

Courtney D. Fugate (ed.), *Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics: A Critical Guide*

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This volume, part of Cambridge's *Critical Guide* series, is the eighth on Kant and the third focusing on Kant's lectures. Edited by Courtney Fugate, the volume brings together ten original essays from leading scholars on a range of issues in Kant's metaphysics from the early 1760s into the 1790s. The essays here focus on the sets of notes that are available in the Cambridge Edition of Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics*, translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Kant 1997). Kant based his lectures on the *Metaphysics* textbook of his predecessor Alexander Baumgarten and, as Fugate notes in his introduction, Kant gave his metaphysics course no less than fifty-three times during his career—surpassed in number only by his logic course.

The volume comes at a time when there is significant interest in not only the origin and development of Kant's metaphysics from the pre-Critical to the Critical period, but its relationship to the metaphysics of his predecessors in the German rationalist tradition. For example, Baumgarten's textbook received its first English translation in 2013 (Fugate and Hymers 2013), and just last year, Fugate and Hymers edited a volume of essays dedicated to the relationship of Kant's metaphysics to Baumgarten (Fugate and Hymers 2018). In addition, there has been a surge of interest in the past few years in Kant's lectures in general, as evidenced by two edited volumes (Clewis, 2015; Dörflinger, et al., 2015).

Baumgarten defines metaphysics as 'the science of the first principles in human knowledge' (§1), and divides it into four branches: ontology (being qua being), cosmology (the

world), psychology (the soul), and natural theology (God). The volume is organized around this fourfold division—with particular attention given to ontology and psychology. I will focus on the six chapters concerned with these two parts, making comparatively brief remarks about the other four.

The volume opens with two standalone essays. The first, by John Zammito, focuses on the only set of existing notes prior to the 1770s—those written by Herder, dating from 1762-1764. In general, the lecture notes present us with the problem of separating out the contributions of the notetaker, and the Herder transcripts are no exception. Zammito's essay situates the influence of the young Kant on an even younger Herder against the backdrop of Kant's burst of texts on metaphysics from this three-year period (including the *Only Possible Argument*, *Negative Magnitudes*, and *Prize Essay*), revealing both Kant's earliest attempts at revising the metaphysical positions of his predecessors and Herder's own attempts to take part in this revisionism.

The second, by Karin de Boer, examines the 'Prolegomena' sections of eight versions of Kant's metaphysics lectures, spanning thirty years. Like Baumgarten, Kant began with a definition of metaphysics and an explanation of its various divisions. However, Kant soon begins to part ways with this Wolffian conception of metaphysics, as well as its Crusian alternative. Though Crusius is also a critic of Baumgarten and Wolff, Kant takes issue with both positions insofar as they inevitably depend on elements derived from sensibility and are therefore impure. Hence, the first task is to determine not only where metaphysics begins (its *terminus a priori*) but also where it ends (the *terminus a posteriori*). De Boer shows that what comes to the fore in Kant's thinking is a conception of metaphysics according to which the first task is a determination of its proper boundaries and limits, which amounts to an inquiry into whether and

how metaphysics is possible as a science. De Boer shows how this leads naturally to Kant's conception of transcendental philosophy and of a critique of pure reason, culminating in his definition of metaphysics as 'the principles of the possibility of all *a priori* cognition' (29:749).

Huaping Lu-Adler picks up on Kant's notion of transcendental philosophy and its relation to ontology, in the first of three chapters dedicated to the subject matter of Ontology. There is no consensus regarding what happens to ontology for the Critical Kant, as he seems to both disavow it entirely and yet also radically re-conceive it. Lu-Adler argues that Kant comes to *identify* ontology with transcendental philosophy. She examines several sets of lectures notes spanning two decades, revealing how Kant comes to reinterpret these notions as 'extensionally equivalent' (p. 66). By distinguishing ontology without critique (i.e., dogmatism) from ontology with critique, she argues, we can see that the latter emerges as a science of the conditions on *a priori* cognition. Here she emphasizes Kant's claim in the *L<sub>2</sub>* notes (1790–91) that the fundamental question of ontology is how cognitions a priori are possible. Thus Kant parts ways with Wolff's and Baumgarten's conception of metaphysics as the science of the predicates of being as such, for it too broadly includes those things that pertain to our a posteriori cognitions (e.g., space and time). Lu-Adler's conclusion is not just historically significant but also philosophically interesting, adding texture to the story of how Kant arrives at the view that only a critique of pure reason can provide us with the proper principle for systematically ordering the concepts we make use of in our thinking.

Nicholas Stang looks at Kant's various uses of the notion of a *ground* in his metaphysics lectures within the context of the Leibnizian focus on the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR): that everything has a reason or ground (*ratio*) that fully explains it. After discussing Kant's early engagement and objections to the formulation of the notion of a ground in his predecessors,

Stang presents the rich and nuanced account of grounding that emerges in the lectures by looking at the structural features of the ground-consequence relation, as well as the various types of distinctions that Kant makes between different types of grounds (e.g., being/knowing, logical/real, causal/non-causal). The essay concludes with a detailed explanation of non-causal grounding, which, as Stang notes, is generally neglected in the literature. Those interested in current discussions of grounding in analytic metaphysics will find this essay particularly enriching.

Space and time, Stang observes, are one such example of real and non-causal grounds and Emily Carson looks in more detail at the role that space and time play in Kant's metaphysics lectures. She begins by drawing our attention to the somewhat striking claim, which Kant makes in a 1787 letter to Jakob, that were he to write a metaphysics it would *begin* with the concepts of space and time. In particular, Carson helps us see the different ways in which experience plays a role for Kant. For while the Critical Kant may famously declare that all our cognition commences with experience (B1), he is equally committed to the view that ontology must be an a priori science. Carson's chapter shows how Kant is able to take the phenomenological givenness of space and time as a starting point, while at the same time avoiding dogmatic conclusions of his predecessors, in order eventually to arrive at his Critical position regarding our pure forms of intuition.

The next set of essays focuses on aspects of the Psychology sections of the metaphysics lectures. Jennifer Mensch examines the relationship between rational and empirical psychology, that is, what can be known of the soul a priori and based on experience, respectively. While Wolff and Baumgarten saw these as two aspects of one discipline, Kant comes to question whether and how the latter could belong to metaphysics, leading to his development of a course

in anthropology in 1772. Mensch's essay also looks at Kant's account of the higher faculties of the mind in the context of developing a 'transcendental psychology', redirecting rational psychology away from the illusion to which it is prone.

Not only were Kant's anthropology lectures based initially on the empirical psychology section of Baumgarten's metaphysics, but, as Paul Guyer shows, so were his earliest views on matters of aesthetics. Though Baumgarten also published a two volume textbook on aesthetics, there is no evidence that Kant read this, instead encountering his predecessor's views on the matter from his discussion of one of the three higher cognitive faculties: the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Guyer presents us with Kant's discussion of beauty and taste in the metaphysics lectures, showing that some of the core elements of his mature aesthetics (as spelled out in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1790) are in place from the mid-1770s—e.g., the distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, as well as the idea of the universality of a judgment of taste despite the absence of a concept. So, in contrast to the other chapters which detail substantive shifts in Kant's views into the Critical period, Guyer's contribution reminds us that there are also some significant continuities. The most significant development, Guyer demonstrates, is Kant's conclusion that the feeling of pleasure arises not from sensibility but from the free play of the faculties.

The significance of Kant's division between the higher and lower parts of our faculties also figures in the essay by Heiner F. Klemme, which considers the problem of human freedom in lectures from before and after the publication of the first *Critique* in 1781. Kant's point of departure is Baumgarten's discussion of the faculty of desire, from which he develops an account of transcendental freedom: determination by motives of the understanding rather than

necessitation by external stimuli. Klemme then shows how Kant comes to see this idea of freedom as practically necessary for morality.

There are two remaining essays, which I cannot discuss in detail, on cosmology and on rational theology. The first, by Fugate, suggests that Kant arrives at four different ways of conceiving of the discipline of cosmology over the course of his engagement with this section of Baumgarten's textbook. Finally, an essay co-authored by Brian Chance and Lawrence Pasternack looks at Kant's philosophy of religion, and in particular, his distinction between transcendental and natural theology, as well as its relation to his ethics.

Overall, this installment is an excellent contribution to the Critical Guide series on Kant. It will appeal to those interested with the development of Kant's Critical thought, especially in those periods where Kant's publications were limited (e.g., the 1770s), as well as those concerned with the relation of Kant's early metaphysics to his German rationalist predecessors. The interpretive and methodological challenges that arise for those who wish to make use of student notes on Kant's lectures have been well documented, so I will not rehearse them here. Still, seeing that the primary issue is how the interested reader can utilize them, the present volume succeeds in lowering the barrier to entry for those who lack the required background knowledge, including but not limited to: Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* textbook and the Wolffian tradition more broadly, Kant's pre-critical texts and unpublished reflections, as well as the many lecture notes themselves.<sup>1</sup> Nearly every author begins their essay with a section that sets the stage by looking at the historical context and providing the view of his immediate predecessors on the issue at hand, including those of lesser known figures such as Crusius and G. F. Meier. Indeed, one receives a mini-education in German metaphysics over the course of reading these essays. While this may at first seem to be an enriching but unexpected by-product, the reader will

come to realize the necessity of it for understanding what Kant takes as his starting point as he begins to work out his dissatisfactions with the way metaphysics was conceived within his own tradition and strives to develop an original philosophical position.

While it goes without saying that such a volume cannot treat all of the topics that appear in Kant's metaphysics lectures, there are at least a few noticeable absences—primarily certain cosmological notions, such as: idealism and materialism; causality and interactionism; and, the nature of the soul (simplicity, substantiality, immortality), especially as it relates to Kant's eventual critique of rational psychology in the Paralogisms of the first *Critique*. That said, Zammito appropriately cites Hinske (1998) in identifying his own approach as viewing the Kantian corpus as consisting in a set of 'mutually nuancing materials' (p. 15)—namely, the published texts, Kant's own notes, the student lecture notes. What makes this volume especially impressive is how virtually every author models this approach in their contributions.

**Nicholas Dunn**

McGill University

nicholas.dunn2@mcgill.ca

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<sup>1</sup> I flag for the reader, as several authors do, the fantastic website maintained by Steve Naragon ('Kant in the Classroom', <https://users.manchester.edu/FacStaff/SSNaragon/Kant/Home/index.htm>) which provides extensive details on Kant's lecture activity.