) criticism,"[50] she writes.

All this is a powerful and attractive picture of our engagements with works of art. It is an account of aesthetic experience without aesthetic properties (properties that no one has ever been able to define satisfactorily as distinct properties) and without McDowellian quasi-sensory detectors of aesthetic value taken as something that is just there in the object, more or less on a par with secondary qualities. We are both actively doing something and letting something happen in appreciating a singular object that strikes or seizes us, epiphanically, and this experience or encounter includes a feeling that the world, or some objects in it, can win our love, praise, and allegiance, in such a way as to make life more worth living, all in a way that is more bound up with emotion than a

[47] Katalin Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 86.

[48] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 164.

[49] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 163.

[50] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 136.

typically paler, more cognitively oriented, merited-response account of value. (All this is the modernist trope I mentioned earlier.)

In focusing primarily on the aesthetic encounter, that is, on the estimation or *Beurteilung* of an object, Makkai is concerned to articulate and defend Kant's idea that this encounter is communicable or *mitteilbar*, a term that suggests a sharing or passing on of that experience. What is communicable in principle in my experience of a beautiful work of art and what may be encouraged by useful elucidatory criticism may not be and is in fact likely not to be exactly the same for you. (It's hard, in any case, to know how to identify and count experiences.) But it *is* at least possible for you to be animated in encountering the work in something like the way in which I have been, and my pointing out some of the features in the work that have figured in my response may help in actualizing this possibility for you. As Arnold Isenberg famously observed, the critic's remarks may function as "directions for perceiving," which directions "may or may not be followed by agreement, or what is called 'communion'—a community of feeling which expresses itself in identical value judgments."[51] This is a broadly Kantian picture of the nature of criticism in potentially actualizing the in-principle communicability of an aesthetic encounter, and I am happy to share it.

But Kant goes yet further. He argues in the deduction not only for the claim that the aesthetic encounter is itself in principle shareable, in the sense that it might be shared or that nothing necessarily blocks this possibility, but also for the further claim that an aesthetic judgment—a verdict or *Urteil*—has intersubjective validity, that it is itself true or false for everyone. And this is because *if* anyone in fact succeeds in paying full,

---

[51] Arnold Isenberg, "Critical Communication," in *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, eds. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), 367. Contra Makkai, Isenberg is, I think, committed to criticism as "directions for perceiving" but not to directions for perceiving aesthetic qualities (despite his talk of perceiving gracefulness), as the qualities in question are radically dependent on the context of the individual work. What is graceful in a particular piece by Shostakovich may be clangorous in one by Bach. No full-context independence, no full-blooded property. (Evidently I am assuming that the paradigm of a full-blooded property is a repeatably measurable magnitude that may appear in different objects.)

disinterested attention to an object and in doing so experiences the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties, *then* anyone else who in fact likewise succeeds in paying full, disinterested attention will also experience that harmonious free play. All this is owing to the fact that we have relevantly similar cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding, as is evident in the fact that our cognitions, which are themselves constructed through these faculties, are communicable. Only these cognitive faculties, albeit used in an unusual free way, are at work within the aesthetic encounter or the *Beurteilung* of the object. In short, same cognitive faculties (albeit used differently), same aesthetic experience (under the optimally free use of these faculties), and therefore universalizable verdict.

I am not sure what Makkai thinks about all this. As I said, all her attention goes to the *Beurteilung,* or aesthetic encounter. The point of emphasizing it, however, is that it is only insofar as such judgments of taste, *aesthetische Urteile*, are in fact universalizable that they count as genuine judgments, not truth-value-less expressions of mere sentiment (or judgments about what is merely agreeable to me). Without Kant's full deduction and its associated account of the relation between aesthetic estimation or *Beurteilung* and the aesthetic verdict or *aesthetische Urteil*, it is, I think, difficult to capture Kant's understanding of how a full-blooded mistake in making a judgment of taste is possible, as well as exactly how, according to Kant, we are ourselves "at stake" in making a judgment of taste, in as much as issuing an aesthetic verdict overtly reposes on an assessment of one's own motives and quality of attention.[52]

[52] In scanting the deduction and reading Kant as caring only about the in-principle shareability—nothing stands in its way—of the aesthetic encounter, Makkai's account interestingly resembles that of Salim Kemal. (See Salim Kemal, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory: An Introduction* [New York: St Martin's Press, 1992], 82–99.) Kemal and Makkai both argue that (what Kemal calls) the same "subjective formal conditions" for judging (that is, the imagination and the understanding operating in harmony) are in play in both aesthetic and cognitive judgment, albeit that this harmony is free in the case of aesthetic judgment and under the control of the understanding in cognitive judgment. This is enough to establish (in a way that echoes the private language argument) that there is nothing that stops us from sharing an aesthetic experience and arriving at like verdicts. What we say would not count as a verdict about the object (rather than avowal) if it were not in principle possible for at least some others to confirm it. This reading is too weak, however, to show either that we will, with care, arrive at like cognitions or that we will share aesthetic experiences and arrive at like verdicts under optimal conditions of free estimating. Kant is committed to these latter, stronger claims. My

Here there are two comments that I must immediately add. First, as I understand Kant's deduction, it fails. The assumption that, in estimating an object and issuing an aesthetic judgment based on that estimation, we always use structurally similar cognitive faculties in the same way in these different, free circumstances is dubitable. There is no satisfactory proof that judgments of taste are universalizable or fully truth evaluable. Second, even if they were, we would nonetheless face standing problems in making individual judgments of taste, as we can never be certain of the character of our own motives, hence never certain that our attention to an object has in fact been optimally free. As Kant famously remarks in the *Groundwork*, the "dear self"[53] may always intrude, and we may mistakenly pride ourselves on our disinterestedness.

Where does this leave Makkai's account of the aesthetic encounter? I am mostly inclined to say that it makes it even *more* interesting and cogent. Just as Alexander Nehamas holds, and (contra Nehamas) following Kant rightly understood, "some kind of mattering comes first; . . . aesthetic attunement [or successful, valuable engagement] is not a prize won from the quest to understand."[54] No aesthetic verdict can be supported and no aesthetic encounter can be shared by appealing to considerations outside one's own aesthetic experience. Elucidatory observations may be offered. But these may fail. Arguing and supporting are in view, but proving is not.[55] We may court agreement in offering elucidatory reasons, but we risk rejection in doing so.[56] In talking about one's aesthetic encounter with an object and the features one takes to play a role in it, "the aim

---

reading follows Paul Guyer's in *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 319–324, and I lay it out in Richard Eldridge, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of* Art, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 188–195.

[53] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) Ak IV: 407, 62.

[54] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 7–8. For Nehamas's version of this claim, see Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 53: "Instead of signifying the end of our interaction [with a work of art], the 'verdict' indicates that far from thinking it's over, I want it to continue. In other words, it isn't a verdict. . . . If I like it, I will want to see more of it in order to see more of what it intimates it has to offer. . . . Evaluation settles nothing. It is a commitment to the future."

[55] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 171.

[56] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 181.

. . . or the hope, [is that of] opening the way for the other person's animation, [of] helping the object bring the other person to life, or helping bring her to life for it"[57]—as well as, one might say, of testing in reflection and courting shared resonance with one's own aesthetic encounter. The experience of animation within the aesthetic encounter offers us a chance of "caring for the world for its own sake"[58] and so of overcoming melancholy at its deadness.

I take all this to be true, important, and little understood or acknowledged. Art is, as Adorno once put it, "the plenipotentiary of a better praxis"[59] that is more meaningful and emotionally engaging than current practice mostly is. It offers us what I have called "the evidence of things not seen"[60] and the chance of being "more fully seduced to life."[61] What is perhaps missing in these forward-looking accounts is enough emphasis on the depth and persistence of the risk that comes in responding to such plenipotentiaries, evidences, and seductions. In taking our own judgments of taste to be correct or incorrect, genuinely truth-evaluable, as Kant claims we in fact do in practice[62] (whether or not he succeeds in proving our entitlement to do this), we cast those who disagree with us as wrong, and vice versa. Deeply felt and articulated aesthetic responses can and do sometimes divide us bitterly from one another or leave us dead and unresponsive to one another, no matter how open to the unfamiliar we sincerely try to be. Makkai notes that there is a risk run in encountering criticism of "confusing one's stake in what the other has said [about an object] . . . in [her] effort to attract you to your own aesthetic encounter

[57] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 180.

[58] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 193.

[59] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 15.

[60] Eldridge, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*, 288.

[61] Richard Eldridge, *Literature, Life, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 149.

[62] "This indeterminate norm of a common sense [that would establish the universalizability of judgments of taste] is really presupposed by us: our presumption [*unsere Anmaßung*] in making judgments of taste proves that." Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Ak V: 240–241, 124. Whether the deduction is sound and whether we possess any entitlement, we do not stop claiming universalizability for our verdicts.

with it . . . with a stake in the object itself,"[63] therein being mistakenly seduced by the critic's words rather than by the object. This can indeed happen.

But the risks of disagreement, alienation, and rebuff are, I think, wider, deeper, and more powerful than this, and Kant's stress on the claim to universalizability as a fact of our practice of aesthetic claiming—a fact that reaches into the heart of our aesthetic encounters and how we think about them––helps us see this. When we in fact disagree about the significance of aesthetic encounters we take ourselves to have had and that we take seriously, then division from others rather than a shared world of experience and feeling follows. I could, I think, not be married to someone who lacked a taste for Jane Austen, Schubert, or Satayjit Ray, or to someone whose primary objects of musical encounter are EDM and "gangsta" rap. But I know that there are such people in the world and that I must somehow learn to live with them, despite deep disagreements in feelings and their objects that we take to be significant. As Ted Cohen once poignantly wrote,

> *Hamlet* and *The Marriage of Figaro* connect me with most of you, I would guess, perhaps all of you. Elaine May's movie *Ishtar,* which I am very fond of, leaves me virtually alone. That's all fine: I need to be with you, and I need to be alone. I need to be like you, and I need to be unlike you. A world in which you and I never connected would be a horror. And so would a world in which we were exactly the same, and therefore connected unfailingly with every object on every occasion. *The Marriage of Figaro* helps us be us. *Ishtar* helps me be me. Thank God for them both.[64]

Makkai is perhaps not quite sensitive enough to this kind of continuing negotiation between possible communion in response and sheer difference, as perhaps I have myself not been in the past. She somewhat underplays the fraught negotiations of intersubjective agreement and disagreement in our various aesthetic encounters and in our talk about them in favor, ultimately, of seeing the world itself as speaking to us through the art

[63] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 181.

[64] Ted Cohen, "High and Low Thinking about High and Low Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (1993): 156.

object, thus enabling us, again, to "care [ ] about the world for its own sake"[65]—as if there were one world and we might all care about all of it together, just in virtue of having experienced *this* art object.. It is a matter of emphasis, but Makkai's handling of this trope strikes me as perhaps somewhat more Heideggerian than Kantian, so that it risks more optimism and even apocalypticism than Kant would allow.

I enter this criticism with hesitation and targeting myself as much as Makkai. It should not suggest that there is not in fact a strain or stream or figure of animation—*Belebung*—that runs from Kant through Heidegger and more widely throughout artistic modernism. Makkai's uncovering, activation, and defense of the tropology of animation through the aesthetic encounter helps us, vitally, see much that is important in Kant and in art. At its best moments, it could change your life, or at least the way in which aesthetics, and philosophy more broadly, are mostly done nowadays. What would it be like to live, both philosophically and on the ground, with the Cavellian thought that, in Makkai's words, "it is not in my power to ensure that I am understood, or that I am not understood; that my expressiveness is neither totally up to me nor totally out of my hands; that attunement must be found; and that it up to each of us to judge what its apparent absence means"?[66] What would it be like, in philosophy and in life, to live with one's finitude and standing exposure to defeat and repudiation, but without despair? Powerfully and gracefully, Makkai's book helps us consider such questions and to take them seriously.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Cohen, Ted. "High and Low Thinking about High and Low Art." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (1993): 151–156.

[65] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 193.

[66] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 60.

Eldridge, Richard. *Literature, Life, and Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Eldridge, Richard. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of* Art. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Gorodeisky, Keren, and Eric Marcus. "Aesthetic Rationality." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 115, no. 3 (2018): 113–140.

Guyer, Paul. *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Isenberg, Arnold. "Critical Communication." *The Philosophical Review* 57, no. 4 (1949): 330–344. Reprinted in *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*. Edited by Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley. New York: McGraw Hill, 1994, 363–373.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. In *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Kemal, Salim. *Kant's Aesthetic Theory: An Introduction*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1992.

Makkai, Katalin. *Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Review 2: Espen Hammer, Temple University

There is not much in Katalin Makkai's splendid new book about Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that I find myself disagreeing with or think should have been expressed differently. What makes this study particularly valuable is not only its detailed exegesis of selected moments in especially the "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment," which engages with central figures of contemporary Kant scholarship, but also its formulation of a deeply compelling philosophical vision. Although that vision seems to have been inspired by more contemporary thinkers, in particular Wittgenstein and Cavell, and as such could be a risky platform from which to start analyzing a more than 200-year-old text conceived and written in very different intellectual circumstances, Makkai does a beautiful job of showing that Kant indeed could have had views that in key ways resonate with exactly that vision.

A key component of that vision is that aesthetic judgment necessarily is bound to experience—not experience in general, but *one's own experience: I must judge for myself*. What it is like to experience a work of art is internal to the value it may have for us. Just being told or "informed" about the presumptive aesthetic value of an item can never be a substitute for one's own engagement with it. Indeed, because the attribution of aesthetic value depends on one's own experientially based assent, any appeal to analogies with secondary qualities (McDowell) or more straightforward anti-realist error-theories and the like are—since they remove the responsive subject from the equation and think of beauty as a property of the object (even if only an illusion)—bound not to do justice to aesthetic experience. In the absence of my own encounter with the object, the very reasons someone might advance for judging it to be beautiful (and hence deserving of universal approbation) could not be fully meaningful to me. A judgment of taste expresses my stance; it is not a belief.

In one sense, this can be considered to reflect what Luc Ferry has referred to as Kant's "democratization of taste," his skepticism of all forms of expertise and dogmatism in matters of aesthetic appreciation.[67] To apply aesthetic concepts is something for which everyone must be responsible, and the authority of the aesthetic

[67] Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: L'invention du goût à l'âge démocratique* (Paris: Grasset, 1991).

judgment, while calling upon others to agree, rests primarily with the individual. However, Makkai's Kant goes further than this, insisting on the need for individual responsiveness, for cultivating one's own voice as a critic, and for being alive to one's experience.

The idea that works of art are items that call on their recipients to respond, feel, and, as Makkai puts it, "care for them"—and that in the absence of such willingness and ability to care will have to be judged "inferior" or "uninteresting"—sets up what appears to be an objection to the many conceptual and post-conceptual developments that, since the 1960s, have de-emphasized the importance of such involvement. If, as Arthur Danto would argue, we are now in a period in which quality in art is not deemed to be of an aesthetic nature but, rather, of "meaning," such that caring for purported objects of art in terms of whatever sensuous qualities they may have is irrelevant to what it is that may count as an adequate approach to them, then something central to what it is to be a human being, namely to be able to appreciate objects in purely aesthetic terms, may seem to be threatened.[68] At least that seems to be an implication of this reading of Kant.

What does it mean to be a human subject? For Makkai's Kant, a crucial part of what counts as displaying subjectivity is to be able to be a discerning agent—and to be able to make judgments that, in the absence of rules or pre-given concepts, combine imagination, emotion, intuition, sensing, empathy, and expressivity (in short, all the capacities that a nineteenth-century "aesthetic education" were meant to develop) such as to adequately respond to an aesthetic object. I take it that this is what Makkai means by "the feeling of life," the capacity to be alive to one's own experience and hence to the world of that experience, a capacity that, with its intimations of intimacy and attraction, Makkai interestingly compares with Plato's *Eros*. Although this would take me beyond the explicit scope of Makkai's study, I would be interested to know how she views the prospects for a rejuvenation of these intuitions today. Is defending them somehow "conservative"? Are they in fact threatened? If so, what does it mean to live in a culture that does not display much interest in valuing them?

Makkai's approach to art seems to favor works of art that can attract the kind of response that Kant has in mind: a disinterested pleasure *in* their beauty that is

[68] Arthur C. Danto sums up his position in *What Art Is* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

enlivening and universally communicable. Can every material object be a candidate? Is there a limit separating art from non-art? Since whether any item counts as a work of art can only be proven in experience, it seems that Makkai's Kant is without resources for thinking more ontologically about art. The "what-is-art" question will have to remain unaddressed. Yet if that is the case, then what about Kant's actual "theory" of art (§§51–54)? What role might that play? More generally stated (and perhaps with a nod to Hegel), how can an account that is so centered on subjective experience avoid the risk of turning the artwork itself into something indeterminate, a mere occasion for pleasure yet nothing else?

Makkai makes a point about aesthetic predicates that may help avoid the threat of indeterminacy. On a cursory reading of "The Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment," she observes, Kant seems to be preoccupied with a very restricted domain of aesthetic judgments. While leaving us with two predicates, those of beauty and sublimity, "X is beautiful" and "X is sublime" do not offer much by way of making interesting and engaging judgments about aesthetic encounters. While satisfying an interest in generality and universality, at best these predicates lend themselves to thin evaluations and characterizations, threatening to make the critic's interventions trivial and superficial, and, as Wittgenstein points out in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, the employment of these predicates may at worst suggest a lack of sensitivity to the aesthetic object, a form of aesthetic mindlessness or indifference to one's own experience.[69] Noting that the German *schön* is used more broadly than "beautiful" and perhaps in ways akin to the ancient Greek *kalos*, denoting not only "beauty" but "good," "noble," and "handsome" as well, Makkai tackles, as I said, this problem. According to her, "Kant's *account* of the judgment of taste reflects a wide range of aesthetic experience and judgment, stretching beyond what is normally registered in

[69] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 6: "When we make an aesthetic judgment about a thing, we do not just gape at it and say: 'Oh! How marvellous!" We distinguish between a person who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn't."

'beautiful.'"[70] Indeed, "beauty" subsumes, she writes, "an open-ended range of particular aesthetic values—including beauty narrowly construed."[71]

I agree with Makkai that, despite his highly restrictive selection of aesthetic predicates, Kant's account does go in the direction of being more inclusive. If his full account of aesthetic feeling and experience is brought into the picture, then Kant's judgment of taste can be understood to reflect a wide range of aesthetic experience. Yet what, ultimately, is this account? A notorious problem is that Kant's deduction of pure aesthetic judgments does not seem to ground their possibility with reference to any kind of appeal to aesthetic experience or aesthetic behavior whatsoever. The famous harmony or free play in which the imagination and the understanding are said to function smoothly together, presumably giving rise to a feeling of pleasure capable of laying claim to universal agreement, reflects a condition that, according to Kant, must be met with by all agents capable of *cognition* as such—that is, by all agents capable of successfully subsuming schema-like perceptions under some form of conceptualization, thereby making possible the capacity for objective ("truth-apt") judgment. Yet what is it about the free play of the faculties, especially in their optimal attunement, that gives rise to a feeling? Why does there have to be a feeling involved? And if it can be shown that it does give rise to a feeling, why does this feeling have to be "aesthetic," issuing in taste and judgments thereof? As Anthony Savile puts it, "To assume the existence of an *aesthetic* common sense on that basis [the universal communicability of one's mental state] is precisely to beg the very question at issue."[72]

In responding to this difficulty, Henry Allison appeals to what he sees as Kant's argument by elimination.[73] Since optimal attunement—and indeed attunement in general—cannot be determined by concepts, which precisely would preclude the attunement from being "free," it must be determined by feeling. Yet even Allison seems

[70] Katalin Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 13.

[71] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste,* 13.

[72] Anthony Savile, *Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant and Schiller* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 145–146.

[73] Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154.

uncertain about this disjunction and the consequent argument. An argument by elimination can of course only work on the assumption that the disjuncts are exhaustive. What if they are not? According to Allison, since the subsumability of an intuition under a concept must be immediately seen (lest it generate an infinite regress of rules necessary to determine whether something falls under the rule), it follows that it must be, as he puts it (using quotation marks), "felt."[74] Yet what makes this feeling "aesthetic"? Like Allison, Makkai also emphasizes this quasi-Wittgensteinian moment in Kant in which a subject, though in the absence of rules or any other form of external guidance, finds itself occasioned by an experience to be put in a certain state (a "feeling") and invoke a concept. Indeed, Makkai goes further than Allison, arguing that the free play is itself to be understood as "a mode" of reflective judgment.[75] (Although the general thrust is very much worth considering on both Kantian and independent philosophical grounds, I would personally resist this reading of Kant. As far as I can tell, Kant never, even in the passage from the Introduction that Makkai cites in support of her interpretation, states that free play is a mode, and hence a species, of reflective judgment.[76] What he does seem to claim is that the cognitive faculties are in play *in* the reflective use of judgment. Yet even on her more manifestly Wittgensteinian and Cavellian reading, Makkai faces difficulties similar to those in Allison. Her account ties taste to a purportedly common orientation to the world that, as she puts it, is "felt as the experience of being brought to life."[77] The attunement of the faculties is Kant's lingo for the mind's own animation as it simultaneously is exposed and responds to the object (and in this process the imagination importantly both receives and creates form). For Makkai, the animation issues in the feeling that in aesthetic encounters counts as aesthetic pleasure. The subject is "touched" or "moved." Yet what is it that distinguishes

[74] Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 154.

[75] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 92.

[76] On page 92, and in support of her claim that the free play should be interpreted as a mode of reflective judgment, Makkai quotes Kant as saying that aesthetic pleasure "can express nothing but [the object's] suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflective power of judgment. . . ." I do not see that this formulation, from Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 76, supports Makkai's reading.

[77] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 162.

the aesthetic feeling from the broader realm of what phenomenologists would think of as our experience of pre-conceptual coping and the discerning capacity that Wittgenstein associates with the mastery of a rule? It would seem that I can feel animated "by the object" when I ski down a slope.[78] I respond to and care for the experience through my embodied responsiveness, the snow, my equipment, etc. The environment "matters" in an emphatic and uniquely involving manner. Yet how can this count as an aesthetic experience?

The tension between a more general account of pre-predicative responsiveness and what seems to call for a narrower account of aesthetic judgment and taste comes out most clearly at the end of the book when Makkai brings in Cavell's reflections on existence and the late Heidegger, most notably the 1936 essay "The Origin of the Work of Art." Here, the artwork is viewed as "like the world" in Cavell's sense: for it to be present to me, I must let it be so, which means that I must find a way of making myself present to it. I do so, according to Cavell's transcendentalist terms, by accepting it, by allowing myself to be affected and "brought to life" by it. Likewise, Heidegger sees art in terms of a disclosure of meaning prior to objectivation and conceptualization, one for which *Dasein* must stand responsible as a "preserver." Unlike Kant and Makkai, however, Heidegger distinguishes between his own account of original disclosure and the aesthetic approach, which he finds is expressive of a modern subjectivation and relativizing of art. Kant, Heidegger argues, is a major villain in the modern turn to aesthetics with its implicit *Seinsvergessenheit*.[79] In other words—is Makkai ultimately failing to distinguish properly between an ontological, truth-oriented approach to art of

[78] For the notion of skillful coping, see the essays in Hubert Dreyfus, *Skillful Coping: Essays on the Phenomenology of Everyday Perception and Action*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[79] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50: "Almost as soon as specialized thinking about art and the artist began, such reflections were referred to as 'aesthetic.' Aesthetics treated the artwork as an object, as indeed an object of ἀἰσθησις, of sensory apprehension in a broad sense. These days, such apprehension is called an 'experience. . . .' Experience is the standard-giving source not only for the appreciation and enjoyment of art but also for its creation. Everything is experience. But perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. This dying proceeds so slowly that it takes several centuries."

the kind found in Heidegger and a taste- and aesthetics-oriented approach? How, on her account, can Kant make sense of aesthetic autonomy?

Another differentiation, this time more overtly Kantian, that Makkai fails to make, or perhaps just acknowledge properly, is that between natural beauty and the beauty of art. While Kant for various reasons privileges natural beauty, Makkai puts natural beauty to the side on the grounds simply that she finds Kant's work "to be especially illuminating" as an account of "our aesthetic engagement with art."[80] In view of the fact that so many readers of Kant have thought the opposite—that Kant's treatment of art and artistic beauty is sometimes peculiar, even strange, and perhaps even inconsistent, and that his account of natural beauty is a lot more compelling—it is interesting that Makkai would take this approach. That said, although her reason for excluding natural beauty can hardly count as satisfying from a scholarly point of view, her concentration on artistic beauty seems to have been motivated more from the attraction she evidently feels to Kant's general account of aesthetic responsiveness (including the responsiveness to natural object) than to his treatment of artistic beauty in the narrow sense. The worry I have is that, by failing to differentiate between the modes of aesthetic encounter or by excluding one of them, she ends up offering a view of Kant's understanding of artistic beauty that can only partially do justice to the text. Kant, after all, has a number of quite interesting and, for his overall account, important things to say both about the relationship between the two and the distinct nature of artistic beauty. Very little, if anything, of this is registered in Makkai's study.

Kant's own distinction between natural and artistic beauty can admittedly seem quite contrived. In §42 of the third Critique, he claims that lovers of art and connoisseurs typically are vain and motivated by an *amour propre*–like tendency to want to impress their peers. Although his interest in the genius and his somewhat curious (though also at times insightful) discussion of the individual arts in §§51–54 suggest that he harbors considerable respect for art and the "art-world," he clearly thinks that both art itself and the way it is presented to an audience may be manipulative, directed not at free satisfaction but to create an effect (which for Kant would typically have the added defect of being merely "empirical"). One way of

[80] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 12.

understanding what this might mean would be to think of Michael Fried's familiar concept of theatricality.[81] According to Fried, theatricality occurs when a work merely exemplifies a type, instantiates a set of expectations, and appeals to the viewer in conventional and easy ways, thereby precluding the kind of subjective involvement—the feeling of having been singled out by the work—that Kant sees as distinctive in experiences of free natural beauty (and that Makkai generalizes to all aesthetic encounters). In view of how our own cultural spaces are being marked by new media and massive consumerism, it seems that a reflection on this challenge to art—what Fried thinks of as an ongoing battle in art between theatricality and absorption—would not only have done more justice to Kant's text but helped articulate what appears to be a central challenge for any serious effort to make art authoritative and aesthetically compelling.[82]

A second (and related) set of concerns that seems to motivate Kant's distinction between natural and artistic beauty has to do with the risk in art (as opposed to objects of natural beauty) of becoming subservient to a pre-given concept or determination of purpose. Art, Kant argues in §45, must look like nature. It has to provide the same kind of occasion for free enjoyment and aesthetic feeling that objects of natural beauty can offer. I read Makkai's account as being fully on board with this particular constraint on what truly matters in art. However, if she had paid more attention to the distinction between artistic and natural beauty, she would have been able to reflect in more depth on such phenomena as artistic literalism and all the kinds of works that primarily seek to convey or communicate a message. (Due the influence on Kant of classicism and Baumgartian rationalism, he also associates this merely "intellectual" orientation in art with a certain kind of expressive "stiffness" whereby reason comes to dominate over the imagination.) She would have been able to give the reader a more detailed

[81] The notion of theatricality is present in all of Fried's publications. However, a natural place to start is Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[82] Robert Pippin draws this connection. See his "Authenticity in Painting: Remarks on Fried's Art History," in *Philosophy by Other Means: The Arts in Philosophy and Philosophy in the Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

understanding of what Kant means when he claims that art needs to look like nature without being or becoming nature.

In §42, Kant goes so far as to hold that artistic beauty, even when it "looks like nature," can never attract immediate interest of the kind one presumably is able to enjoy when faced with items of natural beauty.[83] When merely imitative of nature (as in Kant's example with the imitated nightingale), it risks becoming deceptive and thus degrade the experience of beauty to something false or illusory. When "obviously intentionally directed toward our satisfaction," the satisfaction in the product, Kant claims, would be immediate but arouses only a mediate interest due to the idea on which basis the work is conceived.[84] By refusing to engage with Kant's distinction between artistic and natural beauty, Makkai has no way to address this material.

A third set of concerns that leads Kant to distinguish between artistic and natural beauty focuses on morality. One of the more prominent claims about art and morality is that only an interest in free natural beauty indicates a moral predisposition. There is, he writes, "an inner affinity" between interest in the beautiful per se and moral interest.[85] Kant's reason for why this is the case is complex and hinges on his ideas about, on the one hand, the interest one presumably takes as a moral agent in being able to view nature as receptive to the realization of moral ends and, on the other, the interest one takes aesthetically in a form of purposiveness whereby nature seems to favor us and thereby our status as end-setting creatures. The sense of harmony experienced in aesthetic encounters appears to suggest a two-way purposiveness: from nature to us (indicating some larger design in which human subjects play a privileged role) and from us to nature (indicating an interest on our part in being able to give our moral ideas objective reality). One of the implications of Makkai's reconstruction of Kant's account of "good judgment" is that it commits us "to caring about judging the world well for the sake of doing it justice, and only for the sake of the benefits that judiciousness of judgment may afford us or the protection it may provide from disadvantages."[86] While

[83] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 181.

[84] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 181.

[85] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 180.

[86] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 193.

she does not seem to bring morality explicitly into the picture, she certainly seems to think that there is a kind of moral or ethical interest implicit in the kind of caring for the world to which the cultivation of aesthetic judgment testifies. Should this be read in light of Kant's thinking about the affinity between aesthetic and moral interest? If so, how, given that she does not address natural beauty per se, can that be done? If that is not how she should be read, then what relevance does she assign to this part of Kant's thinking?

Speaking of morality—Makkai sees in Kant a continuity between the power of determinative judgment as it is developed in the first *Critique* and what the third *Critique* calls the power of reflective judgment. Does, as I suspect Makkai would argue, this continuity extend seamlessly to morality as well? Of course, the situation when it comes to acting is quite different from what it is when agents make judgments about something. Central to Kant's concept of action is that self-determining beings, such as ourselves, act on principles or what he calls maxims. It is on the basis of these principles that they rationally determine themselves and act. Is there a continuity between the categorical principles that form the moral horizon of a morally responsible individual and that same individual's reflective judgments? When looking at Kant's texts, including the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, we see that he seems to consider the exercise of reflective judgment to be inevitable when it comes to imperfect duties. How I best may exercise the imperfect duty of benevolence is something that requires sensitivity and judgment over time and probably also the development of moral character, a standing and identity-forming disposition to exercise virtue. However, can a supposedly perfect duty such as "thou shalt not lie" permit the kind of flexibility that is involved in reflective judgment? Widely known for his moral rigorism, Kant himself does not seem to have believed that the exercise of reflective judgment is required for the adequate observation of such precepts. On more independent grounds, however, there seems to be much to be said for admitting the need for such judgment even in cases of observing perfect duties. Prohibitions against lying or stealing—the kind of imperatives that Kant has in mind when thinking about perfect duties—do seem to require that one is able not only to heed a purportedly universal principle but to know what would count as lying or stealing in individual cases. Is a mother who hides her seven-year-old son's video games in order to keep him from

playing all day stealing something or protecting him against self-inflicted harm? No principle or general rule seems able to decide this question in advance of context-sensitive judgment.

One final question I have is whether Makkai's view of aesthetic judgment permits any kind of cultivation of taste. "Taste," she writes, "is a capacity that I bring to bear, but it is not structured like virtue."[87] Virtues, she seems to be claiming, are constituted intersubjectively; their normativity, the standards according to which one exercises them correctly, depends on what the community, or authoritative representatives of a community, is prepared to endorse. Taste, on Makkai's view, is more fragile: the judgments ensuing from taste depend crucially on what individuals, trusting themselves, are prepared to say. I can make my feeling in this rich sense communicable to others. I can articulate and express its reasons, and I can do my best to make it attractive to others. Indeed, I can even demand that the other takes the same kind of pleasure in an object as I do. Yet what would a community of such agents look like? Would it be able to confer standards of aesthetic judgment on initiates? In one sense, it seems as though it would have to be able to do that. How else would training in music, for example, be possible? Yet in another sense, those standards would on Makkai/Kant/Cavellian grounds risk excluding individuals who do not find themselves able to feel animated by them. Aesthetic virtues, if there can be such things on this view, would seem to have to involve a great deal of openness and experimentation. Yet is there in many cases not at least a tension between the need for a more robust, intersubjectively constituted notion of virtue and the austere requirement of self-authorization? Perhaps the view she finds in Kant simply entails that there is always going to be a need to negotiate between these two impulses, and that while Aristotelian virtues will always be central in upholding institutions, what ultimately matters will depend on what individuals from a first-person point of view find themselves able to experience as mattering.

This is a book that deserves to find a wide readership. While providing a profound yet most likely controversial reading of Kant's challenging critique of taste, it

[87] Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste*, 177.

opens a number of interesting vistas that point far beyond Kant and have great philosophical value.

Bibliography

Allison, Henry. *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Danto, Arthur C. *What Art Is*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

Dreyfus, Hubert. *Skillful Coping: Essays on the Phenomenology of Everyday Perception and Action*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Ferry, Luc. *Homo Aestheticus: L'invention du goût à l'âge démocratique*. Paris: Grasset, 1991.

Fried, Michael. *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *Off the Beaten Track*, edited and translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Katalin Makkai, *Kant's Critique of Taste: The Feeling of Life*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Pippin, Robert. "Authenticity in Painting: Remarks on Fried's Art History." In *Philosophy by Other Means: The Arts in Philosophy and Philosophy in the Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Savile, Anthony. *Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant and Schiller*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967.

Author Response: Katalin Makkai, Bard College Berlin

I am grateful to my readers, Richard Eldridge and Espen Hammer, for their thoughtful engagement with my work. I thank the SGIR for organizing the Author Meets Critics panel at which this exchange took place and for publishing it here. I also thank Eliza Little, who chaired the panel and steered the publication process. The rich and convivial conversation that the panel generated was, for me, profoundly encouraging and productive. I can only wish there were a way to reproduce it, especially since it also allowed me to touch on issues raised by my critics that constraints of time required me to leave unaddressed in my delivered reply. That reply, reproduced below, is organized around four topics.

1)

I am heartened to hear that Eldridge and Hammer find Kant's account of aesthetic experience and judgment, as I read it, to be compelling and to speak to our lives with works of art and to debates about the nature of their significance for us. I'd like to begin my response to their comments by lingering over Hammer's characterization of my interpretation and (hence) of its relevance. That characterization locates Kant on one side of a familiar debate, whereas what animates my reading of Kant is the sense that his approach rejects the initiating terms of that debate in favor of a more promising way forward. Citing Arthur Danto, Hammer invokes a familiar explanation of why a notion of the aesthetic is no longer central, either in theory or in practice, to art. Namely: the rise of conceptual and post-conceptual art, beginning in the 1960s, has attended a shift in the conception of art (or of good art) in which what matters is an artwork's meaning(s) and not its aesthetic or "sensuous" qualities.[88] According to Hammer, Kant, as I read him, mounts (anachronistically, of course) a challenge to that shift and a defense of appreciating objects "in purely aesthetic terms" as elemental to what it is to be a human being.

[88] Danto does see a place for beauty in art so would not be willing to grant its "irrelevance," although he subordinates its role to that of meaning: beauty finds its place so far as it serves the work's larger meaning. See, for example, his "Beauty and Politics," in *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2003).

I am indeed reading Kant's account of aesthetic experience and judgment as offering a defense of the aesthetic. And I do think that this defense speaks to debates such as those that have attended the changes (or alleged changes) in the art world that Hammer cites. But that doesn't mean that sympathizing with my Kant would have us reverting from the "meaning" side of the dichotomy Hammer mentions back to its "aesthetic" side. By the same token, it doesn't mean that Kant, on my reading, is a "traditionalist": his account relevant only to pre-1960s artworks, or only to nonrepresentational art, or only to abstract art, or the like; not able to do justice, in other words, to more recent and contemporary art, and so to (much of) our actual lives with art. (Such "traditionalism" might be what Hammer has in mind when he asks whether my reading of Kant renders him "conservative.") Rather, I take Kant to be offering a new—or no longer familiar —vision of the aesthetic (that is, of what constitutes the aesthetic).

Up to a point, I thus join the company of most Kant interpreters these days. For example, it is true that elsewhere in philosophy, and certainly in art history, art criticism, and art theory, Kant is regularly identified as espousing a "formalism" akin to that of Roger Fry or of Clive Bell or of Clement Greenberg, so as a proponent of (and indeed crucial source for) an art historical or art critical position that has now, for reasons including those Hammer mentions, fallen out of favor. But Kant interpretation has done a great deal to show that Kant's view is its own thing, so to speak, and that although its conflation with such twentieth-century formalisms does not come from nowhere (Kant's account *is* "formalist" in a *certain* sense: he does say such things as that the judgment of taste is not based on concepts, and so on), it remains a conflation that misses much of what is distinctive in Kant's thought.

One of the larger aims of my reading of Kant's critique of taste is to mount a defense in a deeper regard: to make the case that Kant's account is compelling, that it goes some considerable way toward capturing what our lives with art, or anyway art we like or love, is like, as well as why it matters—the place it has in our lives. (This means that I am reluctant to suppose with Hammer that we "live in a culture that does not display much interest in valuing" works of art in the way Kant claims that we do or should value them. At any rate, such a supposition need not figure in a rehabilitation of Kant's aesthetics.) Effectively, then, I am reading Kant as suggesting a notion of the aesthetic—of aesthetic experience, aesthetic judgment—that could be a useful resource for ongoing

conversations in philosophical aesthetics more generally, as well as in the world of art theory and art history. One of the reasons that Kant's notion of the aesthetic has so much to offer is that it is freed from the dichotomy that Hammer presupposes (and that seems to be presupposed by recent campaigns for the "anti-aesthetic," the "rediscovery of the aesthetic," and the "revival of beauty"). Rather, it carves out an alternative, a third way, to that dichotomy.

I read Kant as elaborating aesthetic experience in terms of (what I call) an aesthetic encounter with an object, a work of art. In the aesthetic encounter, I find the object, or rather my experience of it, to matter, not with respect to any existing or ongoing concern, but in its own right (as it were), simply as the source or object of the very experience that it has awoken in me. To find it to matter is to feel it to invite me into an improvisatory engagement with it. I want to stay with it—that is, with my experience of it—and to follow it out, to explore or articulate its character. It has come alive for me, or I for it.

This "exploring" and "elaborating" or "articulating" is what Kant means by tying the "state of mind in the given representation," which is the judgment of taste's "subjective condition" and "ground," to the capacity to communicate (*Mitteilungsfähigkeit*) (CJ V: 217).[89] He is adducing a state of mind, a frame of mind or mood, in which one deploys the capacity to communicate, and this takes the form of seeking to render communicable one's experience of the object's seeming to matter, by tracing its sources and shapes. This is the heart of what he calls the "free play" of the cognitive powers of the mind.

I am suggesting that this sort of encounter deserves to be called "aesthetic experience." And I am also suggesting that it captures pretty well the response invited by a work that by Hammer's lights would be regarded as post-aesthetic—for example, Duchamp's *Fountain*.[90]

To be engaged by this work it is to find myself drawn to exploring my experience of it—of coming across, in a museum or the like, a urinal set on its side, displayed on a plinth, and bearing that punning painted signature. Many (including Duchamp's contemporary defenders and detractors, as well as Danto) have remarked that this work

[89] Kant's writings are cited by title or, in the case of the *Critique of Judgment*, abbreviated title (CJ) and by volume and page number of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Reimer, later de Gruyter, 1902–).

[90] The 1917 original is lost. There are a number of replicas, some on museum display.

forcibly raises the question of its own status: Is it art? My sense is that the questions it more naturally or immediately raises for its audience are: Does this lay a serious claim to my attention? Is it worth spending time with and exploring? What is there to explore? That is: Does it matter? (Perhaps these are the questions that the "Is it art?" question turns out to mean, or should turn out to mean.) But these questions are, I think, the questions at issue in *any* aesthetic encounter with an art work; it is its stake in such questions that mark out the experience as "aesthetic." A work like Duchamp's *Fountain* does not stake itself on entirely different questions, does not make an entirely different kind of appeal to its audience than a Renaissance portrait or Pollock's *Lavender Mist*. The difference lies in the sharpness and explicitness with which it stakes itself on those questions, or else in its making them its subject matter.

Crucially, aesthetic experience so conceived is not restricted to sensible or perceptual qualities or features of the object. Nothing prevents aesthetic experience so conceived from involving consideration of, say, the work's subject matter, or its narrative content, or its references to other works, or the conversations it initiates with other works or genres, and so on. *Fountain* surely asks me to know, or at least suspect, that the urinal was acquired from some plumbing supplier, and to explore how (or whether) its provenance figures in what I find worthwhile about my experience of it.

What about more contemporary art? Given that it anchors aesthetic experience in pleasure and liking (*Wohlgefallen*), Kant's account of taste is usually taken to be ill equipped to make sense of our admiration of art that is challenging, disturbing, or provocative. But the artist who makes a challenging work, say one that involves upsetting images or sounds, would regard it as a failure if all it did was to make people recoil and walk away. Even challenging art seeks to hold us before it, to make us want (even if it is not easy) to stay with it and to find it to matter. This response is what Kant figures in terms of the pleasure and liking of aesthetic experience, recognizing, I think, that there are modes of liking—even pleasure—that feel nothing like delight. It is natural to ask someone whether they like such a work of art, and natural too for the reply to sound something like this: "Yes—I mean, it's hard to take, it's tough to sit through. It's not fun—but I'm glad I saw it, it's worth it, and you should see it too." The response does not dismiss talk of liking or even of pleasure, but rather seeks to distinguish the kind of liking or

pleasure that is involved from sheer unalloyed enjoyment. This kind of liking or pleasure is a matter of trust, gratitude, and commitment: a form of caring.

2)

Eldridge remarks that I focus mostly on aesthetic experience, in Kant's account, and that I say little about the judgment of taste proper. As Eldridge sees it, the judgment of taste is a verdict about or based on aesthetic experience, and it is the verdict that is really important to Kant's project, since it is the verdict that, in laying claim to universal validity, poses the problem that orients the whole "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" and that the deduction is supposed to resolve.

I want to resist, on Kant's behalf, the splitting up that Eldridge suggests between aesthetic experience and verdict. This is for two related reasons: first, aesthetic experience, or what Kant calls the free play of the cognitive powers, is itself an act of judging (*Beurteilung*). (It is not merely a pleasurable experience about which one then judges.) In the free play of the cognitive powers, one responds to the value that one feels the object to have, and one takes one's response to be what the object merits from anyone. Second, the judgment of taste is, in Kant's view, distinct from theoretical judgment (as well as practical judgment). It is not a belief, or the holding of a proposition to be true.[91]

[91] Kant does say that we treat the judgment of taste "as if" it were logical and cognitive ("objective") judgment (CJ V: 282) and beauty "as if" it were a property of the object (CJ V: 212). But he does not mean that we take the judgment of taste to be truth-evaluable. For one thing, Kant notes that we do not treat the judgment of taste as if it were logical or cognitive in every respect (for example, we do not make judgments of taste based on testimony or at second hand). In my view, Kant's point is that we present the judgment of taste as really about the object (and not just about the subject in relation to it) and as making (because the object makes) a demand on others. But he does not say, and in fact formulates things carefully so as to avoid implying, that the judgment of taste makes the same kind of demand, so holds itself to the same kind of norm, as cognitive judgment. I think that Eldridge might hold a (revisionist) view similar to that of Paul Guyer, on which the judgment of taste is a claim about the cause of the feeling of pleasure one has, and is thus straightforwardly a cognitive judgment. On this view, Kant's "as if" claims really mean that the judgment of taste is a peculiarly limited cognitive judgment, in that one can never be sure that it is properly grounded (that it is a judgment of taste at all). See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Richard Eldridge, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Instead of Eldridge's splitting up, I would rather say that the judgment of taste gives expression to the judging, as praise gives expression to appreciation.[92]

Eldridge seems to hold that the judgment of taste's claim to "universal validity" must be a claim to truth. Perhaps Eldridge thinks that there is no other way in which the judgment of taste could lay claim to normativity. But this is not the case. One might construe the judgment of taste along the lines suggested by John McDowell and pursued by Keren Gorodeisky and Eric Marcus.[93] On this construal, the judgment of taste is a kind of feeling that presents the object as meriting that feeling, or, equivalently, which presents itself as the correct or appropriate response to the object. Consider a partly analogous case. To fear the frightening, for example an approaching alligator, is not just to take something to be true. It of course involves taking it to be true that an alligator is approaching, and that an approaching alligator is frightening, but the fear holds something about itself as well, and that is not that it, the fear, is, so to speak, "true." Fear of the alligator presents itself, fear, as what the alligator merits, or as the correct or appropriate response to its, the fear's, object. Similarly, Kant could hold that the norm to which the judgment of taste holds itself is correctness or appropriateness to its object, and not (mere) truth.

This approach would allow Kant to retain his governing idea of the distinctiveness of the judgment of taste, its being different in kind (and not just in content) from the other kinds of judgment from which he is at pains to distinguish it, particularly theoretical and practical judgment. In particular, it would allow him to retain the claim that the judgment of taste must be made on the basis of one's own felt response, and not on the basis of testimony or at second-hand, which he characterizes as the "autonomy" of the judgment of taste. At the same time, he has some resources for acknowledging that there is such a thing as aesthetic belief, although he does not exploit those resources as much as he could. In CJ §8, he mentions what he calls an aesthetically grounded logical judgment, which he

[92] Rachel Zuckert also interprets Kant's judgment of taste as the expression of aesthetic judging. See her *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the* Critique of Judgment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 326.

[93] See John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities" and "Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), and Keren Gorodeisky and Eric Marcus, "Aesthetic Rationality," *Journal of Philosophy* 115, no. 3 (2018).

distinguishes from an aesthetic judgment proper. His example is the judgment that roses in general are beautiful. To say that there is an aesthetically grounded logical judgment is to say that there is such a thing as a logical judgment that attributes beauty to certain objects: that predicates beauty of them or says that they fall under the concept "beauty," that says effectively that it is true, or it is a fact, that they are beautiful. The judgment about roses in general being beautiful is the only example he gives, and he does not mention the possibility of aesthetically grounded logical judgments of other logical forms—particular judgments, say, like one claiming that the *Romance of the Rose* is beautiful. But I do not see that it would be any more barred to him in principle than the one about roses in general. Part of what Kant means in calling such judgment logical is that it behaves, or we behave with it, as we do with any judgment through which we apply a concept to something (which is what "logical" means). So, for example, it is a judgment that one can make, be in a position to make, on the basis of testimony or at second hand, and without any experience of the object to which beauty is being ascribed. If I don't find something beautiful (aesthetically valuable) but someone else, especially someone whose judgment or taste I have reason especially to trust, pronounces it to be beautiful, that provides me with reason to wonder whether I might be missing something. They might be on to something that I am not myself seeing or capable of seeing. I have reason to try again with the object. But, crucially, Kant's idea is that this is not what the judgment of taste is, and that the judgment of taste is what is really vital to aesthetic life. The judgment of taste is a different kind of thing, and it is the more fundamental and the more important kind of thing.[94] It is more fundamental in that, as Kant's term indicates, the logical judgment about roses—or, I'm suggesting, on Kant's behalf, about the *Romance of the Rose*—is "aesthetically grounded": it is based on the judgment of taste. Kant presents the universal or general logical claim about roses as based on my own singular judgments of taste about particular roses. The logical judgment about the *Roman de la Rose* being

[94] Apart from this passage in CJ §8, Kant always talks about judgments about beauty as though there could only be one kind, viz., the judgment of taste, which is not logical, is always singular, and cannot be made on the basis of testimony or at second hand, or apart from one's own experience of the object. When he discusses what we mean or are doing when we call something beautiful (e.g., CJ V: 203) it is always the judgment of taste he has in mind. Gorodeisky and Marcus argue for two forms of judgment of beauty on Kantian grounds in "Aesthetic Rationality."

beautiful might be based on hearing or reading about someone else's judgment of taste (maybe even my own previous judgment of taste?). If Kant sees a place for this sort of judgment, he does not think it plays a significant enough role, in life or from the philosopher's point of view, to deserve any exploration. (He might well be wrong about this.) The judgment of taste is more important for Kant not only because it is more fundamental, but also because, as I suggested a moment ago, it belongs to what is "peculiar to" (distinctively characteristic of) the aesthetic realm, differentiating it from the theoretical and practical realms.

I mention the McDowell-inspired approach of Gorodeisky and Marcus partly to indicate that Kant has a better alternative to thinking of the judgment of taste as truth-evaluable, but also, and more importantly, in order to situate how my own reading differs. First I should note that my own reading has some things in common with the McDowell/Gorodeisky and Marcus approach. On their view as on the one I am finding in Kant, the judgment of taste is a liking of an object that presents itself as revelatory of the world, disclosing something to be the case (that its object is aesthetically valuable). It presents its object as meriting that liking, and as meriting it of anyone (not just that judge).[95] But on the view I find in Kant, the judgment of taste is not exhausted by disclosing its object to be aesthetically valuable. The judgment of taste is a response to the object's felt value in a different sense. In the free play, I do not merely register the presence of a value the object seems to have. I, further, seek to explore and even to celebrate that value. Such responsiveness nourishes and deepens itself, "strengthens itself," as Kant writes (CJ V: 222), and involves committing to ongoing engagement with it and to the furthering of one's liking itself. This sort of liking entails trust and projects an open-ended commitment, which means that it intrinsically looks to the future. For such reasons, it amounts to a kind of caring for the object. That is why I compare, rather than contrast, it with the kind of love that Alexander Nehamas has movingly argued our relationship with beautiful artworks to involve.

3)

[95] See Gorodeisky and Marcus, "Aesthetic Rationality."

To reflect the "risks of disagreement, alienation, and rebuff" that are genuinely and importantly part of our aesthetic lives, Eldridge suggests that the judgment of taste must present itself as, and be taken to be, true. I think again that this is because Eldridge is ruling out any other way of laying claim to normativity—as though there were only two options: either the judgment of taste is a belief and lays claim to truth, or in the judgment of taste one speaks for oneself alone (avows one's liking). But there are alternatives. On the McDowellian lines suggested above, Kant could conceive of the judgment of taste as a form of liking that claims correctness for itself. Then there is room for a judgment of taste to go wrong. To say that someone is failing to judge as they should is to say that they are judging, and feeling, incorrectly, or that they are not responding appropriately to the object, with the feeling that it merits.

Nevertheless, my sense is that the stakes and risks involved in aesthetic agreement and disagreement are in fact a bit different, in some sense stronger, and that Kant's own account comes closer to capturing them. To criticize someone for not judging something to be beautiful is not to say just that they are making a mistake about what is the case, or getting something wrong; it is more like saying that they are wronging the object—and perhaps at the same time themselves. It is a failure of acknowledgment rather than a failure of knowledge. That is, it is to fail to acknowledge a claim that the object makes upon us, rather than to fail to register something about it. For Kant, aesthetic judgment lays claim to necessity, and, as I argue, what he means by this is that it presents its object as necessitating aesthetic liking: it presents its feeling as (not merely what would be required in order to appropriately register something about the object, but) as what the object is due, or deserves. There is thus a (partial) analogy with moral judgment. Let us suppose that what is morally required of you in the situation in which you find yourself is that you give money to the person who is asking you for it. You ought to act in this way. This is a truth-claim: the judgment says that it is true that you ought to give her money. But it is not only a truth claim, and it is the "other" part that carries the distinctive normative force proper to morality. If you fail to do what morality requires of you here, the cost is not merely that you will have made an error about what morality requires of you. The real cost, the cost with the teeth proper to morality, is that you will have failed to respect that person's humanity, or *their* claim upon your help.

4)

An issue that both Eldridge and Hammer raise is my interpretation of Kant's deduction of the judgment of taste.

Let me begin by saying that I agree with Eldridge that Kant's deduction, as he presents it, does not work. So any reading on which it is to be compelling needs to be at least to some degree reconstructive. This is because the deduction presents a dilemma. If it is read as stating that a state of free play, or an act of aesthetic judging, is a condition of any act of cognition, then it seems to yield an implausible conclusion: that every cognitive judgment involves an aesthetic experience. If, however, the state of free play is not the same as what is required for any cognitive judgment, then the conclusion that Kant wants, that the universal validity of the state of free play may be inferred from the universal validity of what is required for cognitive judgment, does not seem to follow.

My reading accepts the second horn of this dilemma—the deduction does not succeed in establishing that the judgment of taste's claim to normativity is simply inherited from cognitive judgment's normativity. Yet I still think that Kant's thought can be reconstructed (as it anyway has to be) so that it can be heard to be working out an interesting and illuminating kinship between aesthetic judgment and cognition.

Kant does argue (in CJ §21) that cognition depends on feeling. On my interpretation, what he means is this: Any act of determination of an object (i.e., of determinative judgment) depends on an act of reflective judgment, whereby one answers the question: Which, among the true judgments that could be made here, is most apt or "to the point"? The question is: What is of importance here, what matters here? (as he puts it in the *Anthropology*).[96] This question is answered through feeling, not the application of a concept. If our cognition is to allow of being universally communicated (on pain of skepticism) then, Kant argues, the feeling for what matters must also be presupposed to be universally communicable. Since universal communicability is a normative notion (that which is universally communicable is universally valid and transmissible), we presuppose a norm for feeling what matters, the idea of a common sense for what matters, on pain of a skepticism about cognition. The possibility of communicating cognition depends, for us humans, on being able, as a condition of each

[96] *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, VII: 227.

act of cognition, to feel that something matters, and on our presupposing that we can speak for others—with a universal voice—with regard to what matters.

Now aesthetic judgment also presupposes a norm, the idea of a common sense—an aesthetic common sense. The suggestion is not, however, that the cognitive common sense and the aesthetic are to be identified. Nor is the point that the aesthetic common sense somehow depends on the cognitive common sense. To see where the deep relation between the aesthetic and the cognitive lies we have to consider what the cognitive common sense itself presupposes.

This is where I appeal to Kant's notion of a subjective principle of judgment (see, e.g., CJ V: 169), the upshot of which I understand as the claim that we are committed to valuing not just getting things in the world right (judging truly), but, further, to valuing judging *well*: aptly, doing justice in our judging (hence our thinking) to the world. And this means that we are committed to finding the world to matter, or to caring about the world for its own sake. This commitment to caring about the world is how I am proposing that we understand the subjective conditions of cognition (as adduced, for example, in CJ §9). Cognition depends upon it not in the sense that each act of cognition rests on having this caring, but in the sense that the possibility of any cognitive judgment, the possibility of cognition at all, depends upon it.

The relationship that I propose on Kant's behalf, then, is between aesthetic judgment about a work of art as aesthetic caring for it (for its own sake), and the caring for the world that cognition presupposes. Again, the relationship is not one that could support the official aspirations of the deduction: the dilemma remains. But it strikes me that there is a real analogy between these two carings, and between the work of art and the world as objects of caring. And perhaps aesthetic caring for a work might be said to provide the opportunity for glimpsing, if only by way of an analogy, a fundamental affective and valuing basis of our lives as thinkers (judges) that would otherwise remain invisible.

In a passage about aesthetic judgment in which he aims to elucidate its Kantian character, Stanley Cavell remarks that aesthetic judgment can and must remain ineluctably subjective even when agreement is found. I am picking this up in the book when I argue that the shape of Kant's resolution of the problem of the judgment of taste's apparent presumptuousness in claiming to speak with a universal voice about what

should be felt to matter aesthetically respects its ineluctable subjectivity. In aesthetic judgment as in cognition, one takes a stand on what matters (and should be felt by anyone to matter) although one has no "objective" basis for that stand, no proof or rule, but only one's own feeling of what matters. The presumptuousness of aesthetic judgment in universalizing its subjective feeling is not dissolved by philosophical critique; all that philosophical critique can do is to show that we may (and indeed must) engage in this presumptuousness. If Kant thinks, as he seems to, that the subjective basis of cognition that the principle of judgment presupposes *establishes* this authority, then he is wrong. But he is nevertheless on to something, I think, in suggesting—or to the extent that he suggests—that the subjective affective basis we must presuppose in the aesthetic realm provides an image or emblem of the subjective affective basis we must presuppose in the cognitive realm.

Bibliography

Danto, Arthur. "Beauty and Politics." In *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2003.

Eldridge, Richard. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Gorodeisky, Keren, and Eric Marcus. "Aesthetic Rationality." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 115, no. 3 (2018): 113–140.

Guyer, Paul. *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie Ausgabe. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902–.

Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Edited and translated by Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

McDowell, John. “Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World.” In *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

McDowell, John. “Values and Secondary Qualities.” In *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Zuckert, Rachel. *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the* Critique of Judgment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

J. A. Clark, and G. Gottlieb, eds. *Practical Philosophy from Kant to Hegel. Freedom, Right, and Revolution*

Cambridge University Press, 2021, 290 pp., $99.99 (hbk), ISBN: 9781108497725

Reviewed by Emiliano Acosta, Vrije Universiteit Brussel/Ghent University

Practical Philosophy from Kant to Hegel, edited by J. A. Clark and G. Gottlieb, is a collection of challenging and unprecedented studies on central topics of ethics and political philosophy in Classical German Philosophy, that period we usually call "from Kant to Hegel." The originality of most of the contributions to this book resides first and foremost in that they do not follow the traditional canon, according to which the practical philosophy of this period is *essentially* contained in the works of Kant and his natural children, whom he, by the way, never acknowledged: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. This book examines not only the practical philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel (Schelling and his *New Deduction of Natural Law* is unfortunately not considered in any chapter), but also the authors the standard scholarship usually neglects or classifies as minor philosophical figures of that period: Pistorius, Ulrich, Reinhold, Maimon, Erhard, Jacobi, E. Reimarus, Genz, Rehberg, J. Möser, F. Schlegel, Dalberg, and Humboldt. Clark and Gottlieb's book convincingly shows the important role of these figures in the development of some of the most important contributions of Classical German Philosophy to the history of moral and political ideas, such as: the exclusion of happiness from the realm of morality and the unconditional duty toward humanity as a principle for ethics (chapters 1, 3, 6, and 7), the possibility of freedom in a determinist universe (chapter 2), the tensions between intellectual and practical virtues and goals (chapter 3), the conflict between right and morality and/or positive and natural law (chapters 4 and 5), the right of revolution and its moral and political legitimacy (chapters 5, 6, 9, and 12), the interplay between freedom in terms of free choice and duty (chapter 7), the need to develop a drive theory and a theory of feelings for the knowledge of moral agency (chapter 8 and 10), nihilism applied to the realm of action (chapter 9), gender and political inequality (chapter 10), the tensions between civil obedience and the right and duty of self-determination (chapter 11), and the unavoidable ideological nature of common sense (chapter 13).

The goal of Clark and Gottlieb's volume is certainly not to write a kind of *history of the excluded*, but rather to contribute to the making of a more complex and nuanced

history. None of the contributions seem to suggest that the truth of this period lies in the works and authors that the standard scholarship has hitherto overlooked or underestimated. Actually, the main idea behind Clarke and Gottlieb's book project seems to be a very Hegelian one, namely, that the unessential is as essential as the essence. So, for a genuine comprehension of what really has happened in that period, we have to abandon this distinction of pre-philosophical thinking between essential and unessential as well as the dogmatic prejudgment that given two opposite answers to the same question, one and only one of them must be true and the other false. Once liberated from these assumptions, the practical philosophy between Kant and Hegel appears in a totally different manner, as a more conceptually complex and intriguing narrative: an intellectual labyrinth of debates, criticisms, misunderstandings, and terminological and conceptual cross-fertilization and contamination.

The volume begins with two chapters on Kant. The first, "The Original Empty Formalism Objection," by P. Guyer, revisits a familiar topic in the scholarship on Classical German Philosophy, namely, Kantian ethical formalism. Nevertheless, Guyer offers an innovative approach by reexamining it in the light of Pistorius's reviews of Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. This chapter represents a very good example of the extent to which reviews of contemporaries help us philosophically analyze classical works. The second chapter, "Freedom and Ethical Necessity," by K. Deligiorgi, focuses on mainly the same two Kantian works. It follows the same methodological strategy of Guyer, but instead of confronting the works with their reviews, it does it with a book: Ulrich's 1788 *Eleutheriology or On Freedom and Necessity*. Deligiorgi's reconstruction of Ulrich's ethical determinism and his criticism of Kant result in a new perspective for reconsidering central elements of the Kantian conception of freedom, such as spontaneity and transcendental freedom.

In the third chapter, "Maimonides and Kant in the Ethical Thought of Salomon Maimon," T. Quinn shows the presence of Maimonides's philosophy in Maimon's criticism of Kant's moral philosophy. In his detailed account of Maimon's view on the relation between happiness and morality and the subordination of moral virtues to intellectual virtues and goals, one can find an example of the terminological tensions Kant's readers were exposed to when trying to translate into a pre-critical philosophical

language a philosophy that constantly subverted the jargon of German eighteenth-century metaphysics.

Chapters 4 and 5, "Erhard on Right and Morality," by J. Clark and "Erhard on Revolutionary Action," by M. Nance, provide arguments for abandoning the idea that Erhard is nothing but "a hesitant precursor of Fichte's more fully developed and more radical position" (61). Clark argues convincingly that Erhard has been a constitutive figure in the modern tradition of natural law theory. Nance reconstructs Erhard's thesis of the lawfulness and moral duty of revolution in the form of what he calls a theory of structural injustice. This chapter provides substantial information for establishing clearer conceptual links not only between Erhard and Fichte but also with other radical philosophers of the last decade of the eighteenth century, for example, Wollstonecraft.

In chapter 6, R. Winegar's "Elise Reimarus on Freedom and Rebellion," the question of the rational, moral, and political justification of revolution is reassessed in light of the works of Kant's contemporary E. Reimarus. According to Winegar, Reimarus does not share Kant's view on rebellion and freedom nor does Reimarus agree with Achenwall, whom Kant criticizes, since her defense of rebellion on consequentialist grounds has as the last goal freedom and not, like Achenwall, happiness.

The title of chapter 7, "Freedom and Duty: Kant, Reinhold and Fichte," by D. Breazeale, may give the impression that this article consists only of a commentary on what these three philosophers have said about these main concepts of the Kantian practical philosophy. On the contrary, this chapter presents an innovative, nonlinear way to read the interplay among these philosophers. Breazeale succeeds in reconstructing the practical philosophical version of the well-known story about the transition from to Kant to Fichte via Reinhold. Reinhold's conviction of the need of a first principle bringing unity to Kant's critical philosophy appears in the realm of practical philosophy under the figure of his concept of freedom as the middle point between reason and sensibility. However, in this account, Breazeale does not relegate Reinhold to a secondary role. He confronts rather the conceptions of duty and freedom of Kant, Reinhold, and Fichte with each other in order to substantiate his argument for an aesthetic of practical reason, namely "an explication or *Erörterung* of how moral obligation (and hence human freedom) is actually experience" (137).

Unlike the previous contributions, chapters 8, 9, and 10 (O. Ware's "Fichte's Ethical Holism," B. Crowe's "Jacobi on Revolution and Practical Nihilism," and E. Millán Brusslan's "The Political Implications of Friedrich Schlegel's Poetic, Republican Discourse") are dedicated to only one philosopher. One of the most interesting parts of Ware's holistic attempt at conceptually connecting Fichte's views on duties, the social realm, and the social function of scientists and philosophers is no doubt his very detailed description of Fichte's theory of drive, as presented in his *System of Ethics*, that complements Breazeale's plea for an aesthetic of practical reason. For his part, Crowe delivers an exceptional and very well documented account of how Jacobi deals with the controversial topics of revolution and practical nihilism. Crowe not only succeeds in identifying wherein actually resides the genuine philosophical potential of this sort of nonphilosopher among philosophers, namely in his skepticism toward any attempt at disclosing reality exclusively from the point of view of reason, but also connects this skepticism with his criticism of the idea of legitimate revolution as an example of the damaging consequences of a philosophy that neglects what common sense prescribes. Millán Brusslan's interpretation of F. Schlegel's social and political thought is a very clear and comprehensive analysis of Schlegel's views on society, democracy, and the problem of social injustice, which highlights the revolutionary insight of Schlegel in understanding gender as roles "that we can take on, even play with," since they are "not categories that determine and dominate us" (179).

Chapter 11, D. Moggach's "The Limits of State Action: Humboldt, Dalberg, and Perfectionism after Kant," illustrates the twilight zone between theoretical and practical philosophy by reconstructing the debate between Humboldt and Dalberg on the limits of political authority concerning the self-determination and individual freedom of citizens in light of the legacy of the Leibnizian–Wolffian school.

The last two chapters approach Hegel's social and political philosophy from very different perspectives, interests, and methodologies. "Echoes of Revolution. Hegel's Debt to the German Burkeans," by R. Maliks, is basically a historical contextualization of Hegel's adverse judgment of the French Revolution, which reconstructs the influences of conservative thinkers such as Gentz, Rehberg, and Möser on Hegel's political thinking. The volume ends with Karen Ng's chapter, "Public Opinion and Ideology in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." From the perspective of the concept of ideology forged in the

tradition of the Frankfurter Schule, Ng rereads Hegel's controversial view of public opinion in his *Philosophy of Right* and his criticism of formalism and empiricism in his 1802/1803 *Natural Law*. According to Ng, whose reconstruction of a conception of ideology in Hegel is mainly based on Guess's *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, it is possible to find a concept of ideology in Hegel's treatment of public opinion. Moreover, Ng seems to realize that what *we* today call ideology, and what Hegel describes as attitudes and beliefs, is more than an erroneous explanation of reality one can take or leave. In Hegel's discussion of public opinion, Ng suggests, we can find the idea that ideology is *constitutive* of the social fabric. This last point opens up the possibility of connecting Ng's discussion on Hegel and ideology with a different school of ideology critique, which unfortunately has not been consulted in this chapter: the Marxist tradition in ideology critique, first and foremost Althusser.

This short summary of the content of *Practical Philosophy from Kant to Hegel* shows that the way to the Hegelian kingdom of reason depicted in this book is longer and has more stops than one usually thinks. Moreover, the way in which the contributions analyze and criticize so-called minor thinkers as well as big philosophers leads the reader to the conclusion that in the period from Kant to Hegel, there is no *way to* at all, but rather a conceptual space of ceaseless dispersion and reunification in all possible directions, "a battlefield," using Kant's words, of "endless controversies." In this regard, this collection of essays no doubt represents a significant contribution to scholarship on Classical German Philosophy.

Last but not least, the cover image of the book deserves a special mention. Under the tutelage of Rousseau, who is and is not there, the young Fichte explains who knows what (his critique of revelation? His sympathy for the French Revolution? His academic uncertainty and financial problems?) to the old and wise Kant, who does not seem to be very comfortable listening to the pedantries of the young philosopher and maybe is wondering whether what he now really wants to do could always simultaneously hold as a principle of a universal legislation. The editors must be praised for having chosen as the cover image this wonderful re-creation of an impossible memory.

Dean Moyar, *Hegel's Value: Justice as the Living Good*

Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp., $110 (hbk), ISBN: 9780197532539

Reviewed by Michael Morris, University of South Florida

Dean Moyar's new book provides a sophisticated and relatively successful contribution to a recent but well-established genre of Hegel scholarship, one that seeks to render Hegel's philosophy cogent and palatable to philosophers already well ensconced in the pragmatic, analytical, and liberal traditions of the Anglophone world. Moyar's Hegel thus appears completely at home amidst contemporary discussions of Rawlsian liberalism, to which he contributes in the fluent idioms of Robert Brandom's pragmatism. Although I find it hard to accept the hermeneutic, meta-philosophical, and historical presuppositions that guide this genre of scholarship, I nonetheless found many occasions to admire Moyar's relatively well-integrated synthesis of terminologies and traditions. He manages to bring contemporary Anglophone concepts and debates to bear directly upon his textually sensitive and comprehensive reading of the *Philosophy of Right*.

Moyar develops a helpful interpretation of the dialectical structure of the book, plausibly illuminating the apparently disjointed connections and strange transitions between the book's three main sections: Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life. *Philosophy of Right* begins with a universal conception of personhood and its attendant rights. It ends with a holistic and communitarian discussion of the state as the rational synthesis of the customs of a specific people. In Hegel's most florid or rhetorically extreme moments, he insists that, from the standpoint of Ethical Life, individuals are "accidents" that inhere in the "universal substance" of the state, a substance that remains in fundamentally antagonistic relations with other states and their peoples. Indeed, Hegel's discussion of Ethical Life might be—it has sometimes been—taken to endorse a highly conformist ethno-state that recognizes war as the necessary hygiene of the body political, as the welcome antidote against the disintegrating forces of decadent individualism. Against such unpalatable implications, much recent scholarship conceptually foregrounds the earlier sections of the book and emphasizes the retentive dimension of dialectical sublimation. Many scholars now ascribe primacy to the abstract rights of personhood and the subjective and agent-relative perspectives of Morality.

They limit the dialectical contradictions that beset these earlier discussions and interpret Ethical Life primarily as the preservative synthesis of the earlier spheres.

In *Hegel's Value*, we find ample insistence upon the primacy of personhood, the core concept of Abstract Right. Of the overall aim of the *Philosophy of Right*, we read: "the book is designed to fill in the content of the personality as the content of right." (108) Morality and Ethical Life thus largely serve to render personhood "concrete." Morality moves from the abstract universality of right to a consideration of the agent-relative perspective on action and the good, thereby providing a basis for adjudicating the balance between formal rights and the concrete welfare of individuals. Finally, "*Sittlichkeit* [or Ethical Life] represents the total conditions of securing the realization of the two spheres that come before it." (187) The structures of Ethical Life do embody a particular orientation toward the highest good, but this good merely represents the attempts of a specific tradition to balance legal freedoms with the concrete and subjectively determined welfare of its citizens. Legal freedoms and rights matter, but they must be balanced against real material needs. Formal rights obviously mean little if I lack the concrete resources to avail myself of them. Abstract Right proclaims: "Property rights are valid, therefore any infringement of property is wrong." (171) Morality and Ethical Life simply modify this claim. They remind us: "Property rights are valid, provided that they are not overridden by a legitimate welfare right of others." (171) More specifically, Ethical Life articulates the family roles, the forms of work, and the political institutions that concretize and adjudicate the balance between the rights of property and the considerations of welfare. With this interpretation in place, Hegel's philosophy may provide insight—or at least intellectual cover—for those seeking to develop liberalism in a progressive or state socialist direction.

Interestingly, the most original features of Moyar's Hegel interpretation serve to emphasize and illustrate what I see as the fundamental inadequacy of liberal progressivism and standard forms of state socialism. Liberal progressives rightly focus upon limiting the power of markets but do not sufficiently question the deeper logic and tacit anthropology of markets, the atomistic self-conceptions and instrumental social relations that markets disseminate through all dimensions of our life and thought. Moyar *does* acknowledge and attempt to address the limits of atomistic anthropology and a strictly instrumental conception of social relations, particularly in his efforts to

differentiate Hegel's political philosophy from traditional contract theories and in his welcome but underdeveloped discussions of Hegel's teleology. However, he continues to defend the primacy of the modern individual without sufficiently considering the absolutely primary and penetrative role that markets play in the formation of such individuality. In fact, Moyar's persistent emphasis upon the category of *value* tends to treat market exchange and equivalence as the *leitmotif* of Hegel's political philosophy.

Moyar rightly identifies the most original and distinctive feature of his interpretation: his "reading of value as the unifying thread in Hegel's philosophy." (18) It is tempting to treat this emphasis upon value as a necessary or at least natural consequence of the problems that beset Moyar's inferentialist conception of norms and practical reasoning. Moyar's pragmatist vision of practical reasoning begins with a broadly Kantian commitment. In Moyar's language: "we are meta-creatures, creatures who not only desire, but who must be concerned with whether what we desire is desirable." (59) As rational creatures, we stand above or back from all that is merely natural or given. It is only some form of rational endorsement that renders a desire fully our own. Despite his occasional dalliance with Aristotelian language, Moyar does not attempt to ground the rational affirmation of desire in the primacy of some objective good. There is no antecedent or objective good that orients our desires and values. Instead, our desires determine the content of the good, though they must first become values through some process of rational endorsement. Rejecting the objective universality of Kantian moral reasoning, the pragmatist attempts to ground rational endorsement in some social process of collective usage, consent, and/or collective deliberation.

As far as I can discern, the pragmatist's hand-waving usually begins at this point. On the one hand, *rational commitments emerge from some kind of social process*. On the other, *the social process must itself be guided by some rational commitments, otherwise the normativity of reason collapses into a purely de facto consensus*. Moyar considers this challenge at numerous points:

> The value of rights [and their content] is expressed in their use in valid practical inferences. But how do we know the inferences are valid? Because they have been recognized (i.e., accepted) by the community as valid. Is community acceptance simply the bedrock of normativity, or can we give some further standard for

> whether the community is correct about this? What kind of community qualifies as the basis of a legitimate normative order? The most prominent Hegelian candidate for such a criterion is full *mutuality* in the patterns of *mutual recognition*. (28)

In addition to mutual recognition, Moyar also mentions "Habermas's power free-communication," Hegel's "philosophy of world history," and Rawls's ideal of public reason as attempts to describe the kinds of social processes that generate legitimate norms or patterns of inference. Among many concerns, I find pragmatist arguments for the limited rational commitments that would underwrite these social processes to be underdeveloped and unpersuasive. Additionally, in the face of widespread and deep disagreement, power-suffused discourse, and rampant epistemic contempt, I just don't see what these idealized models of reflection can actually accomplish. I certainly don't think that most currently existing forms of consensus emerged from any process that approximates these ideals.

Moyar briefly addresses the problem of conflict—and tacitly suggests the appeal of exchange value—in the following passage:

> Hegel's appeal to mutual recognition naturally suggests that the objects of desire become objects of value, deserving the name good, when their value (their desirability) is agreed upon by multiple subjects standing in a suitable relation to each other. This is not completely wrong, but it does distort Hegel's argument, for it is central to that argument that it is conflict over value, over who gets to decide what is valuable, out of which the objectivity of value first emerges. (58)

Of course there are conflicts over values and who gets to decide them. No one can deny this, not even Hegel. But the fundamental question still remains: How can this conflict be resolved through a process that confers or establishes rational legitimacy? Somehow, values or norms must ultimately emerge through the *agreement* of "subjects standing in a suitable relation," whatever that suitable relation might turn out to be.

Here we see the value of economic exchange as a process that mediates conflicting valuations. Moyar identifies seven types of value in Hegel's political philosophy but seems to attribute pride of place to the second form: exchange value or

"equivalence" in exchange. The first value is utility, or use value, which obviously varies by person. The initial valuation of various objects rests upon our current needs and immediate tastes, which vary by person and with time. In Moyar's words: "Value is initially a function of my relation to myself, to my various needs and their equivalence, rather than a matter of exchange." (118) However, it is the very diversity and difference of utility that leads to exchange. Through the proliferation of exchange relations, a universal standard of value emerges: the value of the market. Exchange thus includes: (a) the diversity of use value or pure subjective valuation, (b) the consent and mutual benefit of the exchange process, and (c) the determinate or common value of the product that emerges through the exchange. As Moyar puts it: "The concept of value [that emerges from exchange] thus serves to convert the particularity of needs/use into the universality of a standard of comparison." (118)

Moyar sometimes acknowledges the need to limit and augment the values of the market, but his discussion of higher values continues to deploy the language of *quantity* and *equivalence*. In his discussion of punishment, for instance, he notes that, "the punishment should fit the crime, yet the question of fit is answerable only with a conception of value." (143) In other words: How much punishment is equivalent to the perpetrated harm? The transition to Morality provides concepts and procedures that, according to Moyar, largely serve to render this equivalence determinate. Similarly, with regards to the relationship between the citizen and the state: "The challenge is just determining how to measure one action (e.g., taxes) as equivalent to another action (e.g., police protection)." (208) Moyar acknowledge Hegel's commitment to a model of "Right as Duty," that is, to something like the civic republican idea that citizenship mainly involves *the right to serve* through specific contributions to the common good. However, most of his discussion of the citizen–state relationship focuses on what he calls the "Right-as-Return-on-Duty" model, where my relationship to the state remains instrumental. We see both models in the following comment on the family: "The duties are the parent's substantial right, but there is for parents as well as for children a mutual exchange of value that is specific to the family." (219) Of course, the "*value* of family relations is not tallied up or legally exchanged until the time that its members come apart. . . . The typical site for this comparative moment is the divorce court. . . . But the fact that the value is cashed in, so to speak, only upon the dissolution of the family does

not prevent us from talking about how it circulates within a properly functioning family." (216) This is simply bizarre. The divorce court does not merely measure or render explicit the circulation of value within the family. The divorce court marks a fundamental shift in the basic modality of human relations. In families, individuals find themselves with dependent identities that emerge from the pursuit of essentially common goods. In the divorce court, they give up these identities and acquire a fundamentally new and different set of duties and rights.

In general, Moyar's book misses the most significant lesson of Hegel's social and political philosophy: the primary role of socially embedded goods in the constitution of the subject's identity. Subjects do not transform given desires into values through some reflective process of deliberation or exchange. Instead, through pre-reflective habituation and custom, they find themselves always already constituted by their practical orientation toward intrinsically common goods. Ethical Life does not augment personhood. Nor does it tell us how to balance the rights of personhood against the claims of welfare. It rather attempts to replace the abstract anthropology of property rights and instrumental relations with a deeper and anthropologically more adequate account of the forms of social participation that first make possible the—only sometimes legitimate—abstractions of modern individuality.