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Kant and his German contemporaries, vol 2, aesthetics, history, politics, religion

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Published in:
British Journal for the History of Philosophy

DOI:
[10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776](https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776)

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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2020

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Gregory, M. L. (2020). Kant and his German contemporaries, vol 2, aesthetics, history, politics, religion. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 28(4), 848-850 .
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776>

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Kant and his German contemporaries, volume II: aesthetics, history, politics, religion

edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,
2018, pp. xii + 286, £75.00 (hb), ISBN: 978-1-10717-816-8

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To cite this article: Michael Lee Gregory (2020) Kant and his German contemporaries, volume II: aesthetics, history, politics, religion, British Journal for the History of Philosophy, 28:4, 848-850, DOI: [10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776](https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776>



Published online: 07 Nov 2019.



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This volume continues the focus of the first volume by bringing into relief the complex relationship that Kant and Kant's philosophy had to his fellow German scholars. While the first volume focused on Kant's theoretical philosophy and formal ethics, this volume focuses on four new topics in Kant's philosophy that provide fresh ground on which to cultivate the rich picture of Kant's relationship with his German contemporaries, which the first volume planted. The volume engages well known opponents of Kant (such as Schiller and Herder) while also bringing under-researched figures into the light (Moser, Winckelmann, etc.). While many omissions might be found in the figures chosen (Spalding, Sulzer, Pufendorf, Achenwall, etc.), the volume does its job of opening interest in the field of German contemporaries that influenced Kant's work.

First, the essays on Aesthetics begin with a wonderful essay by J. Collin McQuillan that suggests the development of Kant's aesthetic theory should be characterized as a critical reaction to "Baumgarten's and Meier's accounts of aesthetic perfection of cognition" (27). McQuillan expertly traces Kant's sustained critical engagement with the notion of aesthetic perfection in his Logic Lectures, and argues that the discovery of reflective judgement allowed Kant to maintain this critique while also insisting on principles of taste. Next, Paul Guyer argues that despite Kant's anti-perfectionist stance, and Mendelssohn's commitment to the concept of perfection in the judgment of taste, there have been some "deep affinities" between the two authors that have been overlooked. First, although Kant rejects the language of perfectionism, Kant's notion of aesthetic experience grounded in subjective purposiveness is "deeply Mendelssohnian" (47). Second, Kant seems to implicitly rely on Mendelssohn's distinction between artistic *representation* and what is presented (29). Third, though Kant insists on the banishment of sentiments from proper aesthetic experience, Kant explicitly leaves room for expression and experience of emotion in such a way that brings him into closer proximity with Mendelssohn. Guyer's expert comparison gives a stimulating look at some bridges between both systems that will, I am sure, be explored by Guyer and others going forward. The last essay on Aesthetics is Michael Baur's essay on an underexplored figure in his influence on Kant, Johann Winckelmann. Though Baur is careful to identify differences with Kant, Baur identifies Winckelmann's influence on Kant to be primarily the recognition of the intersubjectivity of the satisfaction of taste (56). Baur's essay is a brief but interesting introduction to Winckelmann's relevance.

The essays on history begin with another essay on Winckelmann. Elisabeth Décultot discusses Winckelmann's hereditary theory of cultural progress through a discussion of his defense of Greek exceptionalism. Décultot then explains why Herder and Caylus rejected this model by insisting that cultural progress is only achieved with cultural exchange between peoples. However, the essay engages only briefly with Kant and provides no sustained treatment of Kant's philosophy of history. Lydia Moland argues that Schiller's well-known

complaint about the Kantian system might be alleviated by the permissibility of conjectural histories, including religious histories, to aid the human being in cognizing the moral law, even if, as Moland admits, Kant's priority of the rational over the sensible ultimately leads to "overcoming" these sensible aids. Moland's essay is an interesting look at the role that conjectural histories might play for Kant, but seems to simplify the Schillerian picture in the process. The last essay on history is the fascinating essay by Nigel DeSouza which attempts to specify a theory of "organic force" that underlies Herder's naturalistic philosophy of history in *Ideas* (115). While Kant's objections to Herder's methods in his philosophy of history are well-known, DeSouza aims to give a fuller account of the theory of organic forces, or those invisible forces that Kant objects to in his review of Herder's work. DeSouza shows that Herder's interaction with the pre-critical Kant in the 1760s informs his later theory of the interaction of force and matter. While Kant later develops a thoroughly dualist approach, Herder insists on "the interaction between force and matter and the constitutive relationship between force and form" (126). Herder, DeSouza argues, goes beyond the limits of Kant's critical philosophy. However, by doing so, Herder does "systematic justice both to our phenomenological experience of soul-body interaction and to our observations of nature and life" which Kant's mechanistic account of nature does not.


The essays on politics begin with Kristi Sweet who characterizes the disagreement between Mendelssohn and Kant about the nature of enlightenment as a difference between Kant's insistence on the absolute authority of reason and Mendelssohn's limitation of the authority of reason to individual and speculative pursuits (132). The essay suffers from a simplification of Mendelssohn on two critical fronts. First, Sweet characterizes Mendelssohn's emphasis on the authority of the conscience as broadly Lutheran, which circumvents the importance of Mendelssohn as a Jewish thinker. Second, the individualism Sweet attempts to attribute to Mendelssohn ignores the emphasis on ritual and language communities in *Jerusalem*. The next essay by Ian Hunter might be the best in the volume. Hunter delivers a thorough study of an influential but under-researched German public law jurist, Johann Moser. His paper brings together the contrasting philosophical and juridical camps of Moser and Kant around an erudite discussion of the religious constitution in Germany. Refreshingly using both Anglophone and German sources, Hunter relates Moser and Kant's views on public law and religion to the German religious constitution. Moser's empirical approach justifies the constitution by tracing the historical grounding to local and regional treaties and agreements. Kant, contrastingly, grounds the normativity of public law in a priori principles of justice arrived at through rational self-reflection and an understanding of oneself as a "sensibly affected rational being" (164). Kant's framework cannot legitimize the religious constitution because rationality demands the development of confessional faiths into a rational faith, and so the constitution cannot be legitimate public law. The last essay in this section is an essay by Gabriel Gottlieb which shows Fichte's deduction of right in the context of quarrels between different camps of Kantian jurist who had taken differing perspectives on the deduction of right. Gottlieb focuses on Erhard's development of a deduction of right through re-cognition of the

other as worthy of respect. This development within the Kantian family feud leads Fichte to develop his own, more radical deduction of right.

The last section, on religious perspectives, begins with Brian Chance and Lawrence Pasternack, who expertly place Kant's "Orientation Essay" as a provisional response to the complex discussions between Wizenmann, Mendelssohn, and Jacobi during the Pantheism controversy. Chance and Pasternack give a sustained reading of the essay, showing Kant's repurposing of the term "need of reason", introduced in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that allows him to reject transcendental intuition or influence by spiritual forces. Chance and Pasternack, trace the development of Kant's thinking by looking at Wizenmann's response to the "Orientation Essay" and the ways that, beyond the familiar footnote, the *Critique of Practical Reason* is Kant's response to Wizenmann. Overall, this essay does a great service in situating the "Orientation Essay" both in Kant's development of the highest good and within the wider context of the Pantheism controversy. Next, Marion Heinz outlines Herder's objections to Kantian dualism and moral theology, as presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Though Kant seems to reject the version of dualism Herder charges him with in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Herder's objections are an informative tool to appreciate his overall direction and "to understand the dispute over the correct concept of reason in the late Enlightenment" (219). Heinz gives a detailed analysis of the "Spizonistic-vitalistic metaphysics of God-nature, living in everything, that Herder offers against the wasteland and emptiness of a critical metaphysics that forms itself" (227). Finally, Daniel O. Dahlstrom follows Hamann's disagreements with Kantian pure reason to point out where Hamann gives a positive account of reason. Dahlstrom sets out to outline an account of Hamann's conception of reason that might give us a way to place him within the conversation about the nature of reason in eighteenth century Germany. Reason, Hamann suggests, cannot be pure or autonomous, but must be fundamentally reliant on linguistic and empirical experience. In order to fill out the account, Dahlstrom turns to Hamann's theology to discover that reason is a means of interpretation of divine revelation (through sensory and linguistic signs) which climaxes in Christ. Dahlstrom ends with some reservations and concerns about Hamann's account, but generally Dahlstrom gives a nuanced picture of an often caricatured thinker.

Overall, this volume is full of interesting avenues for future scholarship and will hopefully serve to correct the lack of attention these figures receive in Anglophone scholarship. It is worth reading for anyone interested in Kant's philosophy or eighteenth century German philosophy more generally.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2019.1674776>

