

Julian Wuerth. *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics*. Oxford University Press 2014. 368 pp. \$99.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199587629).

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Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics is an exciting and well-researched book that will serve as a resource for Kant scholars for years to come. Wuerth argues against a tradition of Kant scholarship that sees Kant as rejecting all rationalist and metaphysical claims about the nature of the mind. In its place, he offers an interpretation according to which Kant maintains a view of the mind as a substance endowed with various powers that ground the mind's actions. And he uses this theory of the mind to argue against intellectualist interpretations of Kant's ethics, which reject the role of sensibility and feeling in moral action. To traditionalists, Wuerth's interpretation may seem audacious, but he argues for it through a careful and extensive engagement with Kant's published and unpublished statements in order to show that Kant's statements on the substantial soul are not an anomaly but a considered position he held throughout his career.

The book is long and detailed, so in lieu of a chapter-by-chapter summary, I will present some of the major theses organizing the book, sketch out the argumentation for these theses, and then consider some issues that might be raised. These theses are:

- (1) We are aware of ourselves as a simple noumenal substance (a *substantiale*) and are aware of our identity as this substance (chapters 1, 2). Wuerth argues for this thesis by rejecting Kitcher's interpretation of Kant as responding to Hume's bundle theory of the self and offering an alternative reductionist view of the self according to which mental states are connected through contentual interdependence. On Wuerth's view, this interpretation is inaccurate given Kant's repeated statements about our awareness of ourselves as a simple noumenal substance throughout his career.
- (2) This noumenal substance is indeterminate in the sense that it lacks any predicates including those traditionally ascribed to the substantial soul by the rationalist such as permanence, incorruptibility, and personality (chapters 2, 4). In the terminology of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant accepts only that the non-schematized category of substance can be applied to the noumenal soul and that this does not entail its permanence, since permanence is a schematized concept of substance that applies only to phenomena. Wuerth also convincingly shows that the rationalist's paralogistic arguments regarding persistence are due to mistakenly conflating the noumenal and phenomenal senses of substance, which leads them to illicitly conclude the permanence of the soul on the basis of immediate awareness of the soul's noumenal substantiality.
- (3) Our awareness of ourselves as a simple noumenal substance is immediate (chapter 3). Wuerth establishes this thesis on the basis of what he calls Kant's 'contribution thesis' according to which 'all receptivity is in part activity, so that the effect of any substance on another reflects not only the nature of the affecting substance, but also the nature and contribution of the affected substance, so that the receptive powers of the affected substance always color this effect and thus preclude untainted epistemic access to the affecting substance' (10). This means that we cannot have immediate or direct access to other objects. But in the case of self-consciousness, in contrast with awareness of other objects, we need not be affected by the

substance in order to have epistemic access to it. We instead have an immediate awareness of being this substance.

- (4) Kant held this same position more or less throughout his career (chapters 1–5) including before and after writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Wuerth gives a strong argument for this thesis on the basis of a painstaking and thorough analysis of Kant's entire corpus.
- (5) This noumenal substance has various faculties and sub-faculties that are founded on three basic faculties, which are distinct not only in degree but kind: the faculty of cognition, faculty of desire, and faculty of feeling of pleasure and displeasure (chapter 6). In his discussion of powers, Wuerth offers a refreshing alternative to current interpretations that focus primarily on Kant's faculty of cognition (involving sensibility and understanding) and opens the door to further research by uncovering Kant's discussion of mental faculties throughout his writings, including in his correspondence with Reinhold.
- (6) This structure of the mind and its three foundational faculties grounds Kant's views on action (chapters 7–9). Wuerth establishes the virtues of his interpretation of the noumenal self and its powers in part by revealing the shortcomings of Sidgwick and Korsgaard's seminal interpretations of Kant's ethics. Sidgwick is faulted for identifying the free noumenal self with pure practical reason, which means the self is divorced from its sensible impulses. His rejection of a role for sensibility in Kant's moral philosophy means not only that the self can act morally but that it must act morally, which undermines moral responsibility for immoral choices made on the basis of sensibility (chapter 7). Korsgaard is similarly faulted for making Kant's ethics overly intellectual and failing to see that sensible desires can provide genuine incentives for choices. The result is that we cannot knowingly act immorally (chapter 8). Wuerth offers an account that aims to remedy these shortcomings by showing that all powers, including sensible desire, inhere in our noumenal substance and that sensible desire can provide a motive for action just as reason can. This means that choices on the basis of sensible desires can be coherent, contra Sidgwick and Korsgaard, even if they are immoral. In his discussion, Wuerth also sees Kant as implicitly relying, as early as the 1760s, on a distinction between *Wille*, the legislative faculty of volition, and *Willkür*, the executive faculty of legislation, a distinction that many commentators first see in *Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793).

A short review cannot do justice to the complexity and thoroughness of Wuerth's argumentation for these theses, but there are a few issues that might be raised for the theses as I have presented them.

The focus in thesis (1) and (3) on our awareness of ourselves as a noumenal substance raises some problems for both personhood and ultimately for moral responsibility in Kant's account. Wuerth recognizes that a Humean impressions-based account of personal identity and Kitcher's contentual-connections account lead to problems with individuating minds and ascertaining the extent to which personhood extends. And he proposes that awareness of ourselves as a noumenal substance does a better job (182–3). But it is not clear how it does this. Does Kant believe, for example, that we are aware of ourselves as a noumenal substance even when we are sleeping? If so, how? And if not, how would Kant explain how personhood might continue across such gaps? If personhood and personal identity depend on awareness of oneself as a noumenal substance, there seem to be problems

here. And since such personhood is necessary for the imputability of actions, as Kant makes clear, then there will also be problems explaining how someone who might have lapses in their awareness of themselves as a noumenal substance may or may not still meet the criterion for moral accountability.

One proposal that might resolve both of these difficulties is to see that Kant eventually shifts his emphasis away from our awareness of ourselves as a noumenal substance to a focus on other arguments for our noumenal substantiality. Wuerth recognizes that Kant provides a transcendental argument to the effect that the permanence of substance must be presupposed for experience (99–106). But he hardly acknowledges (185) the analogous argument Kant makes regarding our substantiality and its permanence and immortality in his practical writings. Here Kant eventually argues that we must presuppose the permanence of our noumenal substance in order to make sense of moral responsibility. However, this presupposition argument is not isolated to Kant's practical writings and can also be found in the third Paralogism where Kant acknowledges that the presupposition of a persisting soul could resolve problems involving gaps in personhood (A 365). If, however, it is true that there is, if not a shift, at least an alternative set of arguments for our noumenal substantiality and the permanence of this substance in Kant's writings, this appears to undermine thesis (4), the claim that Kant consistently held that we are aware of ourselves as a noumenal substance. This alternative set of arguments also lends some support to the claim, which Wuerth rejects, that there is some incoherence in Kant's denial of spatial and temporal properties to noumena and his discussion of the permanence of the noumenal soul in his practical philosophy. To my mind, Kant may have recognized the limitations of his awareness argument for our noumenal soul, which was inherited to some degree from Wolffian rationalism, and sought to overcome it with the presupposition arguments. The latter account would also be able to accommodate Wuerth's insistence on our noumenal substance possessing certain fundamental powers that are necessary for both cognition and moral action.

It would also have been nice to see Wuerth differentiate his interpretation from other current metaphysical views of the self, and a more thorough consideration of Kant's predecessors such as Wolff and Crusius may also have added much to the discussion of our faculties. But there is of course only so much one can do in a single book. Notwithstanding these issues, some of which may be problems for Kant more than Wuerth, the book is an impressive achievement and will be an important part of the continuing discussion of Kant's views on the self.

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