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*Kant's Observations and Remarks: A Critical Guide.*

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It would have been impossible to imagine this volume twenty years ago. Now that such early works as *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* are being taken seriously as part of Kant's *oeuvre*, and more scholars are becoming interested in Kant's thoughts on such issues as education, geography, anthropology, and culture, there is a sea-change in Kantian research. And this despite the fact that the *Observations* was the most successful (and thus popular) text of Kant's during his lifetime (234). The 'Two Cultures' (art and science) of C.P. Snow are beginning to meld. Most of the essays in this volume, under the section headings, 'Kant's Ethical Thought: Sources and Stages,' 'Ethics and Aesthetics,' 'Education, Politics, and National Character, and 'Science and History,' expand the traditional (i.e., the first *Critique* and *Groundwork*) side of Kant taught in undergraduate classes and point to a hitherto unrealized side of Kant's voluminous output.

Combining reflections on such figures as Addison and Rousseau along with British common-sense philosophy (in place of the canonical Germans, Wolff and Baumgarten), Kant's *Observations* [*Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*] and the *Remarks* therein [*Bemerkungen in den 'Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen'*], the latter never intended for publication, have heretofore been read as ancillary examples of Kant's empirical psychology, that is, the 'variety of human tastes and customs' whereas the *Remarks* were mostly Kant's thoughts while reading Rousseau. They were placed inside Kant's own personal copy of the text of the *Observations*. While it is not arbitrary that this critical guide is on both the *Observations* and the *Remarks*, some of the chapters focus on only one or the other. No doubt there was a serious shift in Kant's thinking after writing the *Observations* while writing the *Remarks* during which reading Rousseau opened his eyes to something beyond the empirical, something we might now call 'human rights.' While both of these texts were written in the 1760s, there are still many questions as to their purpose and whether Kant would have wanted his observations and remarks to even be taken seriously after his critical turn.

In the first part, D. Henrich, C. Dyck, P. Frierson, and P. Guyer look at the 'Sources and Stages' of Kant's ethics. Henrich's 1963 essay, reprinted here but not untimely, argues that Kant is distinguishing himself from the Leibnizian-Wolffian theory and more closely aligning himself with Hutcheson. The context of 1760s moral philosophy requires an understanding of the varied conceptions of will in the terms of ought, command, law/duty or, most importantly, moral taste, as when Henrich writes the following:

The drive of conscience [*Gewissenstrieb*] underlies all moral ends and the acts by which they are willed. Conscience is also not a theoretical judgment of the intellect, which one 'can already judge by the fact that' it pleases and frightens. In this context, Crusius also acknowledges the existence of a 'moral taste.' The basis of this taste is the sensation we have 'of accordance or strife between things and certain desires of our wills'.

Henrich then says that 'no specific research has been done concerning the difference between German critiques of Wolff and British empiricism' (23, quoting Crusius' *Metaphysik* and

*Moralphilosophie*). What is at stake here, going back to Shaftesbury's 'moral sense' over against Wolffian rationalism, concerns the reflexivity of ethical consciousness, as Henrich points out. This interplay among Baumgarten, Wolff, and Crusius is part of the nexus, or what Henrich will later call *Konstellationsforschung*—that constellation of thinkers between Germany and England in whose work one may find patterns and connections. The other essays of this section look at the constellation of those whom Kant read and taught and incorporated, either by way of agreement or rejection, Dyck on Baumgarten and Meier in particular, Frierson on Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, and Rousseau (*vis-à-vis* 'subjective universality'), and Guyer on Wolff, Baumgarten, Thomasius as well as Smith.

Part II, 'Ethics and Aesthetics,' begins with an essay by Rudolf Makkreel on sympathy and honor, both considered incentives to action. There is an important distinction to be made between sociable feelings and moral ones, the former leading to 'agreeableness,' the latter of which may be virtuous, noble, or sublime; the sublime ones being those which are of the highest moral worth. Thus, on this basis there is a continuum between 'beautiful' and 'sublime' feelings, some having more moral worth than others. Reading A. Cohen's chapter, 'Kant's "curious catalogue of human frailties" and the great portrait of nature,' especially her tables (see specifically table 7.7 on 155), before reading Makkreel's and Clewis's chapters helps one picture how different temperaments relate to different feelings, whether moral or not. The takeaway from reading each of these three chapters allows for the 'cultivation' of aesthetic feelings (or receptivity) to help enable the duties of virtue (honor for Makkreel, true vs. false sublimity for Clewis, and temperaments and gender for Cohen), and yet each poses a difference between the early and later Kant. Whether Kant changed his mind between the 1760s and the critical period or whether his basic doctrines were already formulated in these early works is something left unanswered but addressed by all of the authors.

Part III, 'Education, Politics, and National Character,' begins to uncover Kant's real wrestling with and inspiration for Rousseau. It is certainly hard to believe that a picture of him graced Kant's study, for what G. Felicitas Munzel reveals is more than just one-sided admiration. Frierson in Part I had pointed to Rousseau being an influence on Kant's thinking regarding 'subjective universality,' and Felicitas Munzel uncovers the overlapping characteristics of Rousseau and Kant's pedagogy over against John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. Commenting on Kant's remarks regarding the uselessness of the scholar, and what is natural or unnatural, she writes, 'a tutor such as Jean-Jacques is "contrived," since it "is unnatural that one individual spend the greater part of his life teaching one child" and one wishes "that Rousseau had shown how schools can arise" from the account of *Emile*' (178). R. Brandt contributes a political reading to this pedagogical one, particularly as it regards property and the 'Rousseauian contrasting of society at that that time with the order of nature' (187) in a close reading of a few pages of the *Remarks*. R. Louden opens his discussion of national character with a comment by Schiller that one learns nothing from Kant's *Observations*. Over against abstruse academic philosophy, this is intended as *popular* – something most of the articles of this book underplay. Louden implicitly defends Kant the public intellectual who was able to speak to the masses regarding the burgeoning fields of geography and anthropology, 'not separate and distinct disciplines but interconnected parts of a larger whole' (201). Despite popularization, and despite all of the bad press Kant has received regarding women and race, Louden guides us to some ideas of 'national character' as opposed to race.

In part III, 'Science and History,' P. Fenves, J. Zammito and K. Ameriks all pose the question of the role of the philosopher in society and of how Kant himself underwent a 'revolution' of sorts, personally and academically, in writing the *Observations* and *Remarks*. The question of the very

purpose of the *Observations* becomes central for Fenves who claims that since it was missing an explicit preface, there was for Kant (like Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* after him) 'a reticence on the part of its author to declare what he is doing' (221). Fenves describes this, referring to the first paragraph of the *Observations*, as Kant's 'undeveloped difference between an observational and a philosophical function of the eye [which] seems to reproduce on a methodological level the enigmatic distinction with which the work begins – the distinction, that is, between "sentiment" (*Empfindung*), which can be of two general kinds, and "feeling" (*Gefühl*), which is far more variable' (224). The analysis Fenves gives regarding the term 'Kepler' (while referencing the importance of Albrecht von Haller) at the beginning of the *Observations*, in which a term no longer stands for a person but a colligation of ideas, opens up the question of Kant's 'pursuit of science as decadence' in Zammito's chapter on the *Remarks*. Learning, whether in the arts or sciences, Kant claims, following Rousseau's first *Discourse*, corrupts society and the more we 'improve' in science or art, the more luxury arises and other effects of idleness—in other words, they lead more towards the 'beautiful' than the 'sublime.' As the sublime in Kant has been derided in much of Anglo-American philosophy—even in a day when the BICEP2 instrument describes an event in terms of a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second (as *The Economist* describes it), recalling Rousseau's claim that 'If you look at science in itself, you enter into a bottomless sea, without shores, full of reefs' (237)—the decadence Rousseau (and Kant) speak of has been sublated into 'progress.' That Rousseau in writing the first *Discourse* was around the same age as Kant when he wrote his *Remarks* points to a personal if not psychological rupture, 'a spiritual rebirth' (238). In a day of rabid careerism in academics, it is difficult to read Zammito's chapter without a tinge of sadness at the decadence of academia. Very few scholars take these words to heart when tenure (or a job) is at stake. As Kant writes in the *Remarks*, 'Society sees to it that one can only esteem oneself in comparison with others' (240, quoting *Ak.* 20:95), and this esteem based on how many top drawer publications one has. One can sadly quip, what has happened to learning for its own sake? What would Kant say to the denizens of scholarly 'pedantry' and 'cliquishness' (239, quoting Vorländer's *Immanuel Kant: Der Mann und das Werk*, 1924)?

The last chapter by Ameriks opens even further the relationship of Kant to Rousseau, especially regarding the 'rabble.' One criticism of Kant is that no one with common sense can understand him, and yet precisely what Kant was trying to do (along with Rousseau) was to prove that 'moral worth [does not] depend on some special kind of technical or deductive ability,' as the Wolffian system might suppose (255). As Ameriks writes, 'Kant was especially concerned with the fact that the technical success and social prestige of the life of modern scientific accomplishment had led to the thought that there was something fundamentally inferior about the uneducated "rabble," and that persons are not basically equal but are to be distinguished essentially by variations in matters such as intellectual training or talent' (262). Given Kant's 'radical turn' against an 'entrenchment of privilege,' in the terms of 'humility' over against science's 'vanity,' and given that 'he supplemented the abstract arguments of his systematic work with detailed courses on anthropology, physical geography, and practical philosophy,' Kant failed to give us precise guidelines as to how these should be read or of how history is to be understood. Ameriks shows that Kant's reading of Rousseau repeats a three-stage view of history mirroring 'three basic capacities of human beings' in order to support what he calls a 'social unsociability' in 'the building of just institutions' (263) and 'a whole new conception of history' (265).

As a critical (academic) guide to these remarks, the authors succeed in showing the relevance of these previously considered less 'sophisticated' texts. Reading this book does not replace reading

the *Observations* and *Remarks* themselves, however (as recently published in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy series, for example). But the question of what the ‘critical’ Kant might have thought of these works of the 1760s is still left unanswered. Kant wrote himself towards the end of *Observations*, ‘If, finally, we cast a glance at history, we see the taste of men, like a Proteus, continually taking on variable forms.’ That there is such a book reveals that even in Kant, taste matters.

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