Rethinking Kant:
Volume 3

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Edited by

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ABOUT THE SERIES

The collection *Rethinking Kant* contains papers presented at the different Study Groups of the North American Kant Society and is part of the series *Kantian Questions*. The goal is to publish original work on any topic of Kantian scholarship, as well as reflections on contemporary debates that bear the imprint of Kant's thought. We publish studies from a variety of philosophical traditions and perspectives – the only requirement is scholarly quality and innovation. The series offers an alternative publishing venue of the highest quality, attractive to scholars who want to reach, through the possibility of paperback editions, a readership of specialists and non-specialist alike.

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Rethinking Kant: Volume 1 (2008), edited by Pablo Muchnik
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ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Kant's works are in accordance with the *Akademie-Edition* Vol. 1-29 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1900–. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* follow the customary pagination of the first (A) and second (B) edition. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–). The following abbreviations are used throughout the book:

AA   *Immanuel Kants Schriften*. Ausgabe der Königlich Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1900–)

Anth   *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), AA 7. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint*

BGSE   *Bemerkungen in den Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764), AA 20 *Notes inserted in the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*

BM   *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace* (1785), AA 8 *Determination of the Concept of a Human Race*

Br   *Briefe*, AA 10-13 *Correspondence*

EEKU   *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 20 *First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment*

FM   *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* (written 1793-1794, published 1804), AA 20 *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*

GMS   *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), AA 4
Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

GSE   *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764), AA 2
Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime

GUGR   *Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume* (1768), AA 2
Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space

IaG   *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), AA 8
Idea toward a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim

KpV   *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), AA 5
Critique of Practical Reason

KrV   *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781, 1787). Cited by A/B pagination.
Critique of Pure Reason

KU   *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), AA 5
Critique of the Power of Judgment

LK   *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte und Beurtheilung der Beweise, deren sich Herr von Leibniz und andere Mechaniker in dieser Streitsache bedient haben, nebst einigen vorhergehenden Betrachtungen, welche die Kraft der Körper überhaupt betreffen* (1747), AA 1
Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces

Log   *Jäsche Logik*, AA 9
The Jäsche Logic

MAM   *Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786), AA 8
Conjectural Beginning of Human History

MAN   *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (1786), AA 4
Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science

MpVT   *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee* (1791), AA 8
       On the Failure of all Philosophic Attempts in Theodicy

MS   *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797-1798), AA 6
       Metaphysics of Morals

MSI   *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (1770), AA 2
       On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World

NG   *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763), AA 2
       Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy

NL   *Neuer Lehrbegriff der Bewegung und Ruhe und der damit verknüpften Folgerungen in den ersten Gründen der Naturwissenschaft* (1758), AA 2
       New Theory of Motion and Rest, and the Connected Consequences in the First Principles of the Natural Sciences

NTH   *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäudes, nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt* (1755), AA 1
       Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens, or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, Treated in Accordance with Newtonian Principles

Op   *Opus postumum*, AA 21, 22
       Opus postumum

Päd   *Pädagogik*, AA 9
       Pedagogy

PG   *Physische Geographie*, AA 9
       Physical Geography

PM   *Metaphysicae cum geometria iunctae usus in philosophia naturali, cuius specimen I. continet monadologiam physicam* (1756), AA 1
        The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology

PND   *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio* (1755), AA 1
        A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition

Prol   *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (1783), AA 4
        Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics

Refl   *Reflexion*, AA 14-19
        Reflection

RGV   *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793-1794), AA 6
        Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason

SF   *Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), AA 7
        Conflict of the Faculties

TG   *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766), AA 2
        Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics

TP   *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis* (1793), AA 8
        On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory But It Is of No Use in Practice

ÜE   *Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* (1790), AA 8
        On a Discovery whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by an Older One

ÜGTP   *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie*
       (1788), AA 8
       On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy

VAMS   *Vorarbeiten zur Metaphysik der Sitten,* AA 23
       Preliminary Works for the Metaphysics of Morals

VAnth *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, AA 25
       Lectures on Anthropology

VE   *Vorlesungen über Ethik*, AA 27
       Lectures on Ethics

VL   *Vorlesungen über Logik*, AA 24
       Lectures on Logic

VM   *Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*, AA 28, 29
       Lectures on Metaphysics

VPE   *Vorlesung philosophische Enzyklopädie*, AA 29
       Lectures on the Philosophical Encyclopaedia

VPG   *Vorlesungen über Physische Geographie*, AA 26
       Lectures on Physical Geography

VRML   *Über ein vermeintes Recht, aus Menschenliebe zu lügen* (1797),
       AA 8
       On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy

VRL   *Vorlesungen über Religion*, AA 28
       Lectures on Religion

VvRM   *Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen* (1775), AA 2
       Of the Different Races of Human Beings

WA   *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784), AA 8
       An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?

WDO   *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?* (1786), AA 8
       What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?

ZeF   *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795), AA 8
       Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project

INTRODUCTION

OLIVER THORNDIKE

In his *Kant als Metaphysiker*, Max Wundt describes philosophy as the attempt to comprehend the *contingent* as grounded on *necessary* foundations.[1] Despite the significant changes that Kant's notion of philosophy undergoes between the early writings and the late *Opus postumum*, Wundt's dictum captures an essential aspect of Kant's metaphysics. In the early remarks inserted into his copy of the *Observations on the Beauty and the Sublime*,[2] Kant says that Newton was the first one to see order and regularity where previously only manifold and anomalies were perceived. Kant continues this remark by saying that just as *Newton* discovered the underlying unity governing physical objects, so did *Rousseau* discover the unity underlying the manifold of human action.[3] Kant's analogy consists in the claim that the force of the general will unites all human beings into a moral world, just as all material substances are united through the force of universal gravitation into a unified physical whole. In other words, what seems contingent can be understood as necessary, and so "after Newton and Rousseau God is justified."[4]

How precisely nature is possible as a law-governed whole, how ethical and juridical obligations can be justified through a law of freedom, and how both nature and freedom can be thought of as united in one coherent system Kant aims to explain in the three *Critiques*. Importantly, as Kant puts it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in transcendental philosophy reason deals with nothing but itself. Therefore, it cannot assume any empirical

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[1] Wundt, Max. *Kant als Metaphysiker. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutschen Philosophie im 18. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Verlag von Ferdinand Enke, 1924. 12-27.

[2] Kant, Immanuel. *Bemerkungen in den 'Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen.'* Kant-Forschungen Band 3. General Editors Brandt, Reinhard and Werner Stark. Ed. Marie Rischmüller. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1991. 48. See also editor's commentary, pp. 200-211.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

objects that are given.[5] Yet, throughout his career, Kant's philosophical thinking remains deeply influenced by empirical disciplines. The principles of the understanding (a culminating point of the Transcendental Analytic), Kant's account of matter and motion in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, and the *transition project* in the *Opus postumum* are examples that show Kant's indebtedness to empirical science. The same holds for Kant's practical philosophy, which displays an intricate connection between the law of freedom and empirically shaped common sense. Most papers in this anthology are concerned with the deep connection between the pure and the empirical elements in Kant's philosophy. I have chosen chapter titles to express that connection: "Humanity and Morality," and "Science and Critique."

I- Humanity and Morality

In the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797-8), Kant holds that we might be mistaken at times in our objective judgment as to whether something is a duty or not, but we cannot be mistaken in our subjective judgment as to whether we have submitted it to "practical reason (here in its role as judge) for such a judgment."[6] We cannot err whether we act under the subjective consciousness that our action is ethically permissible.[7] This remarkable statement raises questions about self-transparency, the relation between objective and subjective grounds of knowledge, and the psychology of moral experience. When, and as response to what did Kant develop this view? In the *Religion* (1793-4), Kant already presents a similar view:

> With respect to the action *I* want to undertake, however, I must not only judge, and be of the opinion, that it is right; I must also be *certain* that it is. And this is a requirement of conscience to which is opposed *probabilism*, i.e., the principle that the mere opinion that an action may well be right is itself sufficient for undertaking it. … Conscience does not pass judgment upon actions as cases that stand under the law, for this is what reason does so far as it is subjectively practical (whence the *casus conscientiae* and casuistry, as a kind of dialectic of conscience). Rather, here reason judges itself, whether it has actually undertaken, with all diligence, the examination of actions (whether they are right or wrong). (RGV 6:186)

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[5] KrV A845/B873. KrV Axx.

[6] MS 6:401.

[7] On this point see: Hoffmann, Thomas Sören. *Gewissen als praktische Apperzeption. Zur Lehre vom Gewissen in Kant's Ethik-Vorlesungen*. Kant-Studien 93 (2002): 424-443. 438-9.

Although Kant also uses the notion *casus conscientiae* in the context of "cases where conscience is the sole judge,"[8] here he is clearly not interested in specifying conscience's role as a tool in subsuming actions under ethical laws. Rather, Kant discusses conscience as the *meta-reflection* on this kind of application. Conscience is a reflection on our own judgment. It is a consciousness *that* self examination has taken place.[9] **Susan Meld Shell** argues that Kant first develops this position in his 1791 *On the Failure of all Philosophic Attempts in Theodicy*. He meant it as a response to acute political pressure, and it is a reminder that philosophy – rightly understood – does not lead to Spinozistic "atheism." In the context of showing that there is a "critically based role for religion consistent with moral autonomy" (p.23), Kant highlights *falsehood* as the main weakness of human nature. While complete *self-transparency* might not be possible, *conscientiousness* is.

What this might imply for specific actions is the topic of **Amelie Rorty's** paper, which analyzes the transition from moral principles to particular cases of their application. At the heart of Rorty's paper is the claim that particular natural and social conditions – such as an agent's physical and psychological constitution, her hopes, fears and expectations, her intimate relation to family and friends – are a necessary ingredient of *human* morality. If this is so, what role should considerations of an agent's individuality play in determining her duties? For example, fulfilling our duties of friendship require an emphatic understanding of the particular hopes and fears of our friends. Promoting the conditions under which a friend can realize her autonomy commands attention to her specific psychology.[10] As Rorty points out, this can create moral *dilemmas*. Withholding a painful truth from a friend is a case in point. While the Aristotelian rhetorician could judge "that it is sometimes best to offer attractive but shoddy and questionable considerations for a good cause,"[11]

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[8] MS 6:440. See also Lehmann, Gerhard. *Kants Tugenden. Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte und Interpretation der Philosophie Kants*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1980. 31, 51. See also Baumgarten, A. G., *Ethica philosophica*. Halle, [1]1740, [2]1751, [3]1763. Reprinted in AA 27:871-1015. §190: AA 27:919.

[9] On this point see Moyar, Dean. "Unstable Autonomy: Conscience and Judgment in Kant's Moral Philosophy." Journal of Moral Philosophy 5.3 (2008); and Lehmann, Gerhard (1980:43).

[10] On this point see also my "Understanding Kant's Claim that 'Morality cannot be without Anthropology.'" *Rethinking Kant*. *Volume I*. Ed. Pablo Muchnik. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. 111-137.

[11] Rorty, Amelie. "Aristotle on the Virtues of Rhetoric." The Review of Metaphysics 64 (June 2011): 715-733. 722.

this is not a heuristic option for the Kantian moral agent. Although casuistic treatments of moral dilemmas provide solutions, the outcome remains painful because casuistry cannot undermine the universality of duty.[12] "The struggles and losses within moral friendship occur when the obligations of respect override the duties of benevolence." (p.45) For Rorty, dilemmas of friendship display the *inevitable* struggle that characterizes the phenomena of morality and thus facilitate an inquiry into what it means to be a rational *and* human agent in the Kantian framework.

The social and anthropological dimensions of morality also play an important role in the next essay. Outside his *Critiques*, in the *Idea toward a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784), Kant provides a definition of reason as modern in spirit as any: a faculty of widening the purposes of the use of our natural powers, acknowledging *no limits* in its projects.[13] The sheer power, contingency and openness Kant here ascribes to human reason might remind the contemporary reader of Helmuth Plessner's description of the human being as *Macht und offene Frage* [power and open question],[14] – but it seems to conflict with Kant's idea of the vocation of the human being, a final end of morality, and the providence argued for in the *Critiques*. **Günter Zöller** understands Kant's critical and his empirically oriented anthropological writings not as being in tension, but rather as being parallel. The thesis that Kant's anthropological and critical writings mutually supplement each other is developed through an analysis of Kant's re-interpretation of Rousseau. Zöller thus shows how the basic socio-political predispositions of the human species lead to the cultivation, civilization, and moralization of the human being under the guidance of both nature and human reason. Kant writes that it is "the supreme end of nature," that all of the human capacities be developed.[15] He adds that ambition, avarice, and imperiousness are the *natural* means for the cultivation of humanity.[16] *Nature* provides incentives for the *cultivation* and *civilization* of humanity. But while technical mastery, science, and institutions open up possibilities as it

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[12] On casuistry and conflicting duties see MS 6:390, 393; and Guyer, Paul. *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005. 267-274.
[13] IaG 8:18-9.
[14] Plessner, Helmuth. "Macht und menschliche Natur. Ein Versuch zur Anthropologie der geschichtlichen Weltansicht." *Gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Dux, Günter, et al. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981. Band V.
[15] IaG 8:22.
[16] IaG 8:20, KU 5:431.

were,[17] i.e., broaden and multiply our options to pursue ends in general and thus indeed further the development of humanity, they cannot make us *moral* agents. The mere capacity to set ends,[18] cultivation, and civilization are quite compatible with an evil disposition as manifested in deception, humiliation, hypocrisy, or submissive behavior. Zöller argues that the three-stage scheme of human development (cultivation, civilization, and moralization) is developed by Kant as a re-interpretation of Rousseau. In this context, Zöller analyzes Kant's reflections on anthropology, where Kant notes that moralization is a state in which "perfect art again becomes nature" [*vollkommene Kunst wird wieder zur Natur*]. (p.71) This perfect art can only be realized in an ethical commonwealth. The final point of human development is the moralization of the *whole* species, thus an end in which all individuals share a purpose and cooperate towards its achievement. Kant's critical notion of the highest good thus parallels his historical and anthropological observations.

Kate Moran addresses the notion of the highest good as follows:

> On the one hand, Kant sometimes describes the highest good as the natural result of acting morally. On the other hand, he often claims we have a special duty to pursue the highest good. This, in turn, raises several puzzling questions. Why should we have a duty to pursue the highest good if the highest good simply results from fulfilling those duties we already have? And if the highest good is somehow more than the result of fulfilling the duties described … in the categorical imperative, then does a duty to pursue the highest good, with its emphasis on happiness, inject a worrisome element of consequentialism into Kant's moral theory? (p.76)

To tackle these questions, Moran traces the development of Kant's notion of the highest good from the *Critique of Practical Reason* to the *Religion within the Bounds of mere Reason*. She interprets Kant's claim that there is a duty to promote the highest good, i.e., "a duty *sui generis*," – a duty the human race has towards itself, as a "shared project" (p.95). The link between the individual and social perspectives on morality consists in the structure of the moral law itself: It is precisely because the moral law, as the *ground* of moral action, has a necessary *object*, namely the highest good, that Kant's moral philosophy has *also* an essential social dimension. Moran's point is that moral justification becomes a social project because ground and object are closely intertwined in Kant's moral theory.

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[17] Searle, John R. *Making the Social World. The Structure of Human Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Ch. 3, 5, 7.
[18] Cf. MS 6:434-5.

Ryan Kemp uses the juxtaposition of individual and social perspectives on moral action to resolve the tension in Kant's notion of radical evil: How can the individual agent be autonomous when the observation of human conduct at the species level suggests that every group, culture, society has a propensity to evil? Kemp writes:

> Kant deliberately shifts his focus from demonstrating evil at the individual level to demonstrating evil at the level of the species. … As such, it is the anthropological narrative of evil, the narrative that attributes evil to the human species and not the noumenal self, that takes center stage in Kant's account of universal evil." (p.120)

Kemp thus suggests that Kant uses two units of moral analysis, the individual and the species level. Such a view has recently also been suggested by Pablo Muchnik, who likewise rejects the dominant readings that

> oscillate between emphasizing the empirical or the a priori aspects of Kant's doctrine, overlooking the fact that neither can by itself be satisfactory to explicate Kant's approach in the *Religion* – the empirical alone, because it clashes with the a priori demands of moral imputation and responsibility; the a priori alone, because it overlooks the social, empirical dimension of the problem of evil.[19]

Kemp rejects the view that there is a tension between the a priori and empirical aspects of Kant's account of evil. The universal ascription of evil to the human species is not an empirical generalization, Kemp argues, but a regulative idea that reflective judgment necessarily posits. According to Kemp, the necessity consists in the fact that "evil is seen as an *indispensable* tool by which the species progresses toward its final end." (p.117, my emphasis)

This section concludes with a paper addressing the relationship between morality and right in Kant's writings. This is a topic that has been fiercely debated among Kant interpreters. Marcus Willaschek, for example, holds that Kant's philosophy of right can be *separated* from his moral philosophy. Very roughly, Willaschek argues that strict right comes down to the authorization to externally *coerce* persons into lawful behavior. For this reason, right cannot be based on the categorical imperative because the categorical imperative always requires compliance for its own sake. Kant's doctrine of right is thus not based on Kant's

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[19] Muchnik, Pablo. *Kant's Theory of Evil. An Essay on the Dangers of Self-Love And the Aprioricity of History*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009. xvi.

supreme principle of moral obligation.[20] Right merely presents the conditions of rightful coercion, but it does not categorically *prescribe* to act rightfully. Since the principle of right abstracts from moral *motivation* (it is exclusively concerned with external freedom), it abstracts from the *unconditional* prescriptive force of practical laws. On this view, the *prescriptive* character of the law becomes untenable: all that remains is the authorization to coerce others into rightful behavior. Unless we separate the universal law of right from Kant's moral philosophy, there is a paradox.

One might respond to this reading by saying that the authorization to use coercion is *derived* from the idea of freedom and, *therefore*, warranted. Such a reading emphasizes that the right to use coercive force can only be non-arbitrary if the normative validity of juridical laws rests on a purely rational (i.e., non-positive) basis: the concept of autonomy.[21] This position has the advantage to account for Kant's claim that Ethics and Right are parts of a single *metaphysics* of morals.

Dean Moyar agrees with Willaschek that there is a serious problem with Kant's view. However, he believes that it can be resolved with the resources of Kant's moral theory. Moyar emphasizes that the categorical imperative contains a relation to the actual carrying out of an action. This Moyar calls "realized agency" (p.144), which is the central notion of his essay. Moyar points out that the motivational requirement, which lies at the bottom of Kant's theory of morality, drops out in the test of the universality of maxims in the *Groundwork*. It thus seems that the motivational requirement and the universality requirement are separate, – as the separationists hold. However, Moyar sees both requirements united in the kingdom of ends formulation of the categorical imperative:

> It is only with [the] Formula of the Kingdom of Ends [FKE], according to Kant, that the motivational requirement actually enters into the formulation of the imperative. … The upshot of this is that only in following the categorical imperative in its third formulation is the moral *worth* of the maxim given a place in the testing of the maxim. Only at this point, when the form and matter (the universality and the humanity) are joined, does

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[20] Willaschek, Marcus. "Which Imperatives for Right? On the Non-Prescriptive Character of Juridical Laws in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*." *Kant's Metaphysics of Morals: Interpretive Essays*. Ed. Mark Timmons. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 65-88; and his "Right and Coercion. Can Kant's Conception of Right be Derived from his Moral Theory?" *International Journal of Philosophy* 17 (2009): 49-70.

[21] See Ripstein, Arthur. *Force and Freedom. Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

my maxim *address* itself to all others and thus call for me to explicitly
renounce all material incentives and act on the motive of duty itself. … [It
seems] as though the motivational requirement in the Categorical
Imperative is simply tacked onto the universality requirement. In FKE, the
requirement of legislating *for others* bars interest as the incentive of my
action, thereby securing moral worth (p.133)

Thus, already the *Groundwork* contains the claim that the realization of
moral values requires the context of other agents. Moyar subsequently
shifts to the *Metaphysics of Morals*. Insofar as the realization of private
right presupposes public right, it seems again that free agency can only be
"realized through common ends." (p.154) By incorporating the conditions
of realization into Kant's notion of agency, Moyar hopes to reconcile the
externality, unconditionality, and prescriptivity theses of Kant's principle
of right.

II- Science and Critique

The pre-critical Kant stands in the tradition of thinkers whose natural
philosophy (*philosophia naturalis*) is meant to ground the science of
physics. For example, in §§94-95 of his *Preliminary Discourse* (1728),
Christian Wolff, whom Kant praises at various places in his writings,
formulates the foundationalist relationship between philosophy and
physics as follows:

If everything is to be demonstrated accurately in physics, then principles
must be borrowed from metaphysics. Physics explains those things which
are possible through bodies ... If these things are to be treated
demonstratively, then the notions of body, matter, nature, motion, the
elements, and other such general notions must be known. ... Now these
notions are explained in general cosmology and in ontology ... Therefore,
if all things are to be demonstrated accurately in physics, principles must
be borrowed from general cosmology and ontology…Thus it is clear that
metaphysics must precede physics… .[22]

Marius Stan inquires into the Leibniz-Wolffian heritage of Kant's
philosophy of nature. He rejects the dominant reading of Kant as a hardcore
Newtonian, and argues that "some key areas in his early philosophy of

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[22] Quoted after: Hettche, Matt, "Christian Wolff", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of
Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/wolff-christian/>.

physics, strongly marked by Wolff," remain intact throughout Kant's career. Stan writes:

> In *New Doctrine of Motion and Rest* (NL) of 1758, Kant proffers a view amounting to an *internal* revision of Wolff's philosophical mechanics—not a Newtonian theory, as one would expect. (p.158)

Stan shows in detail that almost all of Kant's views in NL resurface, albeit transfigured, in the mature *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (MAN). But how should we then interpret the Newtonian elements in Kant's philosophy? Stan argues for a duality between dynamics and mechanics in Kant's natural philosophy: With the 1755 *Naturgeschichte* and the 1756 *Monadology*, Kant takes a position in favor of strongly Newtonian "dynamical" forces, that is, action-at-a-distance forces that underpin a "dynamics," i.e. a theory of matter. But with the 1758 *Lehrbegriff*, he outlines a theory of "mechanical" forces that are Leibniz-Wolffian in origin. A close reading of Kant's natural philosophy shows that the mature Kant strives to strike a balance between Leibnizian and Newtonian commitments. Stan is pressing to reassess the almost universally held view of the Newtonian Kant by pointing out important Leibniz-Wolffian components in Kant's natural philosophy – among which are the attempt to provide "a priori dynamical laws, and an effort to ground mechanics in philosophy." (p.158) Stan's work seems also important for a proper understanding of the so-called *Opus postumum*, which deals with a transition from the metaphysics of nature to empirical physics. The Transition Project is supposed to bridge the "broad gulf (*hiatus in systemato*)"[23] between metaphysics and physics, which are the two parts of the science of nature (*philosophia naturalis*).[24]

Certainly, Kant's critical philosophy is not only concerned with the project of a *philosophia naturalis*. After all, the *Critique of Pure Reason* investigates into the possibility of *metaphysics*. Kant does not doubt *that* there is a natural metaphysics, but he doubts that his predecessors have shown *how* it is objectively possible.[25] Key to Kant's propaedeutic to metaphysics is the separation of intuition, concepts, and ideas. Whereas

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[23] Op 21:476. Cf. Förster, Eckart. "Reply to Friedman and Guyer." Inquiry 46 (2003): 228-238. 238 (note 5).

[24] Op 21:407 (*Octaventwurf* 1796).

[25] For the notion "metaphysica naturalis" see Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb. *Metaphysica*. Halle [1]1739 ([4]1757). Reprinted in AA 17:5-226 and AA 15:5-45. §3. For Kant's conception of metaphysics as a natural disposition see KrV A3, KrV B xxxi; B21 (in the latter passage we find a direct copy of Baumgarten's expression "metaphysica naturalis"). See also Prol 4:365. See also Wundt (1924:196).

the distinction between sensibility and understanding is established in the
Inaugural dissertation, the insight that concepts only yield knowledge in
connection with intuition is the decisive new step of the *Critique*: it is here
that Kant distinguishes phenomena from noumena, i.e., concepts of the
understanding and ideas of reason. **Colin McQuillan** addresses the
historical context of Kant's distinction between intuition and concept. Few
claims are as central to Kant's epistemology as the assertion: "Without
sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none
would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without
concepts are blind."[26] Henry Allison holds that Kant does not argue for,
but starts from, the discursivity thesis.[27] McQuillan aims to elucidate
Kant's two-cognitive-capacities distinction by historically tracing the
heterogeneity of intuition and understanding to Baumgarten's distinction
between aesthetics (the science of perception) and logic. In Baumgarten
"the distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition [is] a *real*
distinction between *different kinds* of cognition." (p.182, my emphasis).
McQuillan argues that Kant subscribes to the two-types-of-knowledge
view in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, but later abandons it in the context of
responding to objections raised by Lambert. The result is a two-elements-
of-human-cognition view – Kant's critical view.[28]

The distinction between sensibility and understanding leads to an
immanent metaphysics in the Analytic of the *Critique*. In the *Appendix to*

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[26] KrV A51/B75.
[27] Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*.
New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 2nd edition, 2004. 13.
[28] McQuillan's essay also reflects a recently increased interest in Baumgarten
among Kantians. In various influential articles and books, Clemens Schwaiger has
argued that Baumgarten's work is key in understanding Kant's terminology. Here I
just name two of his publications: Schwaiger, Clemens. *Kategorische und Andere
Imperative. Zur Entwicklung von Kants praktischer Philosophie bis 1785*.
Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1999. And "Vollkommenheit als Moralprinzip bei Wolff,
Baumgarten and Kant." *Vernunftkritik und Aufklärung. Studien zur Philosophie
Kants und seines Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Michael Oberhausen. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt:
Friedrich Frommann Verlag, Günther Holzboog, 2001. 317-328. Two critical
commentaries and translations in German and English of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*
have just been published or are forthcoming. Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb.
Metaphysik: historisch-kritische Ausgabe; übersetzt, eingel. und hrsg. von Günther
Gawlick und Lothar Kreimendahl. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2011. There is
also an English translation and commentary in preparation: *A critical translation of
Alexander Baumgarten's "Metaphysics," accompanied by Immanuel Kant's
marginalia and selected reflections*. Translated with an introduction and notes by
Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers.

the Dialectic and the *Doctrine of Method*, Kant hints at a regulative and practical use of metaphysics. This is to say, there are propositions to which we have reasons to assent even in the absence of an objective epistemic justification. **Lawrence Pasternack** picks up on Kant's notion of the *doctrinal belief* in God, – a notion Kant ascribes to theoretical reason. That this notion has *not* received much attention in the literature might be due to the fact, pointed out by Pasternack, that Kant uses the notion of doctrinal belief *only* in the first *Critique* – a *hapax legomenon,* as it were. A doctrinal belief is a subjectively necessary belief, whose objective reality cannot be established. We have to admit, Kant writes, that the belief in the existence of God belongs to doctrinal belief because

> purposive unity is still so important a condition of the application of reason to nature that I cannot pass it by, especially since experience liberally supplies examples of it. But I know no other condition for this unity that could serve me as a clue for the investigation of nature, except insofar as I presuppose that a higher intelligence has arranged everything in accordance with the wisest ends. (KrV A826/B855)

What is the epistemological status of "doctrinal belief?" Kant wavers between two perspectives. On the one hand, it is reason's own demand for unconditional completeness that makes the idea of systematic unity necessary.[29] As Kant puts it in the *Prolegomena*, reason applies the subjective principle of systematic unity *methodologically* "for the sake of its self-satisfaction."[30] On the other hand, Kant claims that there could not be "a logical principle of rational unity among rules unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the object itself, is assumed *a priori* as necessary."[31] This transcendental principle of unity pertains to "objects that are given to us,"[32] and because it is "recognized not only empirically but also *a priori*, though still indeterminately [it is] following from the essence of things."[33] But why must experience be systematic all the way down? Isn't the question of the possibility of experience, i.e., its *constitution*, independent of the possibility of its systematic organization, which latter point is captured in reason's *regulative* idea of systematic unity?[34] Pasternack analyzes Kant's conceptual distinction between opinion, knowing, and

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[29] KrV A309/B365; A508-9/B536-7; A782-795/B810-823.
[30] Prol 4:349.
[31] KrV A650/B679.
[32] A654/B682.
[33] KrV A693/B721, cf. A650/B678.
[34] For such a view see Guyer (2005: 31, 23).

believing by questioning whether and how doctrinal belief can be distinguished from mere opinion. He addresses the recent literature that tries to connect Kant's terminology to contemporary epistemological debates and reflects on the metaphysical commitments of Kant's distinctions. Pasternack emphasizes that the putative assertoric assent that comes with doctrinal belief poses interpretative problems, which are resolved through the principle of reflective judgment from the *Critique of Judgment*. The principle of reflective judgment solidifies the boundary between belief and other propositional attitudes, and it takes

> away the mode of assertoric commitment to something which, according to the Canon, is supposed to be integral to our scientific inquiry. … Of course, we may still entertain the idea of a "wise Author" as a mere *focus imaginarius,* but no assertoric commitment is implied thereby. (p.217)

Pasternack thus interprets the principle of reflective judgment as a conceptual refinement that makes the special class of doctrinal belief obsolete.

The interpretive difficulties caused by Kant's re-thinking of his own philosophy become especially clear in the last two papers of this volume. For the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant prepares a *Refutation of Idealism* – a *reductio ad absurdum* of Descartes' position, which was supposed to turn the game that idealism plays against itself.[35] The *Refutation* commences from the Cartesian starting point that I am immediately aware of my own existence as determined in time. Kant argues that this determination of my existence in time is only possible through a thing outside me (and not through a mere *representation* of a thing). This argument is among the most debated pieces of Kant's transcendental idealism. What motivates it? In the fourth paralogism of the first edition, Kant comes dangerously close to Berkeley's idealism – at least according to the reviewers of the A-edition, Garve and Feder. Phrases such as "outer perception ... is itself the real"[36] can certainly be read as echoing Berkeley's position. After all, both Kant and Berkeley "deny the reality of matter as an existent independent of the mind."[37] In the *Prolegomena*, Kant tries to distinguish his idealist account of experience from Berkeley's reduction of reality to mere illusion.[38] The subsequent

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[35] KrV B276.
[36] KrV A375.
[37] Förster, Eckart. "Kant's Refutation of Idealism." Philosophy, Its History and Historiography (1983): 287-303. 289.
[38] Prol 4:290-4.

Refutation emphasizes that we do not have to *infer* the existence of the external world by means of our immediate representations, but that the very possibility of empirical consciousness presupposes *immediate* knowledge of things outside us. Both the *Prolegomena* and the *Refutation* attempt to defend the doctrine of transcendental idealism by contrasting it with empirical idealism. According to Kant, the latter entails either that we can never be completely certain about the existence of external objects (Descartes) or that experience of material objects is mere illusion (Berkeley). However, if the determination of my existence in time is only possible through a thing outside me (and not through a representation of a thing), then there seems to be a kind of realism lurking in the background: the question arises as to whether this position is compatible with transcendental idealism. What is the permanent that is not in me? It cannot be the thing in itself, because that is not in perception.

Andrew Brook reads Kant's *Refutation of Idealism* as expressing a common sense realism that is, however, compatible with Kant's empirical realism. Brook ascribes to Kant a "never-fully-acknowledged realism" (p.221), and argues for a shift in perspective from the Fourth Paralogism in the first edition to the *Refutation* in the second edition. Whereas the A-Edition discusses immortality and skepticism about knowledge of the external world together (fourth Paralogism), Kant separates these topics in the B-Edition. He continues to discuss immortality in the chapter on the Paralogisms, and he moves skepticism about knowledge of the external world to the new *Refutation*. But Brook also argues for a substantial change in Kant's philosophy, which has to do with a "new concept of what a real object that we know is like," (p.242) "a new account of our awareness of objects," (ibid.), and a change in Kant's doctrine of matter. In the first edition, extension, impenetrability, cohesion, and motion[39] are features of matter as appearances.[40] According to Brook, this doctrine of matter as a property of appearances changes into a certain kind of realism, through which Kant "advanced the idea … that matter is independent of us." (p.243) Brook concludes his realist reading of Kant's *Refutation* by connecting it to contemporary debates on reference. It is one thing to say that *only representations make me aware,* it is quite another to say that I am *aware only of representations."* (p.236-7) Brook suggests reading the *Refutation* as claiming that

> our acts of reference … refer to and thus make us aware of the objects
> themselves, not just representations of them, but in both cases these acts of

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[39] KrV A358.
[40] KrV A370.

reference need give us no knowledge of the things to which we thus refer. … The distinction between being aware of something and having knowledge of it is supported by an important contemporary theory of reference. On it, reference can 'reach' all the way to its object, yet description remain an act of constructive concept-application, even to the point of one not being able to know whether one's constructions are ever accurate – reference could reach its object free of judgment or description." (p.246)

Such a reading of Kant's *Refutation* might be seen as enriching the debate regarding the distinction between ostensible seeing and judgment. As McDowell puts it: "The point is simply that it does not take cognitive work for objects to come into view for us. Mere synthesis just happens, it is not our doing; unlike making judgments."[41]

Kant's last philosophical thoughts are devoted to a transition from his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* to Physics. In moving language, Kant likens the effect of his still unfinished critical philosophy on him to the pain of Tantalus.[42] On one interpretation, the origin of the Transition Project lies in the new developments of chemistry.

What, then, is lacking in the *Metaphysical Foundations*? Why should it be necessary to go beyond this work to the new project of the *Transition*? The answer, I think, is actually quite straightforward: the *Metaphysical Foundations* is correct as far as it goes …, the problem is that it simply does not go far enough. … Whereas the *Metaphysical Foundations* deals with the universal forces of matter in general … it says nothing at all about … more specific forces of matter … [which are] left entirely without an a priori foundation, and the task of the *Transition* is to fill precisely this lacuna."[43]

Friedman holds that the *Transition* becomes necessary because an essential task of Kant's critical philosophy is to provide a secure foundation for the empirical sciences.[44] **Ludmila Guenova** takes up Kant's attempts to incorporate the diverse empirical laws of physics and chemistry into the system of knowledge, and asks how organisms (biology) fit into the Kantian picture of a systematic science. She argues that in order to sketch the a priori classification of natural moving forces

[41] McDowell, John. "The Logical Form of an Intuition." The Journal of Philosophy 95:9 (1998): 451-470. 462.
[42] Br 12:257.
[43] Friedman, Michael. *Kant and the Exact Sciences.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. 237-8.
[44] Op 22:265.

Kant introduces the notion of *Lebenskraft* or *vis vitalis*. Guenova locates this notion in the historical context provided by the seminal works by Brown, Haller, and Blumenbach as well as in the systematic context of Kant's *Transition*.

> The Opus postumum thus presents us with the following picture of the relation between organisms, teleology and systematicity: Teleological principles are still … necessary for the possibility of investigating organisms. Without them, we cannot possibly conceive of how inorganic matter could have first arranged itself into an organized natural product. Teleological principles must, of course, remain outside the confines of our system of genuine scientific knowledge. Yet we now possess a tool by which we can classify organized natural products as a specific kind within the confines of this system. And in this way our system can embrace the distinction between organisms and inorganic objects as one of its own hierarchical divisions." (p.262-3)

This tool, Guenova argues, is the notion of *Lebenskraft* – understood as a moving force specific to organisms. However, open questions remain: How does the living force account for self-organization? If it is a mechanical force, how can it be self-organizing; if it's not mechanical how can it be incorporated into the system of forces? Ultimately, Guenova rejects Kant's attempt to incorporate living forces into the system of natural moving forces as incoherent.

    The essays in this volume deal with a broad variety of Kantian topics and their imprint on contemporary debates. I have presented a narrative of these essays that focuses on Kant's attempt to comprehend the relationship between the *empirical* and the *necessary* components of agency and knowledge. Needless to say, the papers are much richer than presented in this brief introduction.

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