

## Review

**Gerad Gentry and Konstantin Pollok (eds.), *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. ISBN 13 978-1-1071-9770-1 (hbk). 978-1-3166-4786-8 (pbk). Pp. 280.**

This volume of essays on the imagination is a much-needed critical account about the nature and significance of the imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism. The volume is divided into three parts and covers key figures such as Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Herder, Schlegel and Schleiermacher. Following Fichte, the volume overall makes a very convincing argument that the imagination is Kant's most important insight, the key concept that contains the true spirit of Kant's philosophy, and, therefore, the means to complete Kant's system of idealism such that its alleged problematic dualism is conclusively bridged.

The volume is divided into three parts: the first, *Kant and the Imagination*, concentrates on the often-undervalued centrality of the imagination in Kant's philosophy and examines the role of the imagination in the production of intuition, the role of the imagination for the Kantian conception of understanding and sensibility, and, finally, the imagination as that by means of which the faculties of theoretical reason, practical reason and the power of judgment achieve unity in their differences. Günter Zöllner, in 'The Faculty of the Intuitions A Priori: Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination' gives a particularly interesting reading of the imagination as the mind's overall power to lay hold of the seemingly completely opposite and distinct ends of sensibility and understanding, rather than a third power or force that unifies them. He argues that Kant's treatment of the imagination constitutes an interesting exception to his usual method for overcoming the many dualisms in his system: 'rather than referring to some subsequent unification or resultant unity, is pointing to an original unity, an antecedent and primordial feature underlying the complex and varied setup of the human mind' (67). Moreover, Zöllner explores Kant's appropriation of the emerging science of chemistry, in particular how Georg Ernst Stahl's work on metals and heat influences Kant's 'chemical account of the imagination' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Zöllner's emphasis on the functional status of the imagination in Kant's thought is an innovative and enlightening contrast to accounts of the imagination that typically focus on the substantial stature of the imagination.

The second part of the volume, *The Imagination in Post-Kantian German Idealism*, concentrates on the role of the imagination in two important post-Kantian

idealists, namely, Fichte and Hegel. These chapters follow the view that Fichte and Hegel draw on the imagination as a means of overcoming the problematic dualism between the supersensible and the sensible in Kant's critical idealism. Johannes Haag examines the 'Deduction of Representation' in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* 1794 in his chapter 'Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early *Wissenschaftslehre*'. He argues that Fichte's early work, particularly if one pays attention to the role of the imagination in this work, contains 'the essential ingredients for a robust conception of an object of representation (in the Sellarsian/Kantian sense)' (127). Gerard Gentry's contribution 'The Ground of Hegel's Logic of Life and the Unity of Reason: The Free Lawfulness of the Imagination' rehabilitates Hegel's notion of purposiveness in an original and erudite *tour de force* arguing that it is best understood as the Kantian 'free lawfulness of the imagination' rather than 'a real, inner purposiveness such as the Aristotelian conception of the soul in *De Anima* or the Kantian idea of a teleological "natural end" as is commonly held' (149). Gentry's work includes a thorough discussion of the existing literature and is a particularly scholarly and innovative section of the volume.

The third part of the volume, *The Imagination in German Romanticism*, focuses on imagination and German Romanticisms. Fichte rightly appears as an important figure in both the section on Idealism and the third section on Romanticism, although, given the breadth and complexity of Fichte's work on imagination, feeling, and the relationship between art and philosophy in his works, the focus on the early work of 1794 in Haag's contribution is not representative of the rich possibilities Fichte's writings offer on the subject of the imagination. It is oddly and unfortunately typical that work on Fichte focuses on the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, a work that Fichte spent a lifetime trying to correct. Elizabeth Millán Brusslan's essay 'Poetry and Imagination in Fichte and the Early German Romantics: A Reassessment' tackles the complicated relationship of Fichte's philosophy and the Early German Romantics and her investigation includes a more representative sample of Fichte's work in her discussions. She concludes that Fichte's science of knowledge and its foundationalism is essentially at odds with the anti-foundationalism of the Early German Romantics.

The volume is rich in philosophical depth, discussing in careful detail the role of the imagination in the epistemologies, metaphysics, aesthetics and hermeneutics of Kant and the post-Kantian Idealists. The essays overall make interesting and innovative contributions to existing scholarship. For example, in 'Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time', Tobias Rosefeldt demonstrates that the work of the transcendental imagination is necessary for the pure intuitions of space and time in Kant. Keren Gorodeisky in 'Unity in Variety: Theoretical, Practical, and Aesthetic Reason in Kant' argues convincingly that the imagination is entirely fundamental to Kant's threefold account of reason. Meghant Sudan in

'The Kantian Roots of Hegel's Theory of the Imagination' suggests the Kantian conception of the imagination is reworked in Hegel and constitutes the core of Hegel's idealism. In the third and final part of the volume Michael Forster offers a learned and thorough reading of Herder in his essay 'Imagination and Interpretation: Herder's Concept of *Einfühlung*' in which he explores the connection between the imagination and the conception of "*Einfühlung*". Against Gadamer, Kristin Gjesdal rehabilitates the imagination as a necessary component of good hermeneutics in her contribution 'Imagination, Divination, and Sympathy: Schleiermacher and the Hermeneutics of the Second Person'.

The volume is also rich in breadth and manages to contextualize the very detailed and scholarly discussions such that the essays are accessible to students and scholars alike. Moreover, some essays draw on both the analytic and continental tradition of interpretation in a seamless and organic manner. It is most impressive that the volume is so clear and broad in its scope and yet the authors manage to offer the reader extremely technical and scholarly insights. There is much to learn for any reader from the very different perspectives and the volume makes a valuable contribution towards an account of the monumental epistemological and ontological significance of the imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism.

**Susan Hoffmann**  
McGill University, Canada  
[susan.hoffmann@mcgill.ca](mailto:susan.hoffmann@mcgill.ca)