

Letter 5 (LXV)

21 February 1772

To Marcus Herz

Noble Sir,
Worthy Friend

If you are annoyed at my complete failure to answer your x 123 letters, you do me indeed no injustice. But, if you draw unpleasant inferences from my silence, I would wish to be able to appeal to your own knowledge of my character. Instead x 124 of any excuses, I shall briefly relate to you the way in which my thoughts have been occupied and thereby explain the decrement of my correspondence in my leisure hours. After your departure from Königsberg I once more examined in the intervals—so necessary to me—between business and relaxation, the project of the observations about which we had disputed. My intention was to harmonise this project with the whole of philosophy and the rest of knowledge, and to grasp its extent and limits. In distinguishing the sensible from the intellectual in ethics and in the fundamental principles springing from this distinction, I had already made quite considerable progress in the matter. I had also already long ago sketched to my moderate satisfaction the principles of feeling, taste and judgement, together with their effects: the pleasant, the beautiful and the good. I now proposed to myself the project of a work which could be entitled: *The Limits of Sensibility and Reason*. I conceived it as having two parts, a theoretical and a practical, the first part containing in two sections, 1. Phenomenology in general and 2. Metaphysics according to its nature and method; the second part containing also two sections: 1. General principles of feeling, taste and the sensible desires, 2. The first grounds of morality. While I was thinking out the full extent of the theoretical part and the reciprocal relations of its sections, I noticed that I was still lacking something essential which I, like others, had left out of consideration in my metaphysical enquiries, and which constituted, indeed, the key to the whole secret, the key to metaphysics which until

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then, had remained hidden to itself. I asked myself namely: on what basis rests the relation to the object of that which, in ourselves, we call representation? If the representation contains merely the way in which the subject is affected by the object, it is easy to understand how it corresponds to the object, as effect to cause, and how this determination of our mind can represent something, i.e. how it can have an object. The passive or sensible representations have therefore an understandable relation to objects; and the principles, derived from the nature of our soul, have an intelligible validity for all things, insofar as they are supposed to be objects of the senses. Similarly, if that in us, which is called representation, were active with respect to the object, i.e. if the object itself were produced by it, in the same way as divine knowledge is imagined as the prototype of things, the conformity of the representation to its object would be intelligible. The possibility, then, both of the archetypal intellect (*intellectus archetypus*) whose intuition is itself the ground of things, and of the derivative intellect (*intellectus ectypus*) which derives from sensible perfection the data for its logical treatment of things, is understandable at least.

But our understanding is not, by its representations, the cause of the object (except in the case of good intentions in ethics) nor is the object the cause of the representations of the understanding in the real sense (*in sensu reali*). The pure concepts of the understanding may not, therefore, be abstracted from the perceptions of the senses, nor may the sensitivity of the representations have expression through the senses, but must indeed have their source in the nature of the soul, though not in the sense that it is either caused by the object, or itself productive of the object. I was satisfied in the dissertation to express the nature of the intellectual representations in purely negative terms: namely that they were not modifications of the soul produced by the object. The problem, however, which I passed over in silence, is how, then, a representation which is related to an object can otherwise exist, without being affected

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by it in some way. I had said: the sensible representations represent things as they appear; the intellectual representations represent them as they are. But by what means are these things given to us, if it is not by the way they affect us; and if such intellectual representations rest on our inner activity, whence comes the agreement which they are supposed to have with objects, the objects not being originated by this activity; and whence is it that the axioms of pure reason concerning these objects agree with them, without this agreement being permitted to derive assistance from experience. This is relevant in mathematics, since the objects before us are only magnitudes and can only be represented as magnitudes, because we can produce their representations when we take one thing several times. Hence, the concepts of magnitude are self-active and their fundamental principles can be constituted a priori. But with regard to qualities the question is, how is the understanding to construct for itself entirely a priori concepts of things, with which the things are necessarily in agreement; how is the understanding to draw up real fundamental principles about their possibility, with which experience is necessarily in faithful agreement, and yet are independent of it;—this question always leaves behind an obscurity with respect to the faculty of our understanding: whence comes the agreement with things.

Plato accepted a past spiritual intuition of Divinity as the original source of the pure concepts of the understanding and of its fundamental principles. *Malbranche*²⁶ accepted a more permanent, continuous intuition of this Original Being. Various moralists have accepted just this with regard to the ultimate laws of morality. *Crusius*²⁸ accepted certain innate rules of judgement and certain concepts, as planted by God in the human soul so as to harmonise with things. The former of these systems could be called the Theory of Hyperphysical Influx; the latter, the Theory of Pre-established Intellectual Harmony.²⁷ But in determining the origin and validity of our knowledge, however, the *deus*

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ex machina is the most absurd argument one could choose. Apart from the vicious circle in the series of inferences from what we know, the argument has the further disadvantage of countenancing every whim and pious or speculative figment of the imagination.

While I was thus looking for the sources of intellectual knowledge, without which it is impossible to determine the nature and limits of metaphysics, I reduced this science to essentially different sections. I tried to reduce transcendental philosophy, namely all the concepts of completely pure reason, to a certain number of categories, but not in the way *Aristotle* did it. He placed them in his ten predicaments next to each other, merely approximately, as he found them. On the contrary, I tried to make the reduction in accordance with the way in which, by means of a few fundamental laws of the understanding, they divide themselves into classes. I shall not here go into a detailed explanation of the entire succession of enquiries, up to the final end. I can, however, say that, as far as the essential part of my intention is concerned, I have been successful. I am now in the position to present a critique of pure reason, containing the nature both of theoretical, as well as of practical knowledge, insofar as it is purely intellectual. I will first of all elaborate the first part containing the sources of metaphysics, its method and limits; after that, I will work out the pure principles of morality. As far as the first part is concerned, I shall publish within about three months.

In a mental occupation of such a delicate kind as this, nothing is a greater hindrance than being busily occupied with reflections lying outside the field of enquiry. In quiet or even happy moments the mind must be at all times without interruption open, but not strained, to the reception of any accidental remark that may offer itself. Encouragements and diversions must maintain the strength of the mind in resilience and nimbleness. Thus is one placed in the position to see the object at all times from different directions, and to extend one's range of vision from microscopic

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observation to a general view, so that one adopts all conceivable standpoints, each of which reciprocally verifies the optical judgement of the other. No other cause than this, my worthy friend, has held back my replies to your so pleasing letters. You did not seem to require that I write empty replies.

With regard to your little work, written with taste and deep reflection: it exceeded my expectation in many parts. But I cannot dilate upon it in detail for the reasons already mentioned. I will, however, say this much, my friend. The effect which undertakings of this kind, with regard to the state of the various branches of knowledge, has among the learned public, is such that these works would just as well be lost to the general benefit, whether they were published or were to remain for ever unknown. I often comfort myself with reflections of this kind, when I begin to worry about the largely completed plan of the most important, in my opinion, of my works, because indispositions threaten to interrupt its execution. For, to induce readers to take the trouble to reflect on one's writings, a writer of more distinction and eloquence is necessary.

I have found reviews of your book in the *Braunschweigische Zeitung*²⁸ and quite recently in the *Göttingische Zeitung*.²⁹ If the general public judges the spirit and chief intention of a book like this, then all effort is lost. If the reviewer has taken the trouble to see what the essentials of the effort were, even blame is more pleasing to the author than praise arising from a superficial evaluation. The Göttingen reviewer dwells on certain non-essential applications of the system, with respect to which I have myself made some alteration, but only because this contributed something still further to the chief intention. A letter from *Mendelssohn* or *Lambert* is more effective in bringing the author back to the examination of his doctrines, than ten such lightly written assessments. The good pastor *Schulz*,³⁰ the best philosophic mind that I know in this region, has understood the intention of the system well. I hope he may occupy himself with

your little work as well. In his judgement there are two misconceived interpretations of the system, lying before him. The first is that space may perhaps be a true intellectual intuition, and thus something objective, rather than the pure form of sensible appearance. The obvious answer is: for this very reason, space is declared not to be objective and therefore not intellectual either; for, when we completely analyse its representation, we conceive in it neither a representation of things (since they can only exist in space), nor a real connection (which cannot occur in the absence of things); namely, not an effect, nor relations as grounds; and consequently we have no representation at all of a thing, nor of something real inhering in the things. Therefore we conclude that space is nothing objective. The second misunderstanding brings him to an objection that has drawn me into considerable reflection, for it seems to be the most essential objection which can be raised against the system, and which will naturally occur to everyone, and which Herr *Lambert* made against me.³⁰ The objection is as follows: changes are real (according to the evidence of the inner sense); now they are only possible under the assumption of time. Thus, time is something real, attached to the determinations of things in themselves. Why (I said to myself) does one not reason in accordance with this argument as follows:—bodies are real (according to the evidence of the external senses); now bodies are only possible on the presupposition of space; thus space is something objective and real inherent in things themselves. The reason is this: since one probably notices that with respect to external things one cannot infer from the reality of representations to the reality of objects; but, with respect to the inner sense, thought or the existence of thoughts is one and the same with myself. Herein lies the key to this difficulty: there is no doubt that I ought not to think of my own state under the form of time, and that, therefore, the form of inner sensibility does not give me the appearance of change. Now, that change is something real, I deny as little as that bodies are

something real, although I simply understand by that merely that something real corresponds to the appearance. I cannot even say: the inner appearance changes, for by what means would I observe this change, if it did not appear to my inner sense. Should anyone wish to assert that it follows from this that everything in the world is objective and in itself unchangeable, I would reply: they are neither changeable nor unchangeable, as *Baumgarten*³¹ says in paragraph 18 of his *Metaphysica*:³² 'What is absolutely impossible is neither hypothetically possible nor impossible, for it cannot be regarded under any condition at all'. Similarly: the things of the world are, objectively or in themselves, neither in one and the same state at different times nor in a different state; for, in this sense, they are not represented at all in time. But enough of this. It seems that one finds no hearing with merely negative propositions. One must construct something in the place of that which one has destroyed; or at least, when one has disposed of the climata, one must make the pure insight of the understanding dogmatically intelligible and indicate its limits. I am occupied with this task, and this is the reason why, often against my intention, I withhold the leisure hours allowed me by my very changing constitution for reflection from the answering of friendly letters, but surrender myself to the natural tendency of my thoughts. Surrender, then, your right over me of retaliation by withholding from me your letters because you find me so negligent in replying. Just as I reckon with your continuous affection and friendship towards me, so can you always retain mine with reassurance. Should you be satisfied with short replies, you will not lack them in the future. The assurance of honest sympathy must take the place of formalities between us. As a sign of your sincere reconciliation I await a pleasant letter from you in the immediate future. Fill it with news, which will not be lacking to you, being as you are in the seat of learning; and pardon the freedom with which I make this request. Greet Herr *Mendelssohn* and Herr *Lambert* from me, and Herr *Sulzer*

as well, and present any apologies with similar reasons to those I have given you. Be always my friend as I am yours,

I. Kant.

Königsberg, 21 February 1772.

Letter 6 (LXXI)

Towards the end 1773

To Marcus Herz

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Most worthy friend,

I am pleased to receive news of the good progress of your efforts, and I am still more pleased to see the tokens of your kind remembrance and friendship in the letter you sent me. The exercise in the practical side of pharmacutics, under the guidance of an adept teacher, is certainly in accordance with my wish. The churchyard must not in the future be filled until the young doctor learns the method of rightly tackling the practical side. Make plenty of observations. Theories are here, as elsewhere, more often concerned with conceptual clarification than with the disclosure of natural phenomena. *Maabridge*'s³³ systematic pharmacutics (I think it will already be familiar to you) pleased me very well in this respect. I feel much better on the whole now than I did before; the reason being that I now know better what does not suit me. Because of my sensitive nerves medicine is, without exception, poison for me. The only medicine that I use, and that only rarely, if acidity troubles me in the morning, is half a teaspoonful of quinine with water. I find this much better than any absorbents. Apart from this, I have given up the daily use of this medicinal, in the intention of toughening myself. This very medicine produced an intermittent pulse, especially towards evening. This made me rather worried until I suspected the reason, and, having given it up, the complaint ceased immediately. Do study the great variety of natures. Every surgeon who was not a philosopher would throw mine to the winds.