

Béatrice Longuenesse

Kant on the Human Standpoint.

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In her new book, Longuenesse investigates not only the role Kant attributes to our capacity to judge in cognition, but also considers this capacity's role in moral philosophy and aesthetic evaluation. She says that we must differentiate the distinctly human standpoint (characterized by this capacity) from both the divine and the non-rational animal standpoints. She maintains that for Kant the activity of the intellect as a whole (consisting of concept formation, combining concepts in judgments, combining judgments in inferences, and the constitution of systems of knowledge) is essentially reducible to making judgments. This basic activity of the intellect, she suggests, is a common theme which unites all parts of the critical system.

Already in her *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (1998), Longuenesse rehabilitated Kant's conception of synthesis. P. F. Strawson once discredited this conception as belonging to the 'imaginary subject of transcendental psychology'. Longuenesse rightly replied that synthesis is the most vital function of human cognition. Rather than belonging to the sphere of transcendental psychology, synthesis determines the objects of cognition themselves.

The first part of her new book is devoted to the role of synthesis in the process of cognition: while it is true that the categories guide the synthesis of the sensibly given, it is also true that the categories *emerge* as a priori rules from this synthesis (42). With this focus on synthetic activity, Michel Fichant's criticism didn't come as a surprise: he contended that Longuenesse's radical interpretation of sensibility is close to Fichte's. It is reasonable to think that Fichant's criticism is unjustified because we have to differentiate clearly between the *generation* of sensibility by spontaneity (Fichte) and the *affection* of sensibility by spontaneity (Longuenesse). In this book there is no doubt that impressions trigger our cognitive powers (29). Thus Kant was not only right to insist on the distinction between receptivity and spontaneity, but right also to deny that imagination is the 'common root' of sensibility and understanding, a view we tend to associate with Heidegger. Longuenesse's only intention is to challenge the myth of the given, and she shows convincingly that for Kant even space, the form of outer intuition, is not already given but is an *ens imaginarium*, a being of imagination (73).

A major topic of the second part of this volume is the conception of causality. This systematic study of the most important contemporary interpretations of Kant's texts is comprehensive and well written. The decisive move of the first *Critique*, we are reminded, was the departure from Hume, who thought that the psychological derivation of the concept of cause accounts for the idea of a necessary connection between cause and effect. For Kant, this explanation was not good enough. For him the necessary connection consisted in the strict universality of a hypothetical judgment ('If A is B,

then C is D'). We must decide on how to interpret this universality. Basically Longuenesse agrees with Strawson: causality is concerned with judgments about ordinary objects of our perceptual experience rather than with judgments about scientifically interpreted objects. Her argument deviates from Strawson's, however, because Kant couldn't possibly have made the mistake of taking the necessary subjective succession as the *perception* of a necessary, i.e. causally determined, objective succession. Our author rightly contends that such a view would presuppose the concept of cause rather than explain it (165).

The book's third and last part deals with the capacity to judge as an element which unifies the three *Critiques*, interpreting the unity of reality as a reality of form. The conception of reality as a whole in space and time lead Kant to postulate an *ens realissimum*, God as a purely rational idea. Longuenesse says that only if we realize the primacy of form over matter in Kant's thought can we truly understand that this idea is nothing more than a mere thought without an object.

Furthermore, the last part connects aesthetic with moral judgment, and both with the motto of eighteenth-century enlightenment '... to think by putting oneself in the position of all other human beings' (289). With the judgment of taste, we are told, Kant doesn't indicate interest in the *objects* of judgment, but rather in the very fact of the universal communicability of judgment. The universal sharing of aesthetic pleasure is the aim of aesthetic evaluation and thus this sharing becomes '... a normative necessity, an obligation made to all human beings to take their part in the common effort to constitute humanity as a community of judging subjects' (290). The imperative of universality — that judgments are shared by all human beings — really is an essential feature of all three *Critiques*, and Longuenesse skillfully explicates Kant's idea that we must promote this universal sharing.

The scholarly approach of this book consists in a combination of systematic and historical aspects. We are reminded that the views of the initial German reception of Kant were not completely wrong, but were too extreme to be tenable. Moreover, Longuenesse shows how Kant reworked the ideas of his predecessors, e.g. Leibniz's idea that concepts alone allow us to analyze reality (225).

At times this book contains detailed discussions of contemporary Kant scholarship. Thus the prospective reader must be acquainted with the basic ideas of the critical system. On this basis, however, this volume is a well-written and thoughtful contribution that certainly will attract many students of the history of modern philosophy as well as Kant specialists. It is a significant contribution to the project of exploring Kant's holistic and anti-foundationalist epistemology on the basis of a detailed textual analysis, a timely project undoubtedly inspired by the pioneering views of Michael Friedman.

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