

Teilen oder die relative Allheit gefordert wird, sondern dasjenige zusammengesetzte Ganze, zu dem die absolute Allheit von Teilen verlangt wird. Dies können wir auch folgendermaßen lateinisch und zwar nach dem für Definitionen gängigen Satzmuster ausdrücken: *Totum ex substantiis compositum quod non est pars dicitur mundus / Die Welt heißt ein aus Substanzen zusammengesetztes Ganzes, das kein Teil ist*“ (§ 14b, 257).

Was eine allgemeine Beurteilung des Buchs angeht, kann man behaupten, dass die vorliegende Arbeit die innere Stringenz der Gedankenentwicklung von Wolff bis Kant scharfsinnig aufzeigt, und zwar auf einem bemerkenswert hohen Reflektionsniveau. Damit werden zahlreiche Einzelprobleme der Wolff-, Baumgarten- und Kantforschung ans Licht gebracht.

In dieser Untersuchung über die deutsche Aufklärung und den vorkritischen Kant hat Kim eine so reiche Verarbeitung der Quellen geleistet, dass an dieser Stelle nur konstatierend angemerkt werden könnte, dass auch Kants *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* von der Frage nach dem „*principium formae mundi*“ geleitet wird.⁸ Ähnliches gilt für das „Scholion“ des Abschnitts IV der *Dissertatio* von 1770, das wohl in Wahrheit auf eine Vertiefung der Frage nach den „*principia formae mundi sensibilis*“ abzielt, indem es die sinnliche Erkenntnis nicht nur aus den Gesetzen der Sinnlichkeit sondern auch aus den intellektuellen Ursachen des Begriffs der Totalität des Raums sowie der Totalität der Zeit thematisiert.⁹

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George di Giovanni: *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Humankind, 1774–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xvi + 373 pages. ISBN 978-0-521-18445-1-7.

Despite the title, this book is not primarily about Kant or his successors. It focuses on “Kant’s contemporaries” (164), well known scholars during the years when the critical philosophy was being written, published, and disseminated, most of whom have now passed into the catacombs of historical oblivion. Moreover, freedom and religion are but two of a wide range of the book’s loosely related themes. Even the subtitle does not denote a theme that runs consistently throughout the book. It refers to the title shared by two books, one published by J. J. Spalding in 1748 (1774 being the date of one of its many editions) and the other by J. G. Fichte in 1800. The subtitle’s dates relate to these publications, but do not hold as much significance for the book’s scope as their prominence in the subtitle might suggest.

Chapter 1 opens with a more accurate statement of the book’s two “broad” and intersecting themes: first, “the reception of Kant between [...] 1781 [not 1774!] and [...] 1800”; and second, an alleged “revolution in the traditional conception of ‘humanity’ that had been underway throughout Europe long before the publication of Kant’s Critique” (1–2). Whereas Spalding’s *Vocation* epitomizes the old approach, informed by Christian tradition interpreted through Enlightenment Rea-

⁸ Vgl. NTH, AA 01: 225–28, 262f., 293, 331ff., 345f., 363f.

⁹ Vgl. auch R 4189, Refl, AA 17: 459; R 4206, AA 17: 456; R 4207, AA 17: 456; R 4208, AA 17: 456; R 4217, AA 17: 461; R 4242, AA 17: 476f.; R 4244, AA 17: 477f.; R 4253, AA 17: 482f.; R 4756, AA 17: 699ff.; R 4758, AA: 17: 705ff.

son, Fichte's *Vocation* adopts a new approach that fully explicates the implications of Kant's constructivist theory of knowledge, whereby reason *creates* meaning by and for itself. The argument that holds together chapters that would otherwise seem only loosely interrelated is that Kant was not as aware of the revolutionary implications of his epistemology as Fichte was (243–244) and that this was due to the influence of philosophers belonging to a school known as "*Popularphilosophie*" who interpreted Kant (whether in support or opposition) in ways that "held [him] hostage" to the old (and doomed) ways of "classical metaphysics" (xi, 126, 236). These "popular philosophers" (284) "either thought that Kant's Critique of Reason could be reclaimed for their modes of thinking or argued that it added nothing to accepted metaphysics except new problems." Only Fichte fully understood Kant's revolutionary move "from faith understood as still unclarified reason [...] to faith based on practical postulation" (272).

Two better known figures discussed throughout the book are F. H. Jacobi and K. L. Reinhold. Di Giovanni claims Jacobi, arch-critic of Kant, understood certain key implications of critical philosophy better than Kant did (10–16), and accuses Reinhold, one of Kant's closest followers, of being "self-serving" (48). This novel reading conveniently supports the author's desire to emphasize Kant's break with his (especially religious) tradition (à la Jacobi) and to downplay any reading (such as Reinhold's) that highlights the continuity. As he develops his main argument, di Giovanni explains why many of Kant's contemporaries saw critical philosophy as merely a development of pre-existing trends. Here, as throughout the book, the primary complaint against both Kant and his contemporaries is that they failed to understand Kant and his influence as well as we do today (e.g., 173–174) – not the fairest standard to uphold in a book that is primarily historical. For each character the author introduces, he highlights any basic insights that *could* have led to the position di Giovanni assumes (without argument) to be correct, namely, a Strawsonian nonmetaphysical phenomenalism (94, 160, 236). Unfortunately, he provides little detailed (textual) comparison between his cast of characters and Kant's position on the issues they discuss. A typical example is Reinhold's highly Kantian position on the nature of representation (95–96), treated by di Giovanni as if it were a wholly distinct theory.

That freedom and religion get top billing in the title may be a marketing strategy more than a description of the book's contents. Freedom is hardly mentioned until Chapter 4, with religion following suit as the main topic of Chapter 5. The latter interrupts the flow of the narrative with the book's only detailed account of the author's reading of Kant's philosophy. Elsewhere, he normally just states as fact whatever reading of Kant he deems correct. It is surprising that an author who displays such a deep and thorough knowledge of an obscure array of historical sources, to which many Kant scholars have never given a thought, pays no attention – he claims, intentionally (x–xi) – to the mainstream contemporary alternatives to his own (sometimes skewed) readings of Kant (e.g., 176). Thus, di Giovanni says Kant illegitimately makes "the efficacy of human agency ultimately depend on" the practical postulates (185), when the postulates relate only to *why* we should be moral, not to the content or efficacy of moral action as such; and he misconstrues the evil propensity by calling it "another practical postulate" (191).

The little effort di Giovanni makes to relate Chapter 5 to the other chapters fails;

to support his main thesis, he *needs* Kant to be more revolutionary than either Kant or his contemporaries realized, so he portrays Kant as mired in the very dogmatism he *claimed* to be overcoming. He reads into Kant's text a view of religion he admits is actually Kierkegaard's (192, 329), describes religious belief and practice in a way that was not Kant's (194), then decries it all as a "more than tortuous" position (197). Whereas the other chapters focus on Kant's contemporaries with few references to Kant, chapter 5 focuses on Kant with few references to his contemporaries. As a result, the main thesis comes across as based on a forced interpretation of the evidence, in relation to both Kant and his contemporaries.

The author's account of Kantian religion is deeply influenced by an anti-religious interpretive bias he asserts as fact. The book's blurb (both on the opening page and on the dustcover) states the author's key assumption, that "Kant's critical theory of meaning and moral law totally subverted the spirit of [the Christian] faith", though Kant's theological contemporaries wrongly saw it as Christianity's "new rational defense". Spalding "had translated" traditional Christianity (299) "into a system of forces and counterforces, all governed by a hypostatized Reason". Admitting that Spalding's position appears to be "saved, even protected" (22) by Kant's system, di Giovanni's main goal in Chapter 5 is to show why this impression is false (30). Although he admits (299) Kant's position on "the vocation of humankind" was "more in tune with the tradition of Protestant Christianity" than Spalding's Enlightenment optimism was, di Giovanni refuses even to consider the possibility that, by "subverting" the latter, Kant was not destroying religion but reforming it in terms of a more authentic model. He expresses a condescending bias against those who take seriously anything that smacks of Christianity or "traditional metaphysics" (e.g., 237–238), chiding that "anyone with any philosophical perspicacity should have been able to see that Kant's religion had nothing in common with traditional Christianity" (240).

Di Giovanni thinks Mendelssohn was right, "Kant was indeed all destroying" (27), yet he concedes that Kant *thought* his system upheld religion by transforming (or reforming) it. Kant "built a whole critical system around" a "Christian faith" that in di Giovanni's opinion was already in the process of dying out (283). He says Kant was simply wrong in his self-assessment, failing to notice that his "rational apology" on behalf of various "long-standing Christian beliefs" ends up "deflating rather than solidifying their claims" (203). Without considering the massive evidence to the contrary, he declares Kant "was remarkably indifferent to religion", an "atheist, for all practical purposes" (203). Refusing to allow "religion" to mean anything other than what Spalding and other pre-Kantians meant by it, di Giovanni never considers that Kant's revolution may have *succeeded* in paving a new way to be religious. True, Kant tended to ignore traditional religious beliefs and practices "in his private life", but not because of "righteous self-assurance" (204)! "Kant's intention" *was not* "to contain the sacred within the boundaries of reason" (204); rather, it was to oppose this very tendency of Enlightenment theology with a view of a reason as *open* to the influence of transcendent mystery. The root of di Giovanni's misconstrual of Kantian religion is his rejection of Kant's claim that his revolution was *modest* (35): he portrays Kant's *critique* of reason (his *limiting* of reason's powers) as an attempt to *highten* reason's stature by viewing it as creator of all. He is correct that Kant "not only inverted dogmatic metaphysics" but also "inverted

the spirit of Christianity as well” (186); what he never considers is that in so doing, Kant was turning right-side-up a religious “spirit” the Enlightenment had turned upsidedown.

Di Giovanni is so intimately conversant with his sources that any reader who does not share his expertise may have difficulty seeing the “forest” of popular philosophy because so many “trees” block the view. Though impressive, his habit of warning that “we shall return to [this topic, or a particular philosopher] in due time” (e. g., 91), or of noting that a topic or philosopher was mentioned before, is confusing in the absence of a roadmap to guide the way through the maze of so many theories. An overview of who the “popular philosophers” *were*, just how they constituted a distinct school, and precisely where they stood in relation to Kant would have been helpful. At times di Giovanni seems to present Kant as *part* of this school, or the school as being mainly a vehicle for popularizing various watered down versions (or revisions) of Kant. Is this *all* it was, or was it more? This book never provides a clear answer.

Most of the book reads like a series of glosses on the books, articles and other related publications that appeared during the last 25 years of Kant’s active career. Aside from Jacobi, Reinhold, and Fichte, lesser known contemporaries who take center stage in this story of the “neoscholastic” (215) philosophers who composed or opposed the “Kantian camp” (206) include J. H. Abicht, A. W. Rehberg, C. C. E. Schmid, J. Schultz, J. A. H. Ulrich and A. Weishaupt, with a host of others playing minor roles. While the occasional quotes di Giovanni provides are helpful, they tend to be insufficient to enable the reader to decide whether the sources actually prove the main thesis as much as the author’s (sometimes obviously slanted) summaries suggest. Although he usually identifies the source being summarized, occasionally the path di Giovanni forges through this dense forest is so overgrown that even his attempts to provide such information are unclear – as when he refers to “these passages” (160) without saying what texts he is interpreting (see also 231).

A frustration for those who wish to participate in the discussion, rather than just observe the thought processes of a masterful historian, is that di Giovanni tends to pronounce judgment on each philosopher’s theories rather than to interact with them on their own terms. He presumes to know when a philosopher is “being disingenuous” (238). Yet he rarely even hints that alternative readings are often deemed more plausible nowadays. Another minor shortcoming is that di Giovanni rarely mentions biographical details for the figures whose ideas he examines; while he sometimes provides minimal details relating to a work he is summarizing, more attention to the lives of these philosophers would have rendered the book more readable and might also have helped non-historians keep track of the different players in this drama.

Whether intentionally or not, this book (e. g., 65) is evidence *against* what I have called “the myth of historical development” (*Foundations of Science* 12.1, 9f.), whereby the new insights of great thinkers are explained as arising through the causal influence of their predecessors or contemporaries. Despite di Giovanni’s many claims that Kant’s contemporaries were sometimes more insightful than Kant, nowhere do we find anyone who even approaches Kant’s stature. Instead, we find many philosophical “trees” that are rightly neglected nowadays, because they have stopped bearing fruit, while the Kantian “tree” towering over them still pro-

vides a rich harvest. Readers interested only in that harvest, not in an academic knowledge of the barren trees surrounding it, may safely ignore this book. But the *historian* of philosophy would be hard pressed to find any quarter century that was more important to the development of western thought than the period this book covers. To di Giovanni's credit, he has gleaned from these barren trees a rather attractive basket of fruitful insights – small and sometimes rather sour though they may be. As such, even though all but one chapter largely ignores the central figure of this period (see e. g., 114) and the book as a whole does not set out to forge new paths in philosophy, the fact that it surveys Kant's contemporaries in such detail makes it a valuable addition to any Kant scholar's library.

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Stefano Bacin: *Il senso dell'etica. Kant e la costruzione di una teoria morale.*

Napoli: Il Mulino 2006 (Istituto italiano per gli studi storici in Napoli, Bd. 54), 338 Seiten. ISBN 88-15-11483-1.

Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Kantschen Ethik gibt es schon viele. Die vorliegende Dissertation, entstanden an der renommierten Scuola normale superiore in Pisa, möchte auf diesem Gebiet aber noch eine Lücke schließen. Ihrem Verfasser Stefano Bacin geht es weder um eine weitere Detailstudie noch um eine erschöpfende Gesamtdarstellung. Seine Rekonstruktion will stattdessen so etwas wie die Grundinspiration herauspräparieren, die Kant bei der Ausarbeitung eines neuen Typs praktischer Philosophie geleitet hat. Dieser habe eine Ethik begründen wollen, die nicht einfach bloß abstrakte Normen vorschreibt, sondern vorgängig die grundlegenden Strukturen und Formen menschlichen Handelns analysiert und damit allererst den Boden für eine moralische Lebensführung bereitet. Der Werdegang von Kants Moralphilosophie zeigt sich von dieser Systemidee aus weniger von äußeren Einwirkungen diktiert als vielmehr von einer inneren Dynamik vorange-trieben (vgl. IX–XII).

Der erste Hauptteil der chronologisch angelegten Arbeit umfaßt die bewegten Jahre von 1762 bis 1766 (vgl. 1–66). Im Einklang mit der jüngsten Forschung sieht Bacin in den Kompendien von Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten den primären Bezugspunkt für Kants ethische Reflexion. Christian Wolffs bedeutendster Schüler stellte nicht nur ein hochentwickeltes Begriffsrepertoire bereit, auf das Kant ständig zurückgriff, sondern gab mit der Idee einer ‚ersten praktischen Philosophie‘ auch den entscheidenden Wink zu Kants Projekt einer ‚Metaphysik der Sitten‘ (vgl. 3, 50f. u. 62f.). Freilich vertrat er in Kants Augen einen ganz unzureichenden Verpflichtungsbegriff (vgl. 18 u. 21). Um der menschlichen Natur angemessen zu sein, müsse die Ethik ihr tragendes Fundament in der inneren Einstellung des Handelnden finden. Deshalb sucht der frühe Kant die herkömmliche Pflichtenlehre durch eine sog. ‚subjektive praktische Philosophie‘ zu ergänzen, die unvoreingenommen beobachtet, wie Menschen wirklich entscheiden und handeln. Für diese moralische Physiologie gelten ihm vor allem die britischen Moral-Sense-Philosophen als mögliche Anreger (vgl. 51–55). Obwohl Bacin zeitweilige Affinitäten Kants zu den Theoretikern des moralischen Gefühls konstatiert, hütet er sich wohl mit Recht davor, deren Einfluß auf den Königsberger Denker zu überschätzen. Die Unterschei-