

Book Reviews

Frank Schalow and Richard Velkley (eds), *The Linguistic Dimension of Kant's Thought: Historical and Critical Essays*

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The Linguistic Dimension of Kant's Thought offers a welcome addition to the recent scholarship on Kant. The volume collects essays that address, either directly or indirectly, the topic of language in Kant's thought or its legacy in his heirs. The volume is welcome because there is indeed a lacuna on the topic of language in Kant. However, this lacuna is not simply a lack of attention to a theme Kant himself treats, but is rather more akin to an *aporia*. The volume in its organization and substance reflects and presents in its fullness, rather than resolves, this *aporia*.

The volume circulates around a number of interrelated tensions on the proposed topic. Kant rarely, if ever, addresses the theme of language directly in his thinking, yet there is much in Kant that is tangential to language – like lines that touch a circle at one point, yet ultimately pass it by. This anthology is somewhat like a collection of lines for which there is no prior circle, and yet the lines eventually emerge to suggest an inner circle not quite present. Complicating this is the added 'anomaly', as the editors put it, that language comes to be a central concern for those thinkers whose lineage is clearly and expressly Kantian. There is the further fact, too, that during Kant's own time, language emerged as a central philosophical concern for much of Kant's milieu. In fact, as the editors point out in the introduction, Kant's own student Herder offers a critique of Kant that goes to the root of the Critical project, and that does so precisely on account of Kant's neglect of language. When one recalls that it is in Kant's own time, and in no small part in relation to his Critical project, that language begins to take centre stage in philosophical discourse, it almost begs credulity that Kant remained silent on the matter.

It is within these tensions that the book covers a wide array of broadly 'linguistic' themes – a word used in the title, but replaced in the introduction as elsewhere by 'language'. While in one regard, I think that the move to discuss the anthology as taking up Kant on language makes sense – linguistics

is, after all, the study of language, and both words have their root in the Latin *lingua* for tongue – *linguisticity* better captures, I think, what the volume actually presents. To examine the ‘linguistic’ dimension of Kant’s thought is to take up a broader range of communicative possibilities, including the fact of being communicative itself. Linguisticity – the capacity to be linguistic – is the name for what forms the condition of the possibility of an expansive array of human endeavours: language, speech, meaning, aesthetic expression. On account of linguisticity grounding so many diverse possibilities of human life, this volume can, at first glance, seem to lack a kind of coherence. But I think this is precisely the point, as well as necessary to the topic. It is the diversity of topics treated in the volume that suggests a rich unmapped territory in Kant’s thinking.

If I have a criticism of the volume, it is that I think it does not do itself justice. Read together, the essays in the anthology come to make a number of cases about Kant that transcend the individual claims of the authors included, but the reader would benefit from a more substantive orientation to the collection *as a collection*. These cases are, in my view, first, substantive about Kant and second, methodological. With respect to Kant, I think the collection suggests that there may be a kind of unacknowledged transcendental capacity in Kant’s opus. I have already suggested that perhaps *linguisticity* better captures the object of investigation of the anthology, rather than merely *language*. Language, I think, has linguisticity as its transcendental ground. While there are multiple places in Kant’s opus to which we may point that suggest such a transcendental capacity, we are reminded perhaps of Kant’s clear association of thinking and communicating in his ‘What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?’ There, he asserts, ‘Yet how much and how correctly would we think if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thought, and who communicate theirs with us!’ (8: 144). We may think, too, of his discussion of the *sensus communis* – a sense common to all – in the third *Critique*, which he associates with an ‘aptitude for communicating [our] thoughts’ (*Critique of Judgement*, 5: 295). While it would be its own project to make this case and defend it, I do think that the different topics treated in the volume, when taken as a whole, come to suggest a shared root in something like such a transcendental capacity. I think the anthology and the reader might have benefited from bringing this out more, to the extent the medium would have allowed.

Second, I think the point of departure for the volume makes an implicit case for a certain way of doing the history of philosophy, and by extension, a fruitful mode of reading Kant. This emerges in two contexts. In the volume’s introduction, I think that one of its methodological thrusts is brought out in the section ‘Kant at the Crossroads of History’. Here, the editors draw upon a specific form of influence that Kant had on thinkers like Heidegger, Arendt

and Gadamer. What each of them shared with the others was a way of reading thinkers in the history of philosophy, namely, with and against themselves. So, while Kant himself may not thematize language or linguisticality, a careful reader may find in him certain commitments or presuppositions about the question. Even more than this, too, the volume itself implicitly rests on the notion that reading Kant through the lens of many thinkers who appropriated and transformed his thought is productive for our understanding of Kant himself. Indeed, it is in part because of the centrality of language or linguisticality in Heidegger, Arendt and Gadamer that we may discern its absence – or possibly unsaid import – in Kant’s Critical system. In this, it is not so much, as the editors note, that Kant is simply suggestive of the topic in some places. This lens allows us to discern the possibility that language is, in fact, ‘the final lynchpin of his system’ (p. 20).

The claim that language may be the ‘final lynchpin’ of Kant’s system is provocative, and, I think, defensible. The anthology, on the whole, gestures toward the centrality of language, but would have benefited from a more robust assertion or engagement with this idea. This need not have been the focus of the volume – that is another project – but it would have made for an interesting backdrop against which to read the essays collected here. For scholars engaged with this question in Kant, the volume will be helpful in offering a landscape for situating the project, and thinking of the possible fruits of such an investigation.

The volume is divided into three parts: The Question of Language; The Concern for Language in Religion, Politics, and Aesthetics; and Historical Perspectives on Language. There are two essays in the first section that directly take on the central problematic announced in the introduction, namely, the strange fact that Kant does not engage with the issue despite its importance to his contemporary interlocutors, along with its foundational role in his heirs. Robert Wood (‘The Place of Language: From Kant to Hegel’) and Michael N. Forster (‘Kant’s Philosophy of Language’) both tackle this question, with Wood noting the overall systematic commitments Kant has that preclude language from playing a grounding role, and Forster tracing Kant’s different attitudes toward the topic across his career. Together, these two essays form the foundation for the inquiries in the rest of the book. The other two essays in this section, by Chris W. Surprenant (‘Language in Kant’s Practical Philosophy’) and Frank Schalow (‘The Language of Time in Kant’s Transcendental Schematism’) both argue that language stands at the ground of two of the human beings’ most fundamental psychic activities: schematization and maxim formation. For Schalow and Surprenant, there is a significant pay-off in discovering this in Kant. For Schalow, we find that Kant offers a *logos* of being that is temporal, anticipating Heidegger. For

Surprenant, we find that integral to our individual moral goodness is the engagement with and testing of our maxims in community with others.

In the second section, the essays examine the different possibilities of language. Kirk Pillow ('Jupiter's Eagle and the Despot's Hand Mill: Two Views of Metaphor in Kant') and Charles Nussbaum ('Models and "Symbolic Hypotyposis": Kant on Music and Language') each take up possibilities *within* linguistic expression. Pillow suggests ultimately that, for Kant, metaphor pushes the boundaries of how we can make meaning, and that this may work back onto our cognition and understanding of the world. Nussbaum pushes the limits of making meaning even further, arguing, in the end, that music may also be understood as a kind of indirect symbolization productive of new meaning. Philip J. Rossi ('Kant's Apophaticism of Finitude: A Grammar of Hope for Speaking Humanly of God') and Susan Shell ('*Nachschrift eines Freundes*: Kant on Language, Friendship, and the Concept of a People') each explore the use of language in different contexts, religious and political, respectively. Rossi develops the notion of a grammar of social hope, bringing Kant's thoughts on our possible relation to God into clear relation with his philosophy of history. Shell's piece, in a way, belongs not only in this section, but could stand alongside Wood's and Forster's pieces that address directly the issue of Kant on language. She offers an in-depth account of Kant's endorsement, very late in life, of preserving minority languages, and examines how he believes a certain kind of successful communication to be consanguine with good character.

The final four essays in section three each map out the legacy of Kant's thinking in Hegel, Schelling, Dilthey and Heidegger. Taken together, these essays comprise new and exciting ways of reading Kant through the lens of those philosophers who appropriated and transformed his ideas. Robert Berman ('Reason, Idealism, and the Category: Kantian Language in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*') traces Hegel's use of Kant's language to solve contradictions he found in Kant's idealism. Jason M. Wirth ('The Language of Natural Silence: Schelling and the Poetic Word After Kant') examines Schelling's turn to the poetic, which, while unstated, takes to their extra-critical conclusion insights Kant himself offers about aesthetics in the third *Critique*. Eric S. Nelson ('Language, Nature, and the Self: Language Psychology, and the Feeling of Life in Kant and Dilthey') and Richard Velkley ('The Inexhaustibility of Art and the Conditions of Language') both demonstrate in different ways the profound and lasting influence that Kant's philosophy has had on the post-Kantian German tradition. Even when attempting to wrest free from and to overcome deep concerns we have about Kant's philosophy, hermeneutics and phenomenology find themselves deeply indebted to Kant's own insights.

This volume will contribute to efforts in scholarship to understand more deeply the relation between the different parts of Kant's philosophy, especially how the third *Critique* may inform Kant's theoretical and practical philosophies. In the end, each of the essays offers something genuinely innovative for our understanding of Kant.

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Lucy Allais, *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and his Realism*

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In her book which has already received wide attention, Lucy Allais provides a novel account of Kant's transcendental idealism. She presents her interpretation as navigating between two extremes. On the one hand, deflationist readings see Kant exclusively as a realist: they either trivialize the distinction between appearances and things in themselves or deny Kant's commitment to things in themselves altogether. On the other hand, phenomenalist interpretations hold that appearances reduce to the content of representations. If we follow Allais, both are untenable. Deflationists cannot do justice to Kant's idealism – that is, they cannot explain why he thinks that there is something mind-dependent about appearances. Phenomenalism, on the contrary, is too subjectivist in that it ignores Kant's realism – that is, appearances are public objects that we can directly perceive in space. Consequently, Allais thinks that any successful interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism must also explain his realism. It must be a 'moderate' one.

Allais's moderate interpretation considers the notoriously controversial distinction between things in themselves and appearances as one between two aspects of things: the in-itself-aspect corresponds to properties that things have independent of a relation to cognizing subjects (but are epistemically inaccessible to us), while the appearance-aspect concerns properties that objects can only have in relation to cognizing subjects. Allais calls properties of the latter sort 'essentially manifest' – they are 'relational, mind-dependent qualities of things which can be present in experience' (p. 124). On her relational account of perception, intuition directly presents us objects without