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Book Reviews

Thomas Nenon (ed.), *Kant, Kantianism, and Idealism: The Origins of Continental Philosophy*
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In this review I will confine myself to describing and commenting on the content of the ten essays in this volume and say little or nothing about the influence on continental philosophy of the various thinkers discussed. The only continental philosophers about whom I have any detailed knowledge are Heidegger and Husserl. The former was influenced by just about all the major philosophers (apart from the British empiricists). The latter was strongly influenced by Kant, thought highly of Fichte, but had little time for Hegel – and none at all for Schelling. In his introduction, Thomas Nenon does not go into any detail about the influence of Kant and German idealism on continental philosophy, but focuses mainly on the social and political background of such classical German philosophy.

In 'Immanuel Kant's Turn to Transcendental Philosophy' Nenon provides a clear and comprehensive account of Kant's epistemology and metaphysics, his moral philosophy, his aesthetics, his philosophical reflections on religion, his philosophy of history and his political philosophy. Though in general admirably clear, Nenon is somewhat unclear on the relationship between the transcendental unity of apperception and the First Paralogism. The 'I' of the 'I think' which must be able to accompany all my representations does not refer to a *substance*, but there is surely more to the transcendental unity of apperception than the idea that 'thinking and the object of thought are not identical' (p. 28). And given that it is what Kant is supposed to be turning to, it would have been helpful to the reader if Nenon had said more than he does about what precisely should be understood by *transcendental* philosophy.

Richard Fincham's 'Kant's Early Critics: Jacobi, Reinhold, Maimon' is a clear and well-argued examination of three thinkers who prepared the ground for German idealism. Jacobi argues that Kant is committed to the idea that we are affected by things in themselves. The resulting sensations are synthesised in such a way that we experience objects. These empirical objects are appearances. But this idea is inconsistent with Kant's insistence that there

can be no cognition of things in themselves. Without the presupposition that we are affected by things in themselves we cannot enter the Kantian system, but with it we cannot stay in it. It also undermines the strict dichotomy between sensibility and understanding, inasmuch as the passivity of the former only makes sense on the supposition that we are acted upon or affected by things in themselves. To imply that our sensations are *caused* by things in themselves is to defy Kant's own strictures on applying the categories beyond the bounds of sense.

Reinhold criticises Kant on the grounds that his system lacks an absolutely self-evident first principle (*Grundsatz*). He proposes as such a principle what he calls the proposition of consciousness: in consciousness the representation is distinguished by the subject from subject and object and is referred to both. This seems neutral as regards the existence of things in themselves, as the term 'object' seems simply to refer to the *intentional* object. But Reinhold argues, somewhat obscurely, that

> no mere representation is thinkable without content and no content is thinkable without something outside of the representation that does not have the form of the representation, i.e., the thing in itself. (p. 68)

Maimon argues that Kant fails to provide an adequate answer to Humean scepticism. He is severely critical of Kant's use of the distinction between subjective and objective succession in the Second Analogy and claims that he signally fails to demonstrate the necessary applicability of the concept of causality and that in general it is inconceivable in terms of Kant's system how *any* of the categories can be applied to our intuitions. Somewhat implausibly, he attempts to remedy the situation by incorporating elements of rationalist metaphysics into Kant's transcendental philosophy. Crucially, this involves scrapping the Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding and replacing it with the Leibnizian distinction.

Sonia Sikka's 'Johann Gottfried Herder' is one of the best essays in the book. She presents a comprehensive account of the main areas of Herder's thought: philosophy of language, aesthetics, epistemology and metaphysics, anthropology and philosophy of history, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. He is an empiricist but has a much richer notion of experience than the British empiricists. In his *Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason* he argues against Kant's claim that the structure of our experience is determined by *a priori* categories and forms of intuition. As regards space and time Herder locates our original grasp of them in our embodied, practical existence. For Herder thought is language-dependent. The languages of different peoples and different cultures embody different perspectives on the world.

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In his 'Play and Irony: Schiller and Schlegel on the Liberating Prospects of Aesthetics' Daniel Dahlstrom argues that both writers were convinced that freedom belongs to the essence of what it is to be human and that literature has the power to embody and give expression to this freedom. Literature has the power to transform, personally, morally and politically.

> Whereas a holistic notion of play, a semblance of cancelling time in time, is at the centre of Schiller's conception of an aesthetic education, Schlegel conceives Romantic poetry as a fragmentary combination of wit and irony, an endless, historically riveted striving. Schiller asserts the liberating potential of art's capacity to express the ideal satisfaction of human striving; Schlegel counters by affirming the equally liberating potential of art's capacity to disillusion or, better, to remind itself that any such expression reproduces the 'endless play of the world'. (p. 108)

In ways which are not always easy to follow, Dahlstrom tries to make these differences more precise by examining Schiller's early essays on tragedy, his *Aesthetic Education of Man* and his *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, and a variety of essays by Schlegel dealing with such topics as progressive universal poetry, wit, irony as 'transcendental buffoonery'. What makes such a study particularly relevant to a book of this kind is that, as well as being philosophers in their own right, both Schiller and Schlegel are deeply influenced by the transcendental philosophies of Kant and Fichte.

Unlike the essays on Kant and Hegel, Robert R. Williams's 'Fichte and Husserl: Life-World, the Other, and Philosophical Reflection' does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of Fichte's philosophy. Rather it focuses on a specific issue, that of intersubjectivity as it figures in his *Grundlage des Naturrechts* and his *Wissenschaftslehre novo methodo*. As an isolated individual I cannot know myself as free. This requires a relationship to other intelligent beings. I must be *summoned* to free action by others. The problem, as Williams sees it, is that Fichte wants to operate with this notion of summons (*Aufforderung*) both at the level of ordinary or natural consciousness and at the transcendental level. Summoning requires the independence of the one doing the summoning from the summoned. But where the subject is the transcendental subject nothing can be independent of the subject. Husserl faces a similar problem in his transcendental phenomenology. However, by Williams's own admission, the version of Husserl's account of intersubjectivity he examines (the one in *Cartesian Meditations*) is his least successful. For the purposes of a book of this kind it would perhaps have been better if Williams had provided a more wide-ranging account of Fichte's philosophy and left Husserl for another day.

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Joseph P. Lawrence's 'Schelling: Philosopher of Tragic Dissonance' gives a rather one-sided presentation of this remarkable thinker. Schelling's philosophizing went through a number of clearly definable phases. He has often been portrayed as jumping from one system to another and in this regard has been unfavourably contrasted with both Fichte and Hegel. This is unfair. Schelling was an unrelenting searcher after truth. The different positions he adopts are not evidence of chopping and changing but of an open and flexible mind. It should not be difficult to present these phases clearly and in their interrelations: his Fichtean phase, his *Naturphilosophie*, his transcendental idealism, his philosophy of identity, his philosophy of freedom, his late philosophy in which he elaborates his distinction between positive and negative philosophy. Lawrence, in his not very clearly argued essay, presents Schelling as (together with Hölderlin and Hegel and in contrast to Kant and Fichte) announcing the 'orgasmic return of the repressed'. In Lawrence's account *Naturphilosophie* does not represent merely a phase in Schelling's philosophy. And despite the clear evidence that Schelling later embraced traditional theism he is presented as from start to finish a pantheist. Given his view that *Naturphilosophie* represents the whole (or at least the essence) of Schelling, Lawrence has difficulty in accommodating his *System of Transcendental Idealism*. He also fails to give a clear account of Schelling's philosophy of freedom, despite the fact that the treatise on *The Essence of Human Freedom* has been widely regarded as conspicuous for its clarity (Kuno Fischer described it as a masterpiece of clarity and depth). Finally he has nothing very illuminating to say about the distinction between positive and negative philosophy.

Bart Vandenabeele's 'Schopenhauer on Empirical and Aesthetic Perception and Cognition' is well written and well argued. Schopenhauer is best known for his pessimism and his metaphysics of the will, in which Kant's thing in itself is identified as an irrational, unconscious and purposeless drive. But Vandenabeele focuses on his theory of perception and cognition. Schopenhauer argues that perception is intellectual in the sense that it involves the application of the concepts of space, time and causality (the only one of Kant's twelve categories he accepts). But in seeming contradiction to this he says that this operation of the intellect does not take place by means of concepts but is 'intuitive and quite immediate'. Vandenabeele argues that Schopenhauer is offering a phenomenological supplement to Kant's theory of perception rather than rejecting it. Following Hume rather than Kant, he holds that the intellect is governed by the will. The intellectual imposition of space, time and causality on the material of sense is driven by human needs, interests and affects. In *aesthetic* perception, by contrast, the will has been neutralised. The subject of aesthetic perception is pure, will-less and timeless. It is not just a heightened state of awareness but a superior kind of *cognition*.

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The objects of such cognition are timeless essences. Schopenhauer can be seen as moving beyond Kantian disinterestedness to something more Platonic. But whereas in Plato knowledge of the Forms involves conceptual thought and ratiocination, in Schopenhauer the Ideas are known by a peculiar type of *imaginative perception* which does not involve any concepts at all.

Terry Pinkard, in his 'G. W. F. Hegel', in contrast to Lawrence on Schelling, is a model of clarity (this is not because Hegel is clearer than Schelling: he isn't). Pinkard's essay covers Hegel's four published works (the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic*, the *Encyclopedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*) and also what he calls 'The Popular Berlin Lectures'. In the section dealing with the *Phenomenology* prominence is given to the idea that all knowledge, including knowledge of self, is essentially practical and social. As Pinkard puts it, 'the entire context of all our intentional acts and our cognizant awareness both of ourselves and the world has as its normative fabric a set of acts of recognition among agents' (p. 214). 'Recognition' is used to translate the German word *Anerkennung*, which, as Pinkard points out, means something like 'bestowing a normative status'. What also emerges from the *Phenomenology* is that knowledge is essentially *historical*. The *Logic* is quintessentially *metaphysical*. Given Pinkard's overall interpretative approach to Hegel, it is perhaps unsurprising that he has relatively little to say about it. As regards Hegel's influence, Pinkard points to his idea of the necessity of understanding everything dialectically rather than seeking to deduce it from some single master principle; similarly, to the idea that we must understand things socially and historically. But perhaps most influential, though in a negative sense, is Hegel's idea that by means of his dialectic we can achieve absolute knowledge of the absolute. For most continental philosophers we are essentially finite. Hegel is to be studied to show where we go wrong in seeking to overcome this finitude. Heidegger is a case in point. He admires Hegel hugely but remains closer to Kant.

Lawrence S. Stepelevich's 'From Hegelian Reason to Marxian Revolution, 1831–48' argues that the ambiguity in Hegel's philosophy allows for both conservative and liberal interpretations. For a time after Hegel's death there were high hopes among conservatives (both religious and political) that Hegel's philosophy could be used to underpin the existing order. Stepelevich shows how such hopes were soon to be dashed. Starting with David Friedrich Strauss and his *Life of Jesus* the so-called Left or Young Hegelians used (or some would say misused) Hegel to argue for atheistic humanism, though it must be said that the distinctly Hegelian character of their arguments is sometimes difficult to discern. Bruno Bauer thought that he could critically dissolve what he took to be the inhuman and alienating doctrines inherent in religion simply by exposing them. By contrast, August von Cieszkowski made practical engagement intrinsic to philosophy. In the new era of philosophy introduced by Hegel, philosophy is to

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be *philosophy of praxis*. This was further developed by Moses Hess. With Feuerbach and his *Essence of Christianity* (translated by George Eliot) the Young Hegelian movement went beyond a debate about the historical truth of Christianity and developed a worldview according to which mankind is both its own creator and its own saviour. Originally an enthusiastic supporter of Feuerbach, Marx (about whom Stepelevich has surprisingly little to say) turned against him under the influence of Max Stirner, who argued that the atheistic humanism of Feuerbach was simply an inverted form of religion which would prove even more destructive of individual autonomy than orthodox religion itself.

Diane Morgan in her 'Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon: "Utopian" French Socialism' gives a careful and detailed account of the main features of their political thought. It is, however, unclear why the essay is included in the book, as it does not fall under any of the three headings in the book's title. It has nothing to do with Kant or Kantianism. All three thinkers can be called 'idealists', but only in the colloquial sense of the term. Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon may have made contributions to nineteenth-century thought, but it remains doubtful whether they can be regarded as contributions to *philosophy*. What each of them is doing is essentially setting out their detailed prescriptions for how the perfect (or as near as possible perfect) society should be organised. Some of the detail descends into the comical, as in Fourier's description of the meals his utopian community would have in their 'philanstery'. Of the three, Proudhon seems the most sensible (despite his notorious 'property is theft', which he later qualified) and the one most acutely aware of the dangers of social engineering degenerating into tyranny.

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Jennifer McMahon, *Art and Ethics in a Material World: Kant's Pragmatist Legacy*
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Jennifer McMahon's new book offers an insightful and engaging defence of a pragmatist aesthetics that centres largely on the integration of Kantian aesthetics and Habermasian pragmatism. I take her aim to be two-fold: first,