Book Review

Gerad Gentry and Konstantin Pollok (eds): *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2019. 267 pp

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The 11 essays collected in this book – which is divided into three parts – provide different accounts of the imagination’s role(s) from Kant to German Romanticism – via insights into Hegel’s and Fichte’s works. The structure of the book eases the reader in gaining a clear picture of the book’s aim. The discussion of Kant’s account of the imagination is extremely helpful in understanding Fichte’s and Hegel’s interpretive attempts. Both the latter and the former also provide the reader with a historical and theoretical background which helps following Herder’s, Schleiermacher’s, and Schlegel’s path. Gerad Gentry’s introduction strengthens this view, for he reconstructs the conceptual history of imagination from Kant’s times and works to a series of post-Kantian interpreters which includes Schelling, Hölderlin, Schiller, and Goethe. Gentry highlights two main points (2) the imagination plays a key role in “one of the most productive and influential periods in the history of philosophy”, and the imagination “represents a topic of substantial relevance to contemporary debates in philosophy”. One may wish that contemporary studies will take seriously the conceptual history of the concept of imagination that this book provides. Two further points deserve more specific consideration. First, by mentioning Sally Sedgwick, Gentry states that the imagination can be said to be the “fundamental force within Kant’s idealism capable of overcoming his system’s shortcomings” (2). Should one state that the imagination shows that many of these alleged shortcomings are not actually shortcomings, it would be no easy deal to provide an effective reply. Second, Gentry understandably complains about the fact that the concept of imagination – despite its relevance – “remained on the periphery of scholarship over the last one hundred years” (17). This is not completely true. There have been several welcomed contributions on the concept of the imagination in the last century, regarding both Kant and post-Kantian philosophy: e. g., *Ästhetische Einbildungskraft und intuitiver Verstand. Kants Lehre und Hegels spekulativ-idealistische Umdeutung* and *Hegels Theorie der Einbildungskraft* (Düsing, 1986 and 1989); *Kant’s Theory of Imagination* (Gibbons, 1994); *Kant’s Productive Imagination and its Alleged Antecedents* (Ferrarin, 1995); *Imagination in German Romanticism: Re-thinking the Self and its*

Environment (Riou, 2004); *Kant's Power of Imagination* (Horstmann, 2018). However, it is true that there still is no defined debate nor any comprehensive historical-theoretical interpretive attempt. The concept of imagination deserves a wider and more unitary approach in order to fully display its philosophical meaning over the centuries (from Kant thereafter). This volume represents a valuable step in this direction.

Let us now consider each essay in greater detail. Clinton Tolley's *Kant on the Role of the Imagination (and Images) in the Transition from Intuition to Experience* locates the imagination's activity at the stage of perception and distinguishes its synthetic function from that of the understanding. Tolley discusses both the A and the B edition of the Transcendental Deduction and tries to keep both versions into play by questioning their alleged incompatibility. It follows a four-step account of experience: the givenness of sensible manifold; the imaginative synthesis of this manifold; the consciousness of this synthesis in the apperception; the conceptual determination in the understanding. Tolley is one of the few authors who explicitly deal with the concept of *synopsis* in the A Deduction. Thus he argues that the 1781s text clearly distinguishes between having intuitions (through sensibility) and assembling them in more complex representations. In this way Tolley locates the imagination's activity mid-way, something that Kant himself states as well (AA 28:585). The non-identity between the imagination and the understanding is the key claim of Tolley's discussion of the B Deduction, for he then moves to argue that "the consciousness of intuition that is added in perception depends specifically on the activity of imagination" (38). The premise is that *perception* already involves "reflective awareness". One may still wonder whether this perceptual consciousness is truly merely perceptual, that is it does not involve any conceptual capacity. The point is undoubtedly critical, and Tolley's arguments leave room open for a further development in a wider a more articulated account (where *consciousness of the synthesis* does not mean *consciousness of the unity of the synthesis*).

Tobias Rosefeldt's *Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time* addresses one key issue: "how drawing a line allows us to represent time as something that has a *direction*" (51). The solution lies in the awareness of the synthetic act of drawing the line itself, as well as in the claim that the synthetic activity at stake has to be performed by productive imagination. The first step consists in giving four reasons why representing spatial figures through the imagination requires us to represent the direction of time. In the first place, imagination is productive precisely because it allows intuiting something that is made of pure forms. Second, only time-oriented figurative constructions make it possible to gain awareness of their having parts. Third, the time-direction works as a rule for our drawing and displays the procedure according to which our activity leads to draw a circle instead of any other figure which may seem like a circle from a merely spatial point of view.

Fourth, it is only by means of time-oriented figures that we represent infinite magnitudes. The outcome of these arguments is that the activity of representing time does not lie in the activity of drawing but in our awareness of this activity. Attending “to our own act of synthesis is a form of attending to our own causal efficacy, and it is exactly this awareness of a causal order that allows us to represent succession as such” (58). It must be stressed that *representing time* is no mere recognition of time’s features but, rather, a production of representations according to the (temporal) rule of succession. The whole argument requires us to assume the import of concepts: to make an ordered series out of this succession, concepts are necessary.

Gunther Zöller’s “*The Faculty of Intuitions A Priori*”. *Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination* explicitly deals with one of the greatest difficulties the concept of the imagination carries out, namely its *mediacy*. The purpose of this essay is to show that the imagination brings together the faculties of sensibility and the understanding and first allows them both to actualize their cognitive potential. Zöller discusses not only the first *Critique*, but also the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. The emphasis is on a “quasi-chemical procedure of uniting the heterogeneous elements of sensibility and the understanding to form an entirely new entity” (71). Two main claims are raised: first, productive imagination associates cognitive states of different kind – by dealing with both their sensible givenness and their being designed to conceptual determination; second, the imagination is able to present representations that are not given in perception. Zöller focuses on the imagination operating on a “virtual *a priori*” (75). The imagination’s activity is thus disentangled from the actuality of experience. Zöller also highlights that sensibility does not merely have content (sensible manifolds) but also specific cognitive forms (where forms are not rules), namely space and time. The latter are both forms (conditions) of intuition and pure intuitions themselves. According to Zöller the heterogeneity of sensibility and understanding cannot be questioned, for it is precisely this which makes the imagination’s activity necessary. Productive imagination bridges the gap between sensibility and the understanding and produces a specific “genuine hylomorphic unity” (82). The reader may ask how this *gap-bridging* activity has to be distinguished from that of the power of judgment and how *Einbildungskraft* and *Urteilkraft* are meant to interact.

In *Unity in Variety. Theoretical, Practical, and Aesthetic Reason in Kant*, Keren Gorodeisky aims to show that theoretical, practical and aesthetic judgments bring about three different faculties of reason, despite the fact that Kant explicitly recognizes only two domains of reason. Gorodeisky claims that the lawfulness of reason has to be actual in the empirical world: this actuality comes from the activity of the imagination. How should we locate teleological judgments in this

picture (given that aesthetic judgments themselves rely on the transcendental principle of purposiveness)? By discussing this point Gorodeisky's general view on judgments would be consistently strengthened. The argument consists of these steps: 1) discussing the specific features of aesthetic judgments, as being constitutively different from both theoretical and practical judgments; 2) focusing on *lawfulness* as the common distinctive feature of theoretical, practical, and aesthetic judgments. The key features of judgments' lawfulness are their normative status and the fact that they rely on a necessary synthetic unity. This normativity leads to two further points: judgments both exemplify laws that have to be followed by others and result from the legislating activity of the rational subject. The third step consists in arguing for aesthetic normativity in two senses, either from the point of view of the necessitating role played by the concept of beauty or from the lawful unity exhibited by the imagination. Gorodeisky's effort is towards (systematic) unity, for she stresses the specificity of aesthetic judgments *and* always treats this as a coherent development of Kant's theory of judgment in its entirety.

Though the second part of the volume deals with post-Kantian idealism, it is unavoidable to have Kant's account of the imagination playing an important role in the three subsequent essays. Johannes Haag's essay is titled *Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early Wissenschaftslehre*. Haag aims to prove how determining the role of the imagination is in order to answer the question of "the objectivity of our representations of object of experience" (110). Haag interestingly shifts from the problem of the applicability of representations to the problem of objectivity in general. Haag also deepens Sellars' reference to the actuality of represented objects and clarifies that the perceptual content at stake here is not just one of the two key elements of perception itself (the other being the subject). Fichte's account of imagination provides a valuable theoretical tool for understanding how possible knowledge relies on the "conscious reference to both subjects and objects of experience" (113). While Kant's account of the imagination is shaped by the two faculties that the imagination tries to connect, Fichte's idealist attempt introduces the concept of reciprocal determination. The imagination not only unites two opposites through its synthetic import, but also synthesizes "the very processes that make the synthesis itself possible" (118). This reflexivity allows us to take productive imagination as the starting point for reconstructing the reciprocal limitation between *I* and *non-I*. Productive imagination involves a kind of coexistence between activity and passivity. This is a way to reinterpret the Kantian account, where the imagination has to mediate between receptive sensibility and spontaneous understanding. For the *I* to actively posit itself as intuiting, it has to posit an intuited non-*I* according to which it can recognize and thus determine its own status. The productivity of the imagination lies in this (self)-

positing of something intuited. Both *intuiting* and *being intuited* come from the very same act of intuition. The process reaches its end in the “*transition* from the activity of the I to the ascription of (still undetermined) reality to the non-I via the fixation of intuition” (122).

Hegel takes Fichte’s place as interlocutor of Kant in Meghant Sudan’s *The Kantian Roots of Hegel’s Theory of the Imagination*. Sudan’s aim is to bring Kant’s account closer to Hegel’s and show how both move from the problem of self-consciousness to a full-fledged concept of subjectivity. Sudan develops an interesting comparative strategy between Kant’s threefold synthesis and Hegel’s critical appropriation and revision of the Kantian imagination. Sudan also emphasizes the link between the activity of the imagination and the concept of self-affection, thereby arguing that one of Kant’s greatest concerns was to replace a substantial account of the self with the self-determination of consciousness. Sudan deals with a crucial question (134–136) Which faculty is responsible for self-affection? On the one hand, Kant seems to state that the inner sense is affected through sensibility – for the inner sense is affected by the intuitions it hosts. On the other hand, since only the understanding is active, this intellectual synthesis first affects consciousness. Sudan avoids this alternative and fosters the integration of the passive moment with the active one: self-consciousness comes from the reciprocal interaction between receptivity and spontaneity. The main outcome of these arguments is an outline of the Kantian mind which Hegel, at once, revises and deploys. Hegel’s account of imagination thus reaches the same target as Kant’s, namely to prove that reception and reflection are integrated in self-consciousness. The activity of the imagination might be said to integrate the universal character of self-consciousness with the particular elements actually given to consciousness.

Gerad Gentry’s essay *The Ground of Hegel’s Logic of Life and the Unity of Reason. The Free Lawfulness of the Imagination* approaches Hegel’s discussion of Kant’s account of imagination through the concepts of purposiveness and life. Gentry claims that Hegel’s notion of ‘triplicity’ refers to Kant’s threefold synthesis of imagination. He also argues that the A and B versions of the Transcendental Deduction have to be read as converging on the link between imagination and apperception. Gentry’s key claim is that Hegel recognized in Kant’s account of imagination an internal purposiveness where the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* are unified. This purposiveness, exemplarily at work in the free lawfulness of the imagination, represents in turn the forerunner of Hegel’s concept of *life*, of the *self-producing concept*. Free lawfulness is highly significant for Hegel since it “displays the possibility of a true internal unity to reason: an organic, dialectic synthesis as reason’s very method” (156). The key-points of Hegel’s account of purposiveness are: 1) teleology displays a self-moving non-mechanical lawful synthesis; 2) the necessary self-determination of thought is its freedom; 3) teleology displays

actuality, for the concrete purposive object is its self-developmental purposive process; 4) teleology grounds the unity of the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*. This latter point directly recalls Gentry initial remarks on Hegel's discussion of Kant. Such an argumentative strategy allows Gentry to further clarify how Kant's account of reflecting teleological judgments overcomes his own account of determining judgments. While in the latter case the lawfulness of the categories is detached from the truth-content, in the former case the free lawfulness of the imagination bridges the concrete externality of the empirical element with the abstract universality of the conceptual element.

The four essays of the last part at once widen the historical horizon of the volume and go beyond Kant and Hegel – where this *beyond* does not always nor necessarily mean chronologically *after*.

The first essay is *Imagination and Interpretation. Herder's Concept of 'Einfühlung'* by Michael N. Forster. It provides a concise and clear discussion of the concept of *Einfühlung* in Herder's writings in order to argue that the imaginative assumption of points of view that radically diverge from the interpreter's perspective helps construing any interpretive attempt. The concept of *Einfühlung* does not imply a psychological projection of the self. Rather, Forster's analysis of Herder's works let the following points emerge. First, since the gulf between the interpreter and the interpreted object is felt by the interpreter, the latter has to find her way into what she is interpreting. This also means, secondly, that the linguistic elements are not exhaustive: geography, history, and more general cultural elements have to be considered in order to let the text display its hermeneutical significance. The third point concerns the status of concepts, whose meaning is rooted in perceptual experience. Understanding and interpreting an object thus requires the interpreter to imaginatively grasp its perceptual (*affective*) import. Fourth, the interpreter has to give up feeling anything hostile which may alter her interpretive work. Lastly, the most difficult of the interpreter's tasks is to reach the same proximity the author (and her audience) has had with respect to a text from a variety of viewpoints: language, culture, perceptual elements, and emotional inputs. Forster also links Herder's account with contemporary debates about the alleged insignificance of figurative, emotional and sensitive elements in interpretation. Against such a view, Herder's conception of *Einfühlung* does not imply any actual re-presentation of sensation, for it rather involves an imaginative reproduction that serves the logical and conceptual understanding of the interpreted object. This is meant to prove that recapturing sensations is quite different from actually having them.

The question of interpretation is also recalled by Kristin Gjesdal's work on *Imagination, Divination and Sympathy. Schleiermacher and the Hermeneutics of the Second Person*. This essay deals with the concept of interpretation and aims to

show the relevance of the Thou when attempting to understand, i.e., to interpret, the meaning of experiences. Gjesdal states that the Thou represents “a hermeneutic challenge” (196). At the same time she also stresses that its opacity does not refer to something hidden or metaphysically inaccessible. Rather, the Thou somehow calls for understanding. It is not only matter of rationally grasping *an other*, but also of being willing to constantly orient herself to this *an other*. The Thou does not run out in a projection of the I. Linguistic expression acquires great relevance at this point. Since Schleiermacher distinguishes between language as something shared among several subjects and language as an expression of the individual, Gjesdal focuses on the individuality of linguistic expression as the key to a full understanding of the Thou, and brings into play Schleiermacher’s concept of *divination*. While shared language forces us to reflectively compare different usages, the opacity of the Thou needs to be approached through *feeling*. This does not involve any emotional melting between the I and the Thou, for it means instead to generate “a totalizing hypothesis, a sympathetic-imaginative identification with the kind of experience or point of view of an other” (200). Gjesdal carefully clarifies that sympathetic-imaginative identification neither means a full-fledged cognitive approach nor comes from an aesthetical framework. Divination is the way through which the I may access a perspective on the Thou that is not already framed by the I’s lenses. By moving from critical-reflective comparison to the immediacy of the sympathetic identification with the Thou, it might be said that we move from hermeneutics as an activity to hermeneutics as an “encounter” (206).

Elizabeth Millán Brusslan’s essay *Poetry and Imagination in Fichte and the Early German Romantics. A Reassessment* reconstructs the link between Fichte’s account of the imagination and the conception of poetry of the early German Romantics – which may well help developing a more precise and richer outline of Fichte’s aesthetics. Though Fichte was explicitly in search for a first principle for philosophy, his theoretical approach owes its strength and consistency to the formative power and freedom of the imagination. However, it is still hard to find in Fichte an actual commitment to link the power of the imagination with poetry – intended as an aesthetic work. Basically, this summarizes both Schmid’s and Schlegel’s criticisms of the outcomes of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Millán Brusslan succeeds in opening a new and very promising research path which, once extensively developed, will be entitled to fill a gap in the scholarship of Fichte’s aesthetics. The reader undoubtedly gains a clear reassessment of the relationships between Fichte’s philosophy and the first steps of German Romanticism.

Allen Speight’s *Art, Imagination, and the Interpretation of the Age: Hegel and Schlegel on the New Status of Art and Its Connection to Religion and Philosophy* considers to what extent Hegel may have acknowledged Schlegel’s claims on art and poetry. On a second level, Speight aims to show that it is not only matter of how

we should conceive art but, rather, of “how art as an imaginative and interpret activity matters” (225). The first step consists in following the development of Hegel’s concept of art. While Hegel’s lectures depict German Romanticism as a decline, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* seems to argue that the Romantics have actively contributed to the actualization of spirit. The second step consists in discussing Hegel’s relationship with the Romantics in the Religion-chapter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The focus is on the concept of *Kunstreligion*. Speight compares Schlegel’s claims on mythology with Hegel’s hermeneutical perspective on art. Speight points out that Hegel has shared the Romantic need to reimagine art and religion, as it is evident from Hegel’s discussion of Egyptian age. While the third step consists of in-parallel discussions about how both Hegel and Schlegel added the notion of symbol to their views on art, the conclusive section is dedicated to the legacy of this Hegel–Schlegel account of art.

The 11 essays of *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism* represent the first systematic attempt to provide a coherent picture of the developmental history of the concept of imagination across some of the most influential years of the history of philosophy. This volume plots a course through the most significant figures of German Idealism and Romanticism and allows the reader to plot new courses by her own, towards a variety of themes which can be said to mirror the variety of roles that the imagination plays. The measure of this book’s efficacy will come from the attempts to answer the questions it raises, as well as to explore the spaces it opens.