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Reinhold, Karl Leonhard: *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens. Teilband 1: Vorrede, Erstes Buch*, ed. Onnasch, Ernst-Otto, Hamburg: Meiner, 2010, pp. 210, clvii, ISBN 978-3-7873-1934-3.

Reinhold, Karl Leonhard: *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen (I) Erster Band, das Fundament der Elementarphilosophie betreffend*, ed. Fabbianelli, Faustino, Hamburg: Meiner, 2003, pp. 451, lxxii, ISBN 978-3-7873-1641-0.

It is only in the last ten or fifteen years or so that the scholarly study of Reinhold's work has boomed, what with the pioneering work of, among others, Karl Ameriks in the English language and Manfred Frank, Dieter Henrich, and Martin Bondeli in German scholarship. A host of articles, detailed historical overviews, and edited volumes of essays have made it possible to become more familiar with a hitherto neglected figure in the run-up to German Idealism whose thought turns out not only to be a pivotal way station to the systemic heights of the thought of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel but also philosophically significant in its own right (even though rather soon Reinhold's foundational philosophy was seen to have lost relevance). It becomes increasingly clear that Reinhold, in more ways than one, paved the way for the development of the quintessentially Idealist idea of philosophy as being both systematic and historical, which was also already Reinhold's own primary concern.

To facilitate this burgeoning interest in Reinhold, new critical editions of his work are gradually becoming available and even a selective collected works has been planned under Bondeli's editorship. In this 'kommentierte Ausgabe', the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (1790 and 1792), in two volumes, and *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens nebst einigen Erläuterungen über die Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens* (1791) have already been published. A convenient English translation of the *Briefe*, containing eight of the letters as they originally appeared as instalments in *Der Teutsche Merkur* between August 1786 and September 1787, has been published recently by Ameriks. A few years ago, Meiner Verlag published a new two-volume edition of Reinhold's *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen* (erster Band: 1790; zweiter Band: 1794), edited by Faustino Fabbianelli.

And now, after the old photomechanical reprint version has long been unavailable, there is finally a textually critical edition, also appearing in the incomparable Meiner *Philosophische Bibliothek* series, of what may be considered Reinhold's main and certainly most recognized work, the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, his first actual monograph, published in the autumn of 1789. This new edition is expertly edited by Reinhold specialist Ernst-Otto Onnasch, furnished with more than 120 pages of

context-setting introduction and overview of the content, an extensive up-to-date bibliography, an *apparatus criticus* indicating only the relevant textual variants – especially useful in regard to the First Book and the ‘Vorrede’ of the *Versuch*, which had been published beforehand under the title *Ueber die bisherigen Schicksale der Kantischen Philosophie* – and almost sixty pages of editorial endnotes in volume 1 alone. An overview of contemporary reviews of both the separately published text of the ‘Vorrede’ and the *Versuch* is also provided. Under review here is the first volume, which contains the preface and the First Book of the *Versuch*. I understand that the second volume, which contains the Second and Third Books, will be published in the course of 2011.

In the excellent introduction by the editor, who skilfully combines the scholarly with dry wit, it is pointed out that although Reinhold’s *Briefe* were very important for the reception of Kant’s philosophy, Reinhold’s systematic interests were very much his own, fostered in his Austrian life as a young priest and active member of a Masonic lodge, and were only reinforced by what he subsequently encountered in Kant’s work. Onnasch observes: “[W]enn [Reinhold] erstmals mit der kritischen Philosophie in Kontakt kommt, [verfügt er] bereits über ein relativ fest umrissenes philosophisches Profil und philosophisches Programm” (p. xxii). This is important to note, as Reinhold, at least the Reinhold of the *Briefe*, is often seen as one of the first more or less orthodox Kantians. Onnasch shows that this view of Reinhold is ripe for revision. Secondly, Onnasch shows that the influence of Reinhold on subsequent thinkers in German Idealism “verläuft [...] über zwei Rezeptionsstränge: der eine führt zu Fichte und der andere ins Tübinger Stift” (p. xv). Fichte here was the only one who read Kant firsthand, and only afterwards he did become acquainted with Reinhold’s work. Fichte is “schon ein ganzer Kantianer [...] wenn er Mitte oder Ende 1792 erstmals mit Reinholds Philosophie in Kontakt kommt” (p. xxi). By contrast, Schelling’s and Hegel’s first encounter with Kant was indeed through Reinhold as well as Johann Schultz’s much consulted *Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1784).

As to Reinhold’s own pedigree, his outlook on metaphysics was very much Leibnizian-Wolffian, although he was already critical of this approach, in a manner different from the *Popularphilosophen*, even before he became familiar with Kant’s own critique of the School metaphysics (pp. xlvii–xlviii). Reinhold’s hope that “Vernunft und Religion Hand in Hand dem Endzweck, nämlich der Vernunftreligion entgegen[schreiten]” (p. xxxix) predates his fashioning this idea in Kantian terms; it is voiced at any rate years before Kant himself would dedicate a book to the topic of rational faith. Reinhold’s view of ‘Aufklärung’ also must be seen as having developed independently from Kant’s. In his answer to the question that also elicited Mendelssohn’s and Kant’s famous essays on that topic, Reinhold presents his own view of ‘Aufklärung’, which is quite different from Kant’s in at least one important respect, for according to Reinhold, in contrast to Kant, the role of the philosopher is indispensable, as “[e]in Volk

vermag sich nämlich nicht selbst aufzuklären, wenn es dazu nicht auch angeleitet bzw. gebildet wird” (p. xxxv). Under the influence of the Austrian Enlightenment, Reinhold propounds a “von ‘oben’ geleitete[.] Volksaufklärung” (ibid.), rather than enlightenment through self-emancipation as in Kant’s view.

Already in his activity in the early 1780s as a prolific reviewer for the *Wiener Realzeitung*, Reinhold’s ambition was “Vernunft und Glauben zu reinigen und so zu wahrer Vernunft und wahren Glauben zu erheben” (pp. xxvii–xxviii). In this context, it is noticeable that Herder, in particular, influenced his view of history and the nature of a people, and of the extent to which ‘Aufklärung’ develops on the basis of the natural disposition of a people, a view to which, as Onnasch observes, Hegel’s later dialectical account in the *Phenomenology* can plausibly be seen as greatly indebted (p. xxxviii & n. 70). In his counter-review, in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, to Kant’s highly critical review of Herder’s *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Reinhold praises Herder for bridging the cleft between speculative metaphysics and history, between the a priori and the a posteriori (p. xlv). It is this opportunity to position himself midway between Herder and Kant that occasioned Reinhold becoming more directly familiar with Kant’s work, although initially he was led to study Kant’s thought by Christian Schütz’s review of the *Critique* in July 1785.

Onnasch reconstructs the biographical context of Reinhold’s *Mercur Briefe* to show that prior to publishing the first letter in *Der Teutsche Mercur* in August 1786 his knowledge of the details of Kant’s thought was practically non-existent; at this time Reinhold regards Kant as one of the typically orthodox Leibnizian-Wolffians. In his first letter to Kant Reinhold confesses not to have understood much from Schütz’s account of the *Critique*. “Das einzige Morceau” that he said he did understand was Kant’s alleged idea of the “moralische Erkenntnißgrund der Grundwahrheiten der Religion” (p. li). Most probably, this was a reference to Schütz’s *Erläuterungen*. According to Onnasch, what Reinhold presented to be a Kantian theme was nothing but “das Morceau seiner eigenen Philosophie” (p. lii). True, by focussing on what he regarded as the results of the Kantian philosophy, Reinhold was one of the first to see the major moral implications of Kant’s *Critique*, probably contributing to the *Briefe*’s popular success. But Kant himself did not intend at any rate to demonstrate religious truths. Reinhold’s idea of practical reason’s enabling the connection of feeling and reason, that reason and faith “in ewiger Eintracht sich wechselseitig unterstützen” (p. lvii), might have Kantian resonances, but that the impulse of moral agency would lie in religion, reflecting a “vorreflexives natürliches Bedürfnis der Vernunft” (p. lvii), is conspicuously unKantian, particularly after Kant’s *Grundlegung* (1785).

Onnasch argues that, in the summer of 1785 when Reinhold first came across Kant’s work, he already disposed of “ein ausgereiftes philosophisches Profil”, and that he effectively merely used Kant “für sein eigenes philosophisches Anliegen” (p. lvii). To put it bluntly, Reinhold’s *Briefe*, strikingly devoid

of any of the technical details of the *Critique*, are but “bloßer Reinholdianismus, verbrämt mit Kantischen Philosophemen” (p. lxii). Onnasch provides various historical reasons (pp. lix–lx) that indeed make it hard to believe that Reinhold could have found the time to properly study the *Critique* itself in the period between first acquainting himself with the Kantian philosophy and publishing the first *Merkur* letter. It looks like Reinhold thought it sufficient for the composition of his *Briefe* to have read Schütz’s review and Schultz’s *Erläuterungen*. All this disproves the common conception that, before the publication of the *Versuch* in 1789 (considered Reinhold’s first independent philosophical work), the Reinhold of the *Briefe* was an orthodox Kantian. Unlike other now forgotten academic philosophers who early on fully subscribed to Kantianism and actually studied the details of the *Critique*, Reinhold was in fact never a card-carrying Kantian, even though he styled himself as such with great success.

What marks out the major philosophical difference between Reinhold and Kant is the former’s focus on the idea of the derivation of a system from a single standpoint. Kant’s *Critique* had clearly been intended to provide a legislative constitution where philosophical decisions are to be conducted “by *due process*” (KrV, A 751/B 779) (emphasis in original), purportedly leading to a ‘perpetual peace’ in philosophy, a conception of philosophy that Reinhold must have found hugely attractive. But Reinhold went beyond Kant in that he wanted to found the possibility of such a peace on the firm basis of a highest principle. Onnasch is forthright: “Hier geht Reinhold methodisch einen neuen Weg, der letztendlich schnurstracks in die Systemphilosophie des ausgehenden 18ten und frühen 19ten Jahrhunderts führen wird” (p. lxxv). It then quickly dawns on Reinhold that the principle he is looking for cannot be found in Kant, and this leads him to initiate his own philosophical programme in the *Versuch*, albeit still designed to prop up the results of Kant’s philosophy. What, in Reinhold’s view, Kant neglected to do – namely to account for the very principle or ground of the critical philosophy, which he tellingly labeled “das neue Evangelium” – becomes Reinhold’s main project from then on.

Whilst the external ground for concerning oneself with the Kantian philosophy lies in the circumstances of the age, the “moralische Bedürfnis der Zeit”, the freshly minted theory of representation will provide its *internal* basis. It is the concept of ‘representation’, central to the argument of the *Versuch*’s foundational programme, that is to provide the solid basis for the critical philosophy, which for Reinhold showed once and for all that pre-Kantian epistemology falsely assumed that the “Prädikate, die der *bloßen Vorstellung* von Dingen angehören” (p. 43) can be transferred to the things themselves.

Although he probably inherited the interest in the concept of ‘representation’ from his teacher Platner, Reinhold’s theory of the fundamental principle of the capacity for representation (“das Vorstellungsvermögen”), expounded in the Second Book of the *Versuch*, is Kantian to the extent that, like Kant, Reinhold

does not think of this capacity in terms of metaphysical, fundamental powers; the emphasis is unequivocally on the epistemological conditions of knowledge. The analysis of the concept of ‘representation’ furnishes the central principle that is able to ground and clarify the distinctions that characterize the Kantian theory of knowledge. ‘Mere representation’ is the simplest fact, itself capable of no further analysis, which grounds all that can be analysed. However, to the extent that mere representation putatively provides the basis for knowledge purely by analytical means, the theory of the capacity for representation is surely a much shorter argument than Kant himself offered in the Deduction of the categories of the understanding and, as Ameriks has shown, could be seen as a precursor of many of the more recent analytic reconstructions of the Deduction. It shows that simplification of complex arguments often leads to distortion.

The Third Book of the *Versuch*, consisting of a reconstruction of the critical epistemology on the basis of the concept of ‘representation’ expounded in the Second Book, and which must be read against the backdrop of the arguments of the three major parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (roughly corresponding to the chapters ‘Theorie der Sinnlichkeit’, ‘Theorie des Verstandes’, and ‘Theorie der Vernunft’), is supposed to provide the proper premises of and the key to Kant’s theory of the understanding that were lacking in the *Critique* itself. It is far less consistent and poses various interpretive problems, as Onnasch points out (p. cv), problems internal to the presentation of the analyses of which Reinhold himself was very much aware. This indicates that it was not so much the external criticisms as the internal inconsistencies of much of the *Versuch* that motivated Reinhold to refashion his ideas (pp. cxiv–cxv).

Whereas in the *Versuch* Reinhold stills endeavours to ground the Kantian philosophy, in his later work *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* the concern is no longer to ground the true but putatively insufficiently justified results of Kant’s thought, and to reconcile Kant with his own systematic interests, but rather with the true and only possible philosophy. Kant’s philosophy becomes a mere propaedeutic to this fundamental philosophy.

One of the most interesting facets of the Third Book of the *Versuch*, at least to this reviewer, is Reinhold’s heroic attempt to solve the unceasingly notorious completeness issue regarding Kant’s tables, based on a derivation of the forms of judgment from the dichotomous structure of a basic subject-predicate judgment form. Later in *Beyträge I* he revisits his putative solution, but the analysis here certainly merits attention, also for Kant commentators today. The *Beyträge I* itself, published in 1790, was initially conceived as a periodical in which Reinhold would further delve into the misunderstandings of previous philosophies and into disputes among philosophers in order to find the first and absolutely valid principle of the true critical philosophy, the “Elementarphilosophie”. Here, Reinhold presents a kind of metaphilosophical account of philosophy, rather than a new theory as in the *Versuch*. The goal of the book was to defend

the theory of the capacity for representation, as presented in the *Versuch*, against objections from Kantians and anti-Kantians alike. It is the first time that Reinhold characterizes his theory as a “philosophy of philosophy” or the “science of sciences”, a coinage that would later recur, *mutatis mutandis*, in Fichte’s and Schelling’s account of what makes philosophy sui generis. What is also new in the *Beyträge* is how Reinhold’s “Satz vom Bewußtsein”, the contours of which in the *Versuch* appear only in the Second Book, becomes the premise out of which the forms of the various sciences can be derived. The emphasis is now more on the characteristics of consciousness as such. Also, the active role of the subject becomes prominent, viz. as the agent that differentiates the representation from both subject and object. This is a clear precursor of the Fichtean theory of subjectivity.

Together these critical editions of two of Reinhold’s main works are indispensable sources for the study of the development of the critical philosophy after Kant and the strong Reinholdian influence on post-Kantians such as the early Schelling and Hegel. They also show Reinhold’s views as worthwhile in their own right but reveal Reinhold himself to be a less than reliable commentator on Kant. Although, as was said above, a recent edition of the *Briefe* has been published, it would be helpful for the purpose of teaching Reinhold if a one-volume edition of them were to be added to Meiner’s *Philosophische Bibliothek*, preferably in their early form as they appeared in *Der Teutsche Merkur*.