

Book Review

Strawson and Kant edited by H-J. Glock. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
2003.

Reviewed by Mathilde Jacobsen

Strawson and Kant is a collection of articles originally presented at the Kant Society's 1999 conference, which was dedicated to Strawson. The articles discuss issues related to Strawson's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the rise of interest in metaphysics started by Strawson's *Individuals*, and key issues in Strawson's analytic Kantianism. There are also articles in the collection which focus on just one of the two philosophers. The collection starts with a contribution by Strawson himself in which he describes the inspiration he has received from *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The collection demands a fair amount of knowledge of both Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and of Strawson's *Individuals*. Knowledge of the main debates sparked by Strawson's interpretation of Kant in *Bounds of Sense* and the debate of transcendental arguments sparked by *Individuals* will also be helpful, as none of these original arguments are spelled out in the articles. For readers familiar with these debates, however, I think the collection is an excellent source of new research on both Kant interpretation and Strawson's Kantian philosophy.

One of the themes which I found was especially well treated by articles in the collection is on the differences and similarities between the main concern of the projects of descriptive metaphysics in Kant and Strawson.

This topic is discussed especially by Glock and Bird's articles. Glock starts his article by sketching the development of Kantian thoughts from the 1920s to the publication of *Individuals*. In the second part of the article he defends Strawson's analytical Kantianism against some common criticisms. Firstly, he argues that Kant and Strawson's main concern in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in *Individuals* respectively are more similar than has often been thought. He argues that Kant's main concern is with defending metaphysical knowledge especially with regards to the possibility of the synthetic a priori. The sceptic Kant aims to answer, is therefore one who challenges metaphysical knowledge, and not one who challenges everyday empirical knowledge. In the same way, the sceptic

that Strawson answers in *Individuals*, challenges our conceptual scheme. Possible experience plays a role for Kant in the defence of metaphysical knowledge and this link between metaphysics and epistemology means that metaphysics comes to concern itself with cognition rather than reality. Glock compares this reading of the main concern in Kant with Strawson's concern with our conceptual scheme in *Individuals*. Secondly, Glock defends Strawson's dismissal of transcendental idealism and transcendental psychologism. Finally, he discusses transcendental arguments both in relation to Kant's use of transcendental expositions and proofs, and in relation to Strawson's transcendental arguments and Stroud's objection to them.

Bird discusses the differences between Kant and Strawson's projects of descriptive metaphysics with particular focus on the difference in their relation to scepticism. He offers an interpretation of Strawson's distinction between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics in terms of scepticism: descriptive metaphysics attempts to defend our beliefs against the challenge of the sceptic, revisionary metaphysics accepts the sceptic's challenge and aims to change our beliefs accordingly. Both forms of metaphysics are therefore concerned with the question of justification. In contrast, Bird argues that Kant's project starts with a level of pure description free of the question of justification. Kant's project is not aimed at scepticism but it can give an indirect answer to the sceptic by rejecting the system of empiricism in which the sceptical doubt is formulated. Bird also argues that the methodologies of the two projects are different in that Kant's is modelled on Euclidian geometry and Strawson's on empirical experience.

The collection also extensively discusses the issues raised by Strawson's use of transcendental arguments outside the framework of transcendental idealism. This debate was started by Stroud in 1968 with his paper on transcendental arguments. In this paper Stroud argued that transcendental arguments without the support of transcendental idealism could only establish conclusions about what we must necessarily believe, rather than about how the world must necessarily be. This led to the distinction between ambitious and modest transcendental arguments, where modest transcendental arguments accepted the limitations suggested by Stroud.

Grundmann and Misselhorn present an argument for the justification of perceptual beliefs and discuss whether it is a successful ambitious transcendental argument. They argue that whether the argument in question can be called a transcendental argument depends on whether its principal premise can be established *a priori* or *a posteriori*.

Stern is concerned with the relation between Strawson's early transcendental arguments and his later defence of these arguments in terms of naturalism. Stern looks in detail at two such arguments: the justification of induction and the argument for the existence of the external world. Stern argues that Strawson in fact makes a turn to naturalism in his later work which is not present in the origi-

nal presentation of the arguments. He further argues that naturalism is problematic and that it cannot help answer the objections which have been put to Strawson's original arguments. He concludes by suggesting answers to these objections which do not rely on naturalism, but rather stay loyal to the original arguments.

Hacker starts his article by sketching the rise and fall of the favour of metaphysics. He places Strawson's *Individuals* in this development as a reaction to logical positivism. He argues, however, that Strawson's descriptive metaphysics differ from traditional metaphysics in that it does not attempt to describe reality but rather our conceptual scheme. He characterises descriptive metaphysics as formulating expressions of *norms of representation*.

Another (related) question that arises from the use of transcendental methods without transcendental idealism is the interpretation we give of the synthetic a priori. Stroud discusses the synthetic a priori and the different understanding of it in Kant and in Strawson who rejects transcendental idealism. He sees both their projects as concerned with establishing judgments with a special status, that is judgments which are necessary. He argues that the identification of a necessary relation between certain conceptual capacities and other experiential capacities is open to Strawson independently of transcendental idealism. He compares this to a Humean naturalism. But he holds that if we have shown that certain conceptual necessities hold, then we cannot also, like Hume, hold that these beliefs are wrong. Rather they must have a special status which makes them 'invulnerable to philosophical unmasking'.

Cassam discusses a priori concepts. He distinguishes between derivationally and justificational a priority, and he argues that in attempting to separate transcendental arguments from transcendental idealism we need to come to terms with the idea that experience can be the source of a priori concepts.

Apart from these topics which I have singled out here, the collection also contains two articles on self-knowledge and the first person (Rosefeldt and de Gaynesford). It contains three articles focused on specific issues within Kant interpretation. Westphal discusses the role of transcendental reflection in Kant's inventory of our cognitive capacities. Allison discusses reflective judgments, that is the principle of formal purposiveness in nature and the deduction presented for this transcendental principle in the third Critique. Förster's article is on Kant's aesthetic judgment. The article by Hyman discusses the causal theory of perceptual belief defended by Grice and Strawson.

The collection contains some excellent articles on the similarities and differences between Kant and Strawson's projects as well as articles which bring the debate on transcendental philosophy and transcendental arguments up to date. It is not a collection which will give people their first ideas on the topic, but it is not meant to do so. It demands familiarity with the subject but for readers with an interest in either Kant or Strawson interpretation, or in the issues in analytic philosophy debated here, it is an excellent source of new and varied research.

Mathilde B. Jacobsen, Department of Philosophy, University College London.
Email: uctymbj@ucl.ac.uk.