

Editorial

As an experiment, this issue of the Bulletin has been typed on a word-processor. Norbert Waszek's article was submitted in that form, and it seemed a good idea to treat the rest of the material in the same way. Differences in quoting conventions, etc., between his article and the rest of the issue are due to Mr. Waszek's text being a part of a forthcoming larger work.

The Editor apologises for delay in producing this issue, caused by an unusual accumulation of work and heavy other commitments. He will be away from Oxford on sabbatical leave between September 1983 and May 1984 and Professor Raymond Plant has kindly agreed to edit the next issue. Raymond Plant will be on sabbatical leave at Nuffield College, Oxford, next academic year. Correspondence concerning no. 8 of the Bulletin should be addressed to him there after October 15.

There is some problem in finding enough reviewers for books published in German and Italian, and volunteers are asked to get in touch with the Editor, mentioning their special interests.

Announcements and Reports

Essex Kant Conference

On February 26 and 27 the Philosophy Department of the University of Essex hosted a conference on Kant's Critical Philosophy. The conference opened with a paper by Michael Rosen on freedom and determination in Kant; this was followed by an elegant paper by Susan Mendus on Kant's moral psychology. The afternoon programme began with a paper by Howard Williams on Kant's political philosophy; this paper elicited an intriguing response from Ronald Beiner, who claimed that Kant's conception of an ethical commonwealth involved an essentially anti-political bias. The most noteworthy papers of the conference were equally those which were of most direct interest to students of Hegel; Onora O'Neill's defence of Kant against Alasdair MacIntyre's probing critique in his After Virtue, and John Sallis' analysis of the interplay between reason and history in the Critique of Pure Reason.

In 'Kant After Virtue' O'Neill argued that Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of Kantian ethics could not be sustained. What was most interesting about O'Neill's paper was that while she acutely reconstructed the Kantian enterprise in response to MacIntyre's call for a return to an Aristotelian ethics of virtue, she simultaneously left dangling the question of what such a restructuring might mean or signify in the face of MacIntyre's neo-Hegelian, historical critique of modernity.

O'Neill began by noting how MacIntyre's critique of Kant reiterated the four most venerable criticisms of his ethics. First, that Kant makes rules the primary concepts of moral life; secondly, that Kant's system, by attempting to provide universal rules applicable to all men irrespective of circumstances and conditions, suffers from rigourism; thirdly, that Kant's ethics is overly formalistic; and finally, that Kant's ethical procedure, because formal, is not truly action guiding.

O'Neill's reply to these criticisms involved an ingenious and important reinterpretation of the object of moral legislation. Traditionally, the

maxims which must meet the demands of the Categorical Imperative have been assumed to be principles embodying intentional descriptions of what agents propose which have the prominence of decisions. However, as O'Neill rightly pointed out, Kant denies that agents are always aware or are infallible about what their maxims are. Thus, transparent intentions having the character of decisions are not plausible candidates for maxims. This led O'Neill to suggest that by a maxim Kant meant those underlying intentions in accordance with which agents orchestrate their numerous specific intentions. As a consequence, maxims 'can have little to do with the rightness or wrongness of acts of specific types, and much more to do with the underlying moral quality of a person's life, or aspects of his life'. Further, since maxims of virtue are those for which no single outward performance is indispensable, and since the categories of virtue (the morally worthy and the like) are more fundamental than the categories of right (the obligatory, permissible and forbidden), then it becomes quite tempting to regard Kant as offering a kind of ethics of virtue himself.

O'Neill did not spell out how she thought Kantian maxims should be analysed with respect to notions like character and disposition; nor did she directly contrast Kantian virtues, which are still rule-like in character, with Aristotelian virtues, which define the being of man. It was equally unclear from her account how such maxims might be action-guiding. Nonetheless, as she showed, such an account of maxims would allow one to answer a good deal of the standard case against Kant.

What such a defence of Kant overlooks, however, is MacIntyre's Hegelian contention that modern moral discourse has lost the social medium and natural telos which gave it its original coherence and sense. Because the modern self 'has no necessary social content and no necessary social identity' (After Virtue, p. 30), moral language comes to be used to forward personal and class ends; its essential reference to the good for man thus being lost. MacIntyre's call for an ethics of virtue cannot, then, be interpreted as a proposal for us now; rather, it gestures toward the conditions under which an ethical life could be led by people like us, with our past and history. If this is correct, then it becomes obscure how any revision of Kant's programme could hope to succeed; if the historical and social conditions necessary for the good life for man are absent, then no set of analytic alterations in any modern theory can hope to recuperate the missing rational grounds for moral action.

In discussion O'Neill was willing to concede this point, but argued that Kantian ethics nonetheless offered the only (or best) rational account of moral action available to us now, even if such an account is not equivalent to the good life for man. This suggestion naturally opens up two lines of questioning. First, it raises the question of foundations for an even Kantian ethical life. After all, the original appeal of Kant's ethics lay in its gesture toward the good will and hence human autonomy as grounding moral action. If O'Neill's account of maxims and her conception of the historical situation of Kantian ethic prohibit reference to these grounds - grounds which, anyway, might be thought of as essential to the kind of self MacIntyre believes to be responsible for the dislocation of the language of morals - then where are the rational foundations for virtuous action now to be found? In other words, has the moral law been displaced from the will or reason into a future community; and if so, what is the nature of our relationship and access to it? Are we forever separated from the conditions for a moral life, or is our society a unique perversion of the social conditions necessary for a moral life? How are we to distinguish social pathology from modernity, or is no such distinction to be drawn. Secondly, O'Neill's proposal opens up the

question of what we expect from ethics if it is granted that the conditions for the good life for man are not now present. Kantian ethics, on this approach, becomes a surrogate for the good for man; MacIntyre recommends a Benedictine retreat into communities capable of sustaining moral life to help see us through the dark ages which are upon us; Marxist theory requires the revolutionary overcoming of the present world. How are we to choose from among these options? In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel attempted to unite the Aristotelian and the Kantian programmes on the realistic assumption that some of the communal conditions for an Aristotelian moral life were incompatible with some of the positive achievements of modernity. Even if one grants that Hegel probably drew the line between social pathology and modernity in the wrong place (or failed to adequately draw that distinction at all), because his programme led him to overtly raise all the questions which are at the centre of this dispute, it deserves careful re-examination.

In his paper 'Tunnelings: Reason and History in the Critique of Pure Reason', John Sallis delicately began the business of probing the repression of history, of historicity and the history of metaphysics, governing Kant's architectonic. Sallis began by pointing to the ambiguity involved in Kant's claims that, on the one hand, reason is to provide the foundation of the critical edifice, while, on the other hand that very same reason has a 'natural disposition' (Kant) to produce the antinomies that, pre-critically, are the history of western metaphysics. Reason is to be both doctor and disease, analyst and analysand; the history of metaphysics for Kant being the spontaneous deformation, madness, of reason itself. The duality thus opened up in reason forces the question: what must reason be like to timelessly ground metaphysics while simultaneously being subject to the deformations which, natural to it, submerge reason in the opaque currents of history?

While it may not be logically impossible for an account of reason to provide for this duality in reason, Sallis noted how Kant's own account of how reason can ground metaphysics tends to occlude the alterity which deforms reason. Briefly, for Kant, reason is, first, essentially one (although it can be set against itself); secondly, reason is self-enclosed (although that self-enclosure can be infringed upon by sensibility); thirdly, reason is self-present (although reason is necessarily subject to self-deception and self-ignorance). Conversely, however, it is the history of metaphysics, be it in the form of Kant's assumption of the validity of Aristotle's categories or in his systematic focus on the debate between rationalism (dogmatism) and empiricism (scepticism), which provides the grounds upon which reason can have access to its own grounding function. Thus, the history of metaphysics provides the opening for reason to disavow that history, the space within which reason can proceed from historical self-ignorance to timeless self-presence.

According to Sallis the hermeneutic key to Kant's textual strategy hence becomes the play of reason (presence/identity) and history (absence/difference), where the suppressed second member of the dyad can be shown to be controlling the operation of the dominant term: history conditions the presence of reason to itself as a self-presence outside history.

Sallis' Derridean procedure worried some of the audience, who wondered how much an analysis of textual structure not sustained by philosophical 'argument' could accomplish. Were not Kant's concrete arguments still there to be validated or refuted? In response the claim was made that any such 'argument' would have to presuppose the legitimacy of the very dualities which this form of reading questioned, viz., reason and history, analytic and synthetic, a priori and posteriori, form and matter, etc.

From a Hegelian perspective, Sallis was pressed concerning the ahistorical character of his presentation of the repression of history in Kant. Sallis agreed that a pure Derridean reading would be ahistorical, but that he had carefully 'framed' his analysis with that original recounting of the turn away from history to reason by Socrates in the *Phaedo*. For Sallis this move is sufficient because from his (Heideggerian) perspective what constitutes historicity, and so the history of western metaphysics, just are the modes and ways in which Being, the question of the meaning of Being, is repressed or forgotten. But can historicity be so directly equated with the history of metaphysics; doesn't this give us a peculiarly narrow and philosophical conception of historicity? And even if this were to be accepted, might it not be thought dubious that the history of metaphysics should be identified, timelessly, with the various ways in which history is repressed for the sake of reason? Doesn't Hegel in the *Phenomenology* when working through the forms of consciousness appropriate to the level of Spirit instigate a sense of historicity that transcends the history of philosophy narrowly construed, and which is more than a repetition of the suppression of history for the sake of reason?

The position of Kant in English speaking philosophy has always, in a way, been anomalous, for the centrality of Kant's ethics and theory of knowledge has always, and inevitably, pointed to a tradition of philosophical reflection antipathetic to the dominant trends of the analytic enterprise. In their different ways the papers of O'Neill and Sallis both showed where the question of validity of the critical philosophy is most decisively posed, namely, in the writing of Hegel.

J.M. Bernstein
University of Essex

Husserl and Continental Philosophy

Report on the Conference of the British Society for Phenomenology at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, 18 - 20 March 1983

That links between the HSGB and the BSP should be fostered was borne out by this latest conference which contained many debates the roots of which were obviously Hegelian. Roger McAure (Keele) on 'The Ground of the World' was strongly reminiscent of the opening of the *Doctrine of Being* in the *Lesser Logic* where 'The truth of Being and of Nothing is ... the unity of the two: and this unity is Becoming' (1). Klaus Hartmann (the president of the BSP) repeatedly referred to Hegel to try to resolve disputes in Heideggerian ontology. It was wondered whether that which grounds most fundamentally can itself be ungrounded and whether, in a weak sense, what grounds is not itself altered by its relation to that which is grounded. The discussion tended to remain at this level of a 'quest for foundations' though.

Klaus Hartmann (Tübingen) discussed the extent to which phenomenology, Husserl's in particular, tacitly rests on metaphysical assumptions. His scholarly treatment of Husserl left us with the view that to do phenomenology at all is implicitly and inevitably to be engaged in metaphysics. N. O'Connor (Cork) examined the question of whether the idea of intentionality could provide a solution to the problem of metaphysical dualism, and went on to trace the origins of modern linguistic structures in male and female language use. William Haurick (Southern Illinois) read a paper on Merleau - Ponty,