

God and Embodiment in the *Opus postumum*

Kant's last, unfinished work, the *Opus postumum*, is as important as it is difficult. Kant claims that it completes his system and pays an unpaid bill left by his previous work; yet it remains in a partial, disordered state due to neglect after Kant's death. Eckart Förster, following Erich Adickes, did much work to articulate the place of this text within Kant's philosophy. Much, however, remains to be unpacked, in particular with regards to Kant's practical and religious thought therein. My current and future research is to provide the first full systematic reconstruction of the innovations that Kant developed at the end of his life. Three main areas comprise the undertaking.

1. Practical Embodiment: Kant spends much of the *Opus postumum* detailing what he refers to as "self-positing" [*Selbstsetzen*]. This focus on the body as a transcendently essential element in cognition is exciting and only partially explored in the literature. Kant, however, also refers to the importance of *practical* self-positing. This concept is yet to receive substantive detail. Why does the body suddenly come to prominence in Kant's thought? And in what way does it connect and augment Kant's *pure* ethics? Is it a result of engaging with Fichte's theory? Or did it organically arise out of immanent demands of his own theory?

2. Human Nature and Immortality: Related to our embodied nature, Kant explores human nature and the role it plays in unifying his system. Part of what it means to "self-posit" is to combine that which is theoretical (the world) with that which is practical (freedom and the moral law). But our access to the moral law, Kant thinks, defines our nature in a manner that goes well beyond the sensible and makes us, in his own words, "infinite" beings. How to understand our participation in infinity is not clear, however. In what sense are we infinite by virtue of being free beings? I've begun to explore the question of how to make sense of our moral or noumenal nature in a paper, "Kant and the Devil," in which I discuss Kant's references to evil and the Devil (as a fictitious entity), which he notes elucidate our own nature as persons and – in his words – as immortal beings.

3. God and the Highest Good: Connecting with my highest good project, I think it is overhasty to conclude, as some have, that the highest good is absent from the *Opus postumum*. Certainly, his earlier arguments are absent. But Kant refers to it repeatedly in the First Fascicle, as the "*summum bonum*." In line with my view of ideals playing a grounding role, Kant speaks in the work of the highest good as dwelling within us as a rational substrate. And drawing on practical self-positing, the highest good as a possible *world* remains very much in the picture since we must self-posit practically to realize it. And connected with questions of human nature, this means that we still have grounds for faith in God and an afterlife, albeit not as conditions to bring the highest good about, but rather as analytically following from the very fact that we come into the world with such an ideal inscribed in our hearts. Thus, the highest good, God, and immortality, do not disappear; rather they are all brought down closer to earth when considering our nature as both embodied and rational beings.