

Friends and Enemies of the Kantian Philosophy: Reinhold, Schulze and Maimon

Main reading

– G. di Giovanni, 'The first twenty years of critique: the Spinoza connection', in P. Guyer ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*.

– P. Franks, 'Transcendental arguments, reason, and scepticism: contemporary debates and the origins of post-Kantianism', in R. Stern ed., *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects*.

NB If you have no background knowledge of Kant, then it is essential that you complete the suggested reading on page 1 of the main handout for the course.

Further reading – primary texts

– 'Feder-Garve' or 'Göttingen' review of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1782), in R. Walker ed., *The Real in the Ideal: Berkeley's Relation to Kant* (New York: Garland, 1989), pp. xv-xxiv. Charging Kant with Berkeleyan idealism.

– J. A. Eberhard's rationalist attack on Kant (1789) is discussed in H. Allison ed., *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 15-45, and 178-82 (Appendix B). (This book contains Kant's reply to Eberhard: 'On a Discovery...')

– F. H. Jacobi, 'On transcendental idealism' (1787), in F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), trans. G. di Giovanni, pp. 331-8.

– K. L. Reinhold, excerpt from *The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge / Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791), in G. di Giovanni & H. S. Harris eds., *From Kant to Hegel*. Exposition of Reinhold's 'Philosophy of the Elements', his re-worked version of Kant's Critical philosophy. (For a brief summary of Reinhold's views, see G. di Giovanni's introduction, 'The facts of consciousness', sect. 2, pp. 9-20. For a full account and critical analysis, see K. Ameriks, *The Fate of Autonomy*, pt II.)

– G. E. Schulze, excerpt from *Aenesidemus* (1792), in G. di Giovanni & H. S. Harris eds., *From Kant to Hegel*. Attack on critical philosophy, in the form of a dialogue between Hermas (a recent convert to Kant/Reinhold) and Aenesidemus (a Humean skeptic). (For a brief summary of Schulze's views, see G. di Giovanni's introduction, 'The facts of consciousness', pp. 20-7.)

– S. Maimon, *Letters of Philaletes*, (1794), in G. di Giovanni & H. S. Harris eds., *From Kant to Hegel*. Addressed to Schulze, partially rejecting and partially confirming Schulze's criticisms of Kant and Reinhold, and offering a different kind of skepticism. (For a brief summary of Maimon's views, see G. di Giovanni's introduction, 'The facts of consciousness', pp. 7-9, 32-6.)

Further reading – commentary

– T. Rockmore, *Before and After Hegel*, ch. 1.

– S. Sedgwick, 'Introduction: idealism from Kant to Hegel', in S. Sedgwick ed., *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy*.

– F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, chs. 4, 6-10.

– M. Bauer and D. Dahlstrom eds., *The Emergence of German Idealism*, pts. I-II.

– M. Rosen, 'From Kant to Fichte: a reply to Franks', in R. Stern ed., *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects*. Suggesting that post-Kantian developments are not as well motivated as Franks supposes.

earliest critics

1. The empiricists Feder & Garve claim Kant's idealism is indistinguishable from Berkeley's idealism:

'On these conceptions of sensations as mere modifications of ourselves (on which *Berkeley* too chiefly builds his

idealism) and of space and time rests the one basic pillar of the Kantian system ... For the author, experiences, in contrast to mere imaginings and dreams, are sensible intuitions connected with the concepts of the understanding. But we confess that we do not see how the difference between the actual and the imagined ... can be adequately based on the *mere* application of concepts ... If, as the author himself maintains, the understanding only reworks sensations, it does not provide him with new [objective] knowledge'

2. The rationalist Eberhard argues that Kant merely repeats Leibniz:

'[those] who only derive their knowledge from the latest books, and for whom the most recent is always the truest, followed [Kant] blindly. Most, however, were stupefied by the boldness of the undertaking ... only a few have been able to recover from this stupor ... The Leibnizian philosophy contains just as much of a critique of reason as the new [Kant's] philosophy, while at the same time it still introduces a dogmatism based on a precise analysis of the faculties of knowledge. It therefore contains all that is true in the new philosophy and, in addition, a well-grounded extension of the sphere of the understanding.'

3. Jacobi, a critic of Enlightenment ideals, argues that Kant's transcendental idealism is incoherent:

'I have had to begin again the *CPR* year after year, because I always became confused by the fact that without th[e] presupposition [of things in themselves] I could not get into the system, and with this presupposition I could not remain within it ... I ask: how is it possible to bring the presupposition of objects which make impressions on our senses and in this way arouse sensations [Kant's doctrine of things in themselves] into agreement with a doctrine which nullifies all of the grounds on which this presupposition rests? One considers, as was pointed out at the beginning of this essay: that space and all things in space are according to the Kantian system in us and not present in any other manner; that all alterations, and even the alteration of our inner condition whereby we, through the succession of our thoughts, believe ourselves to have certainty, are only representations ... ; one considers that all the principles of the understanding express only subjective conditions which are laws of our thought but in no way laws of nature in itself, and which are without any truly objective content or use: one considers these points properly and reflects if one could accept alongside them the presupposition of objects which make impressions on our senses and in that way achieve representations ... But since with this the whole of transcendental idealism would crash to the ground, its proponent must absolutely abandon that presupposition [of things in themselves] and not want to ever find it probable that things which would be outside us in the transcendental sense [things in themselves] are present and have reference to us, which we could be in a position to perceive in any way ... The transcendental idealist must therefore have the courage to maintain the strongest idealism that has ever been taught, and not fear even the reproach of speculative egoism [solipsism], for he cannot maintain himself in his system if he so much as attempts to rid himself of this last reproach ... Should the Kantian philosophy want to distance itself by a hair's breadth ... from the transcendental ignorance which transcendental idealism teaches, ... it would also have to utterly abandon what it presents as its main advantage, namely that of bringing reason to rest; for this has no other ground than the thoroughgoing and absolute ignorance which transcendental idealism claims.'

Kant's system

sensibility + understanding	empirical objects = NATURE	: metaphysics of empirical reality (appearance = realm of <i>knowledge</i>)
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Theoretical

reason	FREEDOM, God, the soul	: metaphysics of supersensible reality (things in themselves = <i>unknowable</i>)
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Practical

empirical motives (inclinations, deriving from NATURE)

pure reason = moral law &
motivation <- FREEDOM

: metaphysics of morals

Reinhold

'The fate of Kant's newly founded metaphysics depends, therefore, on this explication of how experience is made possible in the mind, i.e. of how the faculty of cognition is originally constituted.' This explication consists in 'the science of the entire faculty of representation as such', which deals with the 'form of REPRESENTING', called *Elementarphilosophie*, Philosophy of the Elements (i.e. basic elements in cognition). This promises to provide a *common foundation* for theoretical and practical philosophy. Its fundamental principle is the 'principle of representation / of consciousness':

- 'in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from both object and subject and is referred to both'
- 'Representation is that which is distinguished in consciousness by the subject from object and subject, and is referred to both'
- 'We are all compelled by *consciousness* to agree that to every representation there pertains a representing subject and a *represented* object, and that *both* must be distinguished from the representation to which they pertain.'
- 'Representation is distinguished in consciousness by the subject from the subject and object, and is referred to both.'

Reinhold claims that the concept of representation is simple, unanalysable and indefinable: it is 'immediately drawn' from consciousness, from the consciousness of an actual fact. The principle of consciousness is consequently 'determined through itself', 'self-determined', and 'self-explanatory'. Like Descartes' cogito ergo sum, which it of course recalls very closely, it provides 'apodictic certainty'. Reinhold claims that his principle provides the *basis for logic*.

Schulze

The question (for Hume, Kant and Reinhold) is, 'Where do the representations we possess originate, and how do they come to be in us?' Aenesidemus, the skeptic, representing Schulze, pursues a Humean critique of Kant and Reinhold. Reinhold's claim are that the faculty of representation 1. is the cause and ground of the actual presence of representations, 2. is present prior to every representation, 3. differs from representation as cause from effect, and that 4. the concept of the faculty of representation may be inferred only from its effects, viz. representations. Schulze's criticisms are that (1) Reinhold's conclusion that this faculty has objective existence violates the Critical distinction of thought and reality, (2) even if an inference from thought to reality is allowed, Reinhold's inference is illegitimate, because nothing about an effect can be inferred from its cause. The same points apply to Kant: 'For the *Critique* claims that the original determinations of the human mind are the real ground or source of the necessary synthetic judgements found in our knowledge; but it does this by inferring, from the fact that we can only *think* of the faculty of representation as the ground of these judgements, that the mind must *be* their ground in *actual fact* too.'

Maimon

Maimon shares Schulze's skeptical dissatisfaction with Kant, but grants Kant more than Schulze will allow, and locates Kant's problems at a different place. Maimon's complaint is that, though Kant has shown that we have a *right* to attempt to use the categories – e.g. the causal relationship – to cognise objects, he has not shown that we *do in fact* succeed in using the categories with cognitive success. Fundamentally this is because the 'original sensible presentation [that Kant assumes as a basic element of cognition] does not represent anything beside itself – and this means that it does not represent anything at all'. This is the entry point for Humean skepticism: 'If we nevertheless refer every original perception to something (outside consciousness) in the manner of a *representation* (and it cannot be denied that this is in fact what we do), this happens because of an illusion of the imagination.' The same point can be made with respect to Kant's claim that his transcendental proof of the causal principle provides the basis for knowledge of nature: '[Kant's philosophy] does not give any a priori *criterion*, however, by which we can recognise whether a given *manifold* can be thought in a *unity of form* at all, still less, in which unity ... From the fact that *objects* must be thought *in general* in the relationship, for instance, of cause and effect, ... it still cannot be explained why (e.g.) "fire" and "warmth" in particular must stand in this relationship ... From the *principle*, however, "Everything that happens, happens according to the laws of *causality*", how can I derive the proposition, "The rays of the sun necessarily melt ice"?'

For next week, if you wish to read ahead:

– J. G. Fichte, 'First introduction to the science of knowledge' (1797), in *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. P. Heath and J. Lachs; also as '[First] Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*', in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. D. Brezeale.