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The volume *System and freedom in Kant and Fichte* is meant to be a *Festschrift* for Professor Günter Zöller, whose research indeed focused broadly on the concepts of “system” and “freedom” in the context of German classical philosophy. The book, edited by Giovanni P. Basile and Ansgar Lyssy, contains eleven contributions, eight of which are dedicated to Kant and three to Fichte. As it is widely known, the terms “system” and “freedom” do indeed play an essential role in the thought of both philosophers, while at the same time encompassing a various number of themes and problems that touch on areas such as theoretical philosophy, practical philosophy, political philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of religion and so on. It should therefore come as no surprise that, as a consequence of this layering, the issues raised within this volume are also quite varied.

In the first contribution, “The Identity of Reason”, Stephen Engstrom focuses on the issue of the harmony between theoretical and practical reason within Kant’s philosophy. Engstrom’s point is that the reconciliation between the two, so much called for by Kant, “presupposes the *identity* of reason” (p. 9). Thus, after having shown how the unity of reason informs all our theoretical knowledge (pp. 13-17), the author “can turn to the idea that the very same reason is also at work in a practical application” (p. 17). Engstrom argues that the realization of the highest good can be seen as the place in which practical and theoretical knowledge are unified, because “this representation [i.e., of the highest good] is theoretical, though it differs from purely theoretical knowledge in that it depends on reason’s practical application” (p. 24). This means that the doctrine of the highest good, far from being a Kantian lapse into transcendent metaphysics, represents the “fullest possible

self-development of the unity of one and the same reason in its two applications” (p. 25).

In the subsequent paper, “Lichtenberg’s ‘Es denkt’ versus Kant’s ‘Ich denke’”, Patricia Kitcher deals with Zöller’s interpretation of the following Lichtenberg’s aphorism: “One should say, *It thinks, just* as one says, *It lightnings*” (p. 31). While this sentence has often been read as an attack to Descartes, Zöller was the first to point out that it could be better understood in relation to Kant’s theory of apperception. Zöller states that Kant had in mind the problem regarding “how the spontaneous actively thinking ‘I’ can be the same subject as the subject whose states passively ‘appear’ in inner sense” (p. 35) but he argues at the same time that the philosopher had the resources to weaken Lichtenberg’s argument about the necessity of conceiving a non-thinking I. Kitcher tries to supplement Zöller’s reading, who thought that Kant could “avoid the Lichtenbergian paradox of an ‘I’ that is not an I [...], but does not answer the underlying problem of differentiating a thinking subject” (p. 35). In the latter’s vision, Kant’s answer was thus only partial. On the other hand, Kitcher argues that Kant gave a satisfactory reply to Lichtenberg, because he demonstrated, in the second Transcendental Deduction, that thought “requires a conscious combination of concepts in judgments that produces both the indissoluble unity of thoughts and the indissoluble togetherness of diverse representations in a single self-consciousness” (p. 48).

The third contribution by Claude Piché is entitled “Modal Concepts in Kant’s Transcendental Discourse”. Here the author deals with the connection between the transcendental discourse, i.e., the discourse through which we analyze the conditions of *possibility* of experience, and the Postulates of Empirical Thought, where Kant thematizes the application of modal concepts to objects of experience as their only legitimate use. The question is thus the following: “how could the modal categories [...] have meaning relative to a philosophical discourse that precisely rises over these objects and events and defines the rules of their application?” (p. 51). In this paper Piché analyzes the status of modal concepts within transcendental discourse following these three points: 1) Experience in its possibility; 2) Experience from the standpoint of its necessity, but also its contingency; 3) Experience from the point of view of its existence. The

overall result of this analysis lies in the acknowledgment that, contrary to dogmatic metaphysics, transcendental discourse never loses touch with experience, even when it is removed from the latter. This means that modal concepts which are at work in the philosopher's reflection on the conditions of experience "have a cognitive meaning only if they comply, *mutatis mutandis*, with the rules that this discourse assigns them in their application to experience" (*Ibidem*).

The fourth contribution, "Can Practical Reason be Artificial" by Dieter Schönecker turns away from the more "classical" issues connected to transcendental philosophy in order to analyze the problem of the relation between practical rationality, in a Kantian sense, and artificial intelligence. The author's goal is to demonstrate that practical reason *cannot* be artificial, because the former "comes along with moral feeling that computers cannot have" (p. 71). The cogency of this argument would lie in the recognition of the indispensability for practical reason to possess moral feelings. According to the author, this is evidently the case in Kant's moral discourse, because "*it is through the feeling of respect that we cognize the validity or binding character of the moral law*" (p. 76). In other words, even if moral law does not depend on the feeling of respect for its validity, it nevertheless requires the latter in order to be categorically binding for the empirical subject. Thus, if we assume that computers really have no feelings – and, so far, there seems to be no real reason to argue otherwise, even if Schönecker recognizes the problem (see p. 81) – they must be excluded from the sphere of a Kantian account of practical rationality.

The following two chapters then deal with the problem of freedom in the light of the problematic relation between Kant's critical philosophy and his anthropology. In the fifth contribution, "The Eye of True Philosophy", Robert B. Loudon's goal is to demonstrate that, within Kant's system, anthropology is not merely a dispensable appendix, as most of the literature seems to argue, but rather the "true eye" of transcendental philosophy (p. 86). What he means is that only this "second eye" of anthropology can account for what Kant calls "philosophy in the cosmopolitan sense", i.e., a philosophy that "requires reflection on what it means to be a human being and on humanity's place in the universe" (p. 98). Only through the inspection of anthropology can philosophy thus acquire

“dignity” and “inner worth” (*Ibidem*) in relation to humans’ interests and ends as finite rational beings.

The contribution “Kant am Pregelflusse. Site and Systematicity in the Preface of the *Anthropology*” by Susan M. Shell is also an attempt to defend the value and the function of anthropology within Kant’s system, focusing in particular on the Preface of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Regard*. Shell’s main point is to demonstrate that, in his late thinking about anthropology, Kant tries to articulate in a rather differently than he did in his previous studies the relation between “general” (i.e., philosophical) and “local” (i.e., empirical) knowledge. General knowledge cannot be established *before* local knowledge but, “[i]f anthropology as a formal science is to be possible at all, local and general knowledge must arise, at least initially, in tandem” (p. 126). This means that it is possible to draw a stronger relation than it is commonly assumed between human’s empirical location in space and time and general, i.e., philosophical knowledge. Referring to a famous example given in the Second Analogy of Experience, Shell notes that “Kant’s location on a city of islands, surrounded by streams of water following in one constant direction, seems to have fostered both his early discoveries as to the relativity of motion and rest [...] as well as bringing the law of causality into concrete focus” (p. 127).

In “Kant’s Philosophy of Religion – A Provocation to the Historical Religions” Bernd Dörflinger deals with the problematic relation between rational religion and historical religions in the context of the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Opposing to a traditional line of interpretation, Dörflinger argues that no conciliation is possible between the two, because rational religion “recognizes no outer – that is, irrational – duties, which Kant calls statutory, but only the same duties that human beings have with respect to other humans” (p. 136). Historical religions, on the contrary, are not “derived from concepts of practical reason a priori; rather, they lay claim to theoretical experience of revelation” (p. 137). In a rather provocative way, Dörflinger then ends his paper by stating that rational religion “confronts these religions [i.e., historical religions] with their ends” (p. 145), because our goal as rational beings is to strive in the direction of the realization of a pure practical religion, which has no need to root its commands on revelations or external laws.

The contribution “Hume and Kant on Utility, Freedom, and Justice” by Paul Guyer is the last concerning Kant’s philosophy. The author here addresses the relation between Hume’s and Kant’s ethics with particular focus on the problem of justice. Guyer’s goal is to demonstrate that, with regard to the normative dimension, no great difference exists between the two proposals, contrary to one might expect. On the one side, Hume’s utilitarianism does not completely set aside the issue concerning freedom. The point is that human’s happiness, as a goal of a utilitarian view of justice, is strengthened by a *free* interaction between human beings, because “happiness is best served by greater rather than lesser freedom to use our resources as we please” (p. 152). On the other side, Kant’s duty-based ethics is not unrelated to the question of happiness. Pure practical reason does not demand to totally abandon the pursuit of happiness, but rather it “constrains” it “by the requirement of interpersonal consistency” (p. 156). Guyer then concludes his paper arguing that, rather than lying in the mere normative aspect of justice, the main difference between Kant and Hume resides in their development of the relation between citizens and rulers. While for Hume it is possible for the citizens to resist and, eventually, overthrow a despotic government which does not fulfill its tasks of maximizing common happiness, for Kant there is no rational right to physically withstand ruler’s power besides the right of petition and criticism.

The contribution by Marco Ivaldo, “Reading Fichte Today. The Prospect of a Transcendental Philosophy” is the first of the three papers devoted to Fichte. The author begins with a brief presentation of Zöllner’s position regarding the status of transcendental philosophy, which, according to the latter, can be seen as a sort of “metametaphysics”. In other words, it is an “emended metaphysics” that “recasts the old question of metaphysics as to the forms and principles of being into the question concerning the conditions for the possibility of *knowledge* about the forms and principles of being” (p. 169). Ivaldo elaborates on this issue, focusing in particular on the development that Fichte attributes to the meaning of transcendental philosophy in order to reconcile Kant’s division between theoretical and practical reason. Fichte’s attempt is to show that freedom is not merely a practical postulate, but the true principle of transcendental philosophy itself. Fichte’s

science of knowing thus reveals itself to be not a merely *theory* of knowing, but a true *praxis* of reason, through which it is possible to overcome the dualism between things-in-themselves and appearances, between being and knowledge, between life and philosophy.

In her “Fichte’s Original Presentation of the Foundational Principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*” Marina F. Bykova focuses mainly on the *method* of Fichte’s *Grundlage*. In particular, her aim is to explain the meaning and the function of what the philosopher calls his “synthetic method”, arguing that the latter is different from Kant’s one. Indeed, for Fichte “the goal of the synthetic act lies not in the unification of the manifold of a given intuition, but rather in *connecting* the two elements posited in opposition to each other and unifying itself with its own differentiation” (pp. 196-197). In Fichte’s system “synthesis” thus does not simply mean the static unification of a manifold, but rather a *dialectical* process by which we progressively synthesize arising contradictions “leading from less sophisticated conceptions or views to more sophisticated ones” (p. 198). When we solve a contradiction, we must introduce a new concept, “which eventually gives rise to a new synthesis that, in turn, grounds a new one, and so one” (p. 199). Thus, rather than conceiving dialectic as something that cannot count as real knowledge (as Kant did), Fichte argues that the dialectical procedure by which we solve contradictions with synthesis “is not only possible, but it is also necessary and grounded in the original act of the I itself” (p. 201).

The last contribution of the volume by David James is entitled “The Idea of Universal Monarchy in Fichte’s Practical Philosophy”. After having presented the main features of Fichte’s idea of a universal monarchy in some of his political writings, James’ main goal is to analyze the relationship “between the idea of universal monarchy and Fichte’s philosophical system” (p. 207). The author argues that a possible connection can be found between Fichte’s philosophical-political proposal and his theory of drive to absolute self-sufficiency developed in his *Sittenlehre* of 1798. The drive inscribed in the desire to create a universal monarchy through constant territorial expansion is therefore conceived as a drive to absolute self-sufficiency that has no lawful, i.e., moral, form. This is the case of the so called “extraordinary human beings”, such as Napoleon, who are also willing to “act

in opposition to the maxim of one's own happiness by exposing themselves to the dangers and enduring hardships associated with the pursuit of [their] aim" (p. 222). On the other hand, a drive that is limited and guided by a moral norm curbs the expansionist's aim of rulers who aspire to subjugate other territories. In political terms, this lawful drive can be expressed by the idea of a "economic self-sufficiency", as opposed to an absolute self-sufficiency.

As can be seen, the variety of contributions offered makes this volume particularly dynamic and insightful. It can thus be regarded as a very useful tool for delving into the crucial problem of the relationship between system and freedom in Kant's and Fichte's thoughts from very different standpoints. In addition to the first contributions, in which the theoretical-systematic results of the Kantian formulation of the relationship between these two terms are effectively analyzed for the most part, the following chapters do in fact attempt to highlight how this question has important practical implications, which deserve to be further analyzed, even for our contemporary world. I think, however, that a possible limitation of the volume lies in the asymmetry of the contributions, eight of which are devoted to Kant and three only to Fichte. Given the fact that it is precisely in Fichte's thought that the question of the relationship between system and freedom assumes an explicit key role in philosophical exposition, it would perhaps have been desirable to devote more attention to this problem. Nevertheless, the volume edited by Basile and Lyssy can undoubtedly be considered as a collection of stimulating and valuable studies.