Self-Consciousness and the Critique of the Subject: Hegel, Heidegger and the Poststructuralists by Simon Lumsden, New York, Columbia University Press 2014. ISBN 978-0-231-16822-9.

The nouns 'subjectivity' and 'the subject' sound clumsy in English. But philosophers persist in using them because they are not as bad as the other English words available for conveying an insight about what it is to have a thought and to be capable of action. This is the idea that thought and action, at least of the kind that mature human beings are capable of, are in some deep sense *down to them*; to the thinker of the thought or the doer of the action. Thoughts and actions require something that can relate to them as its own; something that can say of them that 'they are mine'.

The philosopher most famous for articulating this insight is Kant. In formulating it, he sought to avoid a series of what he regarded as fatal mistakes that his predecessors had succumbed to. First, it was important not to mistake the relation between thinker and thought, or agent and action, as the relation between a *substance* and its *properties*. A thought does not belong to a subject in the way, say, that the property of 'sweet-smelling' belongs to a burning candle. Subjectivity is not a set of features that belongs to a particular kind of entity, a 'subject'-substance, be it mental or physical. Second, it was important not to misunderstand the relation between thinker and thought, or agent and action, as a matter of *fact*, as something that can be discovered empirically and explained within the framework of natural science. Above all, this was because thoughts and actions, in being down to someone, are someone's responsibility. Some exercise of judgement stands behind them, and that makes them accountable to norms of how judgements ought to be made. But while thoughts and actions are therefore in some sense produced or *made* by a subject – they arise from *spontaneity*, as Kant called it - they are by no means all *made up*, at least in their mature, well-formed expression. Rather they are responsive to something given from the outside. A subject must not be mistaken for an object – as the first two ('realist') errors have it - but nor should it be mistaken as being *without* objects (which is the third, 'idealist' mistake).

In this way Kant arrived at a conception of the subject and self-consciousness that would provide the key reference point for the whole tradition of German Idealism. As Simon Lumsden shows in this admirable book, Kant's theory of the subject also provides a key for understanding the movement of thought that characterizes French poststructuralism. This is because of the way the poststructuralists – Derrida and Deleuze in particular – defined themselves in relation to Hegel. For the poststructuralists – themselves under the influence of Heidegger – Hegel's Absolute Idealism was not just problematically *centred* on subjectivity: it turned subjectivity and self-consciousness into a god that encompassed and held dominion over the whole of reality. The overcoming of this idolatry called for a 'critique of the subject' which would put philosophy back on track and equip it for more radical critical interventions than the Idealist tradition could muster. But while Lumsden is sympathetic to the poststructuralist impulse, he is dissatisfied with the reading of Hegel that prompts it. For what the poststructuralist reading of Hegel neglects is the Kantian structure of Hegel's theory of the subject, a structure which enables it to address at least some of the concerns about self-transparency and subject-

centredness that motivate the poststructuralist critique. Indeed, if we look into the matter more closely, Lumsden argues, we see that Hegel advances on the Kantian conception, especially in regard to Kant's problematic 'dualism' of 'concept and intuition', or as Lumsden more approximately puts it, 'mind' and 'world'. Viewed in light of its correction of the Kantian dualism of concept and intuition, Hegel's idealism appears not so much as the enemy the poststructuralists depict it to be, but as an ally, or friendly conversational partner at least, with which poststructuralists can productively engage. By reinterpreting Hegel as a non-metaphysical, essentially Kantian theorist of self-consciousness and subjectivity, Lumsden suggests, this missed opportunity for debate between philosophers in the Idealist and poststructuralist traditions can be recovered. The chapters on Derrida and Deleuze in the second half of Lumsden's book offer a template of how this debate might proceed.

In the course of presenting this case Lumsden provides detailed and illuminating discussions of Hegel's account of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the notoriously opaque account of subjectivity in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. There is also an analysis of Heidegger's account of care, conscience and authenticity in *Being and Time* and a more general discussion of Heidegger's reading of the history of philosophy and its influence. Lumsden is an accomplished and erudite interpreter of difficult philosophical texts and the scope of his sympathies is impressively immense - though it must be said that Heidegger tests even his patience.

This is a pity, since Heidegger the phenomenologist (as distinct from the historian of Being) is himself concerned to overcome distortions than can arise from a misunderstanding of the relation between the 'made' and the 'given' in experience which Kant seeks to capture in his distinction between concept and intuition. Heidegger, like Hegel, follows Kant in seeking to avoid naïve realisms that ignore the role of subjectivity and judgement in constituting knowledge, on the one hand, and subjective idealisms that leave the subject cut off or disengaged from the world, on the other. Like his Idealist predecessors he also seeks to achieve the latter by way of securing a non-conceptual, or as Lumsden calls it 'extraconceptual' (p. 90) component to experience. In Heidegger's case, this 'extraconceptual' content arises by way of embodied immersion in the world, and makes possible forms of 'pre-objective' understanding that not only need not be conceptualized, but in some cases cannot be conceptualized without distortion. The 'analytic of Dasein' that precedes the discussions of care, conscience and authenticity in *Being and Time* thus itself offers an opportunity for reassessing the Kantian dualism of concept and intuition which, according to Lumsden, both motivates Hegel's idealism and, contrary to the Heideggerian and poststructuralist readings, lends it its distinctive character.

If there is another Heidegger that can enrich the debate Lumsden seeks to reactivate, there is another Kant too. There are certainly many problematic dualisms in Kant, but is the distinction between concept and intuition among them? The instability of this distinction in Kant is a key premise of Lumsden's argument, since this is what gets the Idealist train going and it is where poststructuralism needs to return to if it is to get back on track. But as Lumsden himself goes out of his way to show, Kant by no means leaves concepts and intuitions dualistically separated from each other. That couldn't be further from the truth. Kant does maintain that these two components of experience are

irreducible to each other, and of course that they are analytically separable, but in Kant's view they are not separated in reality, indeed they could not be so. Kant's painstaking transcendental deduction is aimed at vindicating just this point. Recent sympathetic readings of Kant, most notably McDowell's, suggest that it is in virtue of the concept / intuition distinction that Kant does *not* dualistically separate 'mind' and 'world'. If both they and Lumsden are right, then the Idealist train need not have left the station.

While in Lumsden's narrative the concept/intuition distinction is the main theoretical issue that separates the German Idealists, especially Hegel, from the poststructuralists, it is not the only one. There is also the more general issue of the critical perspective these two traditions open up, and in particular their perspective on history. Here the parting of the ways may be genuine and not just based on mutual misunderstanding. For the post-structuralist – and one thinks here especially of Foucault – the Hegelian story of modern social and political institutions becoming what they are through a process of 'self-correcting Spirit' flies in the face of actual historical developments. Not only does it lack credibility, it immediately puts critique on the back foot, since it grants the status quo a *presumption* of rationality. Is the modern world entitled to that presumption? At this point we need to be joining a debate not just with Kantians, Hegelians and poststructuralists, but with Marx and the tradition of critical theory too.