

**B KULTURWISSENSCHAFTEN**

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**Personale Informationsmittel**

**Immanuel KANT**

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- 23-4** *Kant and Eighteenth-Century German philosophy* : contexts, influences and controversies / ed. by Andree Hahmann and Stefan Klingner. - Berlin [u.a.] : De Gruyter, 2023. - V, 377 S. ; 23 cm. - ISBN 978-3-11-079372-7 : EUR 124.95  
[#8836]

This book is of particular relevance for English-speaking scholars who are interested in Immanuel Kant's thought in relation to his German predecessors and contemporaries. For even though one can certainly agree to the proposition that Kant inaugurated a revolution in the way of thinking in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it is also relevant to look at how earlier philosophers dealt with similar topics and how his contemporaries understood or misunderstood his thinking. The latter was certainly not a rare thing; perhaps most famously, Christian Garve's review of Kant's *Critique of pure reason* stumbled on the new terminology employed by Kant and therefore did not manage to adequately portray and criticize Kant. It is topics like these that are treated in the volume under consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the essays have been published before, mostly in German, in various volumes of the series *Werkprofile* that is edited by Andree Hahmann, Stefan Klingner, Udo Roth and Gideon Stiening and presents both collection of essays and textual editions presenting mostly neglected thinkers and writers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Germany. Earlier volumes have dealt with authors like Crusius, Diez, Feder, Garve, Gottsched, Hißmann, Jacobi, Lambert, Mauvillon, Meier, Reimarus, Sulzer and Tetens.<sup>2</sup> These names already indicate that the history of German philosophy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>1</sup> Contents: <https://d-nb.info/1284500667/04>

<sup>2</sup> The present volume also contains an essay on Ernst Platner published elsewhere (p. 47 - 68) as well as an essay on Carl Christian Erhard Schmid from a *Werkprofile* volume that will only be published some time in 2024 (p. 97 - 118). Schmid was an early Kantian best know for his *Wörterbuch zum leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften* (1798) that was reprinted various times by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

contains a wide range of thinkers who were concerned with very many different topics. Some of them directly engaged Kant, others were dealing with different issues and thus represent various non-Kantian approaches to philosophy, such as empiricism or psychology.

The present volume uses the focus on Kant to make some of the thinkers mentioned above more known to English-speaking audiences. The main focus of the volume is on those thinkers who can be described as anti-Wolffian or empiricist and who are, according to the editors Andree Hahmann and Stefan Klingner, mostly neglected in the research about this period. This is due to the fact that a thinker like Wolff looms rather large in all accounts of 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, whereas those like Crusius, Tetens, Feder, Garve, Platner or Meiners are rarely treated at all, if they are not altogether forgotten.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that some of their arguments against Kant are hardly tenable, they still represent important steps in the development of topics like psychology or anthropology and also were taken seriously enough by Kant himself to refer to them. The volume, however, also takes note of thinkers like Sulzer and Lambert who are closer to Wolff and who may have influenced Kant in some way. But how exactly this influence looked like is still a matter for research and debate. This is often connected to questions of moral philosophy or ethics as in the thought of Crusius or Sulzer. But larger issues such as the concept of human dignity also play a role. Likewise, even metaphysical concepts in connection with epistemology come under discussion, as in a paper that looks at the ways Kant engaged with Johann Heinrich Lambert.

The volume does not aim at some sort of philosophical rehabilitation of the thinkers treated here, although that does not preclude the presence, in some of these thinkers, of valuable ideas or useful criticisms. But in general, it is clear that contemporary critics of Kant such as Garve had it wrong, as Dieter Hüning explains when he says that despite „Kant's wake-up calls, Garve persisted in his dogmatic slumber, so that he did not rise above the role he had ascribed to himself: to be a mere whetstone for others“ (p. 278). So even though Garve does not really pose a theoretically valid challenge to Kant, it is still worth studying Garve's confrontation with Kant in order to see what it is he did not grasp about the *Critique of pure reason*. In a similar vein, Gideon Stiening also maintains that Feder put forth a very intelligent but also highly problematic criticism of Kant, a criticism he links to counter-enlightenment approaches. In contrast to earlier research claiming that Feder did not understand Kant, Stiening rather stresses Feder's fundamental rejection of the „secular orientation of Kant's moral philosophy“ (p. 279).

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<sup>3</sup> It may suffice here to draw attention to the most recent of these volumes on Christoph Meiners: ***Christoph Meiners (1747-1810)*** : Anthropologie und Geschichtsphilosophie in der Spätaufklärung / hrsg. von Stefan Klingner und Gideon Stiening. - Berlin [u.a.] : De Gruyter, 2023. - IX, 425 S. : Ill. ; 25 cm. - (Werkprofile ; 22). - ISBN 978-3-11-079482-3 : EUR 129.95 [#8800]. - Reviewed in: ***IFB 23-3*** <http://informationsmittel-fuer-bibliotheken.de/showfile.php?id=12301>

Whatever one may think of this issue, essays like this one offer ample food for thought.

It was a good idea to put together this collection in order to facilitate a better understanding of (some) contexts of Kant's thought, of the influences that can be detected in his works as well as of the controversies in which he took part. The controversies are perhaps the most enlightening aspect of Kant's thinking, as they show what for him was crucial and also which thinkers he thought it worth his while to criticize. Thus, according to Stefanie Buchenau, Kant seems to have tried to point out to some of his opponents like Garve that they did not „consider all the logical consequences“ and were arguing in a self-contradictory way (p. 256).

The book offers a collection of sound scholarship on the basis of the contributors' thorough knowledge of both Kant and his contemporaries. It is essential reading for those who want to expand their horizons of knowledge beyond Kant himself. In this sense, the studies also complement more popular accounts of Kant by highlighting often somewhat neglected contexts.<sup>4</sup> The volume contains a *Bibliography* (p. 347 - 369) as well as an *Index of names* (p. 371 - 374) as well as a list of the *Sources* from which the volume draws (p. 375 - 377).

Till Kinzel

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<sup>4</sup> See **Kant** : die Revolution des Denkens / Marcus Willaschek. - Originalausg. - München : Beck, 2023. - 430 S. : Ill. ; 22 cm. - ISBN 978-3-406-80743-5 : EUR 28.00 [#8787]. - Rez.: **IFB 23-4**

<http://informationsmittel-fuer-bibliotheken.de/showfile.php?id=12294> - **Immanuel Kant heute** : der Weltbürger aus Königsberg ; Leben und Werk / Otfried Höffe. - Wiesbaden : Marix-Verlag, ein Imprint von Verlagshaus Römerweg GmbH, 2023. - 396 S. ; 21 cm. - ISBN 978-3-7374-1221-6 : EUR 34.00 [#8790]. - Rez.: **IFB 23-4**

<http://informationsmittel-fuerbibliotheken.de/showfile.php?id=12263> - See also **Immanuel Kant 1724- 2024** : ein europäischer Denker / hrsg. von Volker Gerhardt, Matthias Weber und Maja Schepelmann Berlin ; Boston : De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022. - 336 S. : Ill. ; 29 cm. - (Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im Östlichen Europa ; 83). - ISBN 978-3-11-076281-5 : 39.95 [#8147]. - Rez.: **IFB 22-3**

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