

Kant's Metaphysics Lectures (Steve Naragon) [4136 words]

The notes from Kant's lectures on metaphysics (Ak 28:5-962, 29:747-1040; CELM) are an invaluable resource for understanding Kant's published works. They provide a decades-long philosophical context for his writings, a forum in which Kant directly confronts many ideas and problems discussed in his day but left unaddressed in his writings, and all this in a relatively accessible manner — he was lecturing, after all, to college students. The thirty-year span of these notes also offers an excellent survey of Kant's intellectual development. They are, in short, an invaluable study-tool, although we need to be clear about what they are and are not — namely, they are not Kant's own lecture notes, but rather the work of students writing them down in class with varying degrees of completeness and understanding. Many different students were taking notes, especially after 1770, and the vagaries and accidents of time have left us material from thirteen of these sets.

The student notes are of interest insofar as they give us insight into what Kant actually said in the lectures. It would be even more useful to have Kant's own lecture notes, and it turns out that we actually have something like that in the *Holstein-Beck* notes for the physical geography lectures (which is a direct copy of his own notes), and in a more edited fashion in Kant's published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) for the anthropology lectures. But the closest that we have of this for the metaphysics lectures are Kant's various "Reflections" published in volumes 17-18 of the Academy edition. Not all of those reflections concern his lecturing activity, of course, but many do, primarily those written in the textbook from which he lectured — his 4th edition copy of A. G. Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* (1757) that was bound with interleaved blank sheets for receiving such notes. Apart from the occasional instance where a reflection appears in a set of student notes, however, we should assume that Kant did not read from a prepared text while lecturing; all of the accounts indicate that he spoke freely, using the textbook and his notes merely as points of occasional reference. And so while the reflections are an excellent resource for understanding the lectures (and his published writings), they are for the most part quite fragmentary and certainly give us nothing of the scope or continuity that the student notes provide.

These student notes are an imperfect record of what Kant actually said, but they are the best that we have and they present a compelling account. In what follows, I will briefly discuss (1) the available notes on metaphysics, (2) the metaphysics lectures being given at Königsberg, (3) the order of Kant's lectures and their relation to the Baumgarten text, and (4) how the metaphysics lectures are related to certain other of his lectures.

(1) Overview of the notes. We know of seventeen sets of notes from Kant's metaphysics lectures, with thirteen available at least in part. Of these thirteen, three (*Pölitz 1*, *Korff*, *Rosenhagen*) appear to be copies of a common set of notes, *von Schön 3* (unpublished) is a near-verbatim fragment of *von Schön 2*, and *Willudovius* (unpublished) exists only as forty scattered lines of text copied out by Adickes in the early 20th century, thus bringing the effective number of distinct sets of notes down to nine.

Of the nine, three have been preserved almost in their entirety (*Herder*, *Mrongovius*, *Dohna-Wundlacken*) and the other six as large fragments. The lectures of origin range over thirty years, from 1762-64 (*Herder*) to 1794/95 (*Vigilantius*). Nearly all have been published in the Academy edition (vols. 28-29), and a majority have been translated into English (CELM). A much more detailed account of the notes (and of other matters surrounding the lectures) is available online ("Kant in the Classroom," www.manchester.edu/kant).

Name	Date of Lecture	Printed in the AA	What is Extant	Notes on the Text
<i>Herder</i>	1762-64	MH, 28:5-55, 137-38, 143-60, 843-931	Ms (138 pp).	Missing end of Cos and beginning of EP.
<i>Pölitz 1</i> group (<i>Korff</i>) (<i>Rosenhagen</i>)	c.1777-80	ML1, 28:185-91, 195-350 ML1, 28:171-91, 1471, 1518-27 ML1, 28:171-91	Fragments in Pölitz, Erdmann, Arnoldt, Heinze.	Missing most of the Ont.
<i>Mrongovius</i>	1782/83	MM, 29:747-940	Ms (239 pp).	Complete, except for a missing section from Ont, and no NT.
<i>Volckmann</i>	1784/85	MVo, 28:355-459	Ms (110 pp).	Prol, Ont, RP and first

				part of NT.
<i>von Schön 2/3</i>	c.1789-91	MvS, 28:463-524	Ms (94 pp).	Prol and Ont only.
<i>Pölitz 3.2</i>	c.1790/91	ML2, 28:531-610	Ms (55 pp), fragments in Pölitz, Heinze.	Almost no Prol, Cos, very short EP/RP.
<i>Königsberg</i>	c.1791/92	MK2, 28:705-816	Fragments in Arnoldt, Heinze, Schlapp, Kowalewski.	Missing most of the Prol, Ont, Cos, EP.
<i>Dohna</i>	1792/93	MD, 28:615-702	Ms (185 pp).	Complete.
<i>Vigilantius</i>	1794/95	MVi, 28:821-34, 837-38 MVi, 29:945-1040	Ms copy (200 pp).	Prol, Ont; missing nearly all of Cos and NT, and two-thirds of EP and RP.

Table 1: Available notes from Kant's lectures on metaphysics.

Key: **Prol** (prolegomena), **Ont** (ontology), **Cos** (cosmology), **EP** (empirical psychology), **RP** (rational psychology), **NT** (natural theology); **Arnoldt** (Emil Arnoldt, "Zur Beurtheilung von Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* und Kant's *Prolegomena*. No. 4 und No. 5. Charakteristik von Kant's Vorlesungen über Metaphysik und möglichst vollständiges Verzeichniss aller von ihm gehaltener oder auch nur angekündigter Vorlesungen" in *Altpreußische Monatsschrift*, 29 (1892): 400-46, 465-564), **Erdmann** (Benno Erdmann, "Eine unbeachtet gebliebene Quelle zur Entwicklungsgeschichte Kants" in *Philosophische Monatshefte* 19 (1883): 129-44; "Mittheilungen über Kant's metaphysischen Standpunkt in der Zeit um 1774" in *Philosophische Monatshefte* 20 (1884): 65-97), **Heinze** (Max Heinze, *Vorlesungen Kants über Metaphysik aus drei Semestern*, Leipzig 1894), **Kowalewski** (Arnold Kowalewski, *Die philosophischen Hauptvorlesungen Immanuel Kants. Nach den aufgefundenen Kollegheften des Grafen Heinrich zu Dohna-Wundlacken*, München and Leipzig 1924), **Pölitz** (Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*, ed. by Karl Pölitz, Erfurt 1821), **Schlapp** (Otto Schlapp, *Kants Lehre vom Genie und die Entstehung der "Kritik der Urteilskraft"*, Göttingen 1901).

The metaphysics notes as published in volumes 28-29 of the Academy edition of Kant's collected writings suffer from various editorial and transcriptional problems, some quite serious. Many of these problems are discussed in Naragon (2000) with a more complete account in Naragon (2006-, <http://www.manchester.edu/kant/Notes/notesIntro.htm>), which includes discussion of all of the student notes from Kant's lectures. See these two sources especially when using *Herder* and *Mrongovius* for help with the proper ordering of the text.

Herder (1762-64). Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) wrote these notes, a collection of loose sheets of papers, sets of folded sheets forming signatures of varying length, and passages from two bound notebooks that also include poems and other miscellanea. These notes are grouped into thirteen sets based on similarity of format and content that range in length from 1 to 42 pages, for a total of 138 manuscript pages. They are without question the closest to Kant's actual lectures, with some almost certainly written down in the classroom (all other notes we have are clean copies prepared outside the classroom, and some of these are copies of copies). This is the third longest set of metaphysics notes (after *Mrongovius* and the *Pölitz 1* group). Apart from their importance as our only notes from the 1760s, they include strong discussions on ontology and psychology, and some discussion of each of the four parts of the Baumgarten text. Of all the notes, these hew most closely to Baumgarten (often with the relevant paragraph numbers inserted), and while it is important to be familiar with Baumgarten when using any of the notes, this is especially true with *Herder*, as one will otherwise not recognize when Kant paraphrases Baumgarten, when he silently amends him, and when he adds something altogether new.

Pölitz 1 group (c.1777-80). These three sets of notes (*Pölitz 1*, *Korff*, *Rosenhagen*) appear to share a common ancestor and so are grouped together. *Pölitz 1*, so named because it was published by Pölitz (1821), lacked a prolegomena (what we have comes from *Rosenhagen*); the cosmology, psychology, and natural theology sections were published and the manuscript portion subsequently lost; the ontology section was still available for inspection by Heinze (1894) and Adickes (1926) before being lost during World War II. *Korff* was used by Erdmann (1883, 1884), Arnoldt (1892) and Heinze before it was destroyed during the bombing of Königsberg (August 29/30, 1944). *Rosenhagen* was studied by Heinze and then was lost in the bombing of Hamburg (July 1943).

The extant notes are second in length only to *Mrongovius*, and the original notes would have surpassed *Mrongovius* (about three-fourths of the ontology notes are lost). These notes are most valuable for their discussion of empirical and rational psychology and natural theology, and are of special interest as they originate from lectures just prior to the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Mrongovius (1782/83). Christoph Coelestin Mrongovius (1764-1855) wrote these notes, which were only recently discovered and published in the Academy edition (1983). They constitute our longest set of extant notes, and are fairly complete except there is no natural theology and the ontology suffers a few gaps. The notes closely parallel *Volckmann*.

Volckmann (1784/85). Johann Wilhelm Volckmann (1766-1836) wrote these notes, which now consist of seven unbound signatures. They are neatly written and form an excellent discussion that often complements the gaps in *Mrongovius*. A number of signatures have gone missing, leaving gaps in the latter part of the ontology, all of the cosmology and empirical psychology, and perhaps the first page of the discussion on rational psychology; a second gap is at the very end of the notes, where the latter half of the natural theology is missing.

Von Schön (c.1789-91). Heinrich Theodor von Schön (1773-1856), the later president of Prussia, was the author of these notes, which are limited to the prolegomena and ontology.

Pölitz 3.2 (c.1790/91). The (one-page) prolegomena and ontology of these notes were published by Pölitz (1821) and those pages have since gone missing, but the remainder of the manuscript is extant, bound in a volume with a set of notes from Kant's logic lectures. For whatever reason, the notes on cosmology concern only the beginning of that section, and the psychology notes are highly abbreviated (more complete accounts are available in *Königsberg* and *Dohna*). These notes are primarily on ontology, with a somewhat shorter section on natural theology.

Königsberg (c.1791/92). These notes were studied and copied — by Arnoldt (1892), Heinze (1894), Schlapp (1901), and Kowalewski (1924) — up until World War II when they were lost during the 1944 bombing of Königsberg. Their original length was comparable to *Mrongovius*, and about 40% has been preserved in the above publications, primarily material from the rational psychology and natural theology, the latter being our best notes from the 1790s. There are close resemblances to passages in *Dohna*.

Dohna (1792/93). Our most complete — although not the longest — set of notes come from Count Heinrich Ludwig Adolph zu Dohna-Wundlacken (1777-1843), an aristocrat who likely had the help of a tutor in preparing the notes (he also left notes from Kant's lectures on anthropology, logic, and physical geography). These notes are unique in being divided by the lecture-hour, and only rarely have content headings drawn from Baumgarten. Of particular interest is Kant's comment, at the end of the ontology section, that “we have up to now expounded the ontology dogmatically, i.e., without looking to see from where these a priori propositions arise — we now want to treat them critically” (MD, 28:650), followed by a six page “Critical Treatise of Transcendental Philosophy.”

Vigilantius (1794/95). Johann Friedrich Vigilantius (1757-1823) was a non-traditional auditor — he was already serving as Kant's legal advisor and would have been in his mid-30's when he sat in on the lectures (he also took notes from the physical geography, logic, and moral philosophy lectures). The original set of notes were by far the longest of all the known sets, but all that remains now is a copy prepared in 1883 by Rudolf Reicke, and about two-thirds of that copy has been lost.

(2) Metaphysics lectures at Königsberg. Kant lectured on metaphysics during his very first semester as a *Privatdozent* (winter semester 1755/56), and with few exceptions lectured continuously every semester until his promotion to the chair of logic and metaphysics, which required that he lecture publicly (that is, free of charge to the students) on metaphysics every winter semester and on logic every summer semester. He appears to have given private lectures on metaphysics only twice more (during summer 1771 and winter 1771/72), after which he gave only the annual public lectures on that subject (he continued to give private lectures on other subjects, of course). Our data are not entirely firm, especially for the early years, but it appears that he lectured on metaphysics 53 times (second in frequency only to logic, which he gave 56 times).

Given Kant's stature in the history of ideas, it is easy to forget that he was just one instructor of many at the university in Königsberg, and that he taught his first fifteen years as an unsalaried lecturer (*Privatdozent*)

alongside a fluctuating number of other lecturers, a few associate professors (Hahn, Watson, Buck), and the eight full professors that made up the philosophy faculty (what today might be called the “college of arts and sciences” — only two of which were assigned to lecture on philosophy: the professor of logic and metaphysics and the professor of practical philosophy). There were from 250 to 350 students enrolled at the university at any given time in those years, and while many took courses on logic and metaphysics as part of their preparatory studies for theology, law, or medicine, Kant was by no means the only person offering lectures on metaphysics, and those he gave cost the students 4 reichsthaler per semester (the annual living expenses for a student were around 60 reichsthaler, so these lecture fees were not trivial). In these early years Kant was competing with the free public lectures given by the full professor of logic and metaphysics (J. D. Kypke until 1759, and then F. J. Buck until the summer semester of 1770), as well as the private lectures given by other instructors (Daniel Weymann from 1759-75 and A. W. Wlochatius from 1769-95) and by full professors who lectured privately on subjects outside their salaried position, such as the full professor of practical philosophy, K. A. Christiani, F. J. Buck (after he became the professor of mathematics in 1770), Christian Flottwell (who held a temporary professorship in German rhetoric), and M. F. Watson (an associate professor of poetry).

Everyone was required to lecture from an approved textbook, although the records only occasionally note the textbook used. Kant appears to have begun with Alexander Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* (1739, with later editions in 1743, 1750, 1757, etc.), and then changed to a less-demanding textbook by F. C. Baumeister (*Institutiones metaphysicae*, 1738, etc.) for a few semesters before returning to Baumgarten, which he then used exclusively until his retirement in the middle of the summer semester of 1796, nearly forty years all told. Both Baumeister and Baumgarten were Wolffians and their textbooks were written in the same rationalist metaphysical tradition, and followed the same four-part order of content.

J. D. Kypke was using the Baumeister text when Kant began his lecturing career. Matthias Watson, the associate professor of poetry, lectured privately on Baumgarten's metaphysics during the summer of 1756, and then changed to Baumeister the same term as Kant. Buck (who possibly taught the heaviest load of all these professors) appears to have used a text by Knutzen (under whom both Buck and Kant had studied in the early 1740s) before adopting one by C. A. Crusius, a leading Pietist critic of Wolff. So much for the academic context of the lectures.

(3) The order of Kant's lectures and their relation to the Baumgarten text. The organization of the metaphysics lectures follows Baumgarten's four part structure, the content of which is divided into 1000 paragraphs: ontology (§§4-350), followed by the “special metaphysics” of cosmology (§§351-500), psychology (§§501f.) — consisting of empirical (§§504-739) and rational psychology (§§740-99) — and natural theology (§§800-1000). These four parts are distinguished by their object of study: being in general, the world, the soul, and God. Baumgarten's brief three-paragraph prolegomena introducing the metaphysics (§§1-3) became in the notes a more expansive conceptual and historical introduction, and while Kant presumably always lectured on all four parts of the Baumgarten text, the notes vary considerably in how fully they represent these parts and often they are incomplete (e.g., *von Schön* has notes only on the prolegomena and ontology, *Mrongovius* lacks notes on natural theology).

Kant introduced a rather different arrangement for his metaphysics lectures in his *Announcement for the Winter Semester 1765-66*, where the sequence was to be: empirical psychology, cosmology, ontology, rational psychology, natural theology (Pr, 2:308-9 [1765]/CETP70:295). Presumably Kant followed this plan during that winter semester, and perhaps during other semesters as well, but we have no evidence of him following such a sequence in any of the extant notes. *Herder* preceded this announcement by a few years and appears to follow the sequence of topics as found in Baumgarten, as do all the notes that come later.

The Baumgarten ontology is divided into chapters on the internal general and disjunctive predicates of things, and the external and relational predicates of things. The cosmology has three chapters on the concept, parts, and perfection of the world. The psychology is divided into empirical and rational psychology, with the former concerned with the existence of the soul, the cognitive and appetitive faculties, pleasure and displeasure, and spontaneity, will, and freedom, while rational psychology is concerned with the nature of the human soul, the three systems for understanding soul/body interaction, the origin of the human soul, its immortality, its state after death, and the nature of animal souls and disembodied spirits. The natural theology is divided into chapters on the concept (existence, intellect, will) and actions (creation of the world, providence, divine decrees, and revelation)

of God. Ameriks provides a useful overview of these topics and the extent to which they appear in the *Critique of Pure Reason* [CELM:xvii-xviii].

Kant lectured on these topics for the entirety of his philosophical career, and reading the notes reminds us of how deeply Kant was steeped in the German rationalist metaphysics of his day. That Kant continued lecturing on Baumgarten's textbook long after working out his own critical system suggests that he did not reject this metaphysics in its entirety (see, for instance, Karl Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, 1992, pp. 249-79; Eric Watkins, "Kant on Rational Cosmology," in Watkins, ed., *Kant and the Sciences*, Oxford 1997, pp. 70-89; Desmond Hogan, "Kant's Copernican Turn and the Rationalist Tradition," in Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2010, pp. 21-40; Corey Dyck, *Kant and Rational Psychology*, Oxford 2014). Certain doctrines he rejected from the earliest lectures, while others he retained in the critical philosophy as regulative or descriptive features of the phenomenal self and world. From the very earliest Herder notes we find Kant modifying and otherwise arguing with Baumgarten, but there is also quite a lot that is simple paraphrase and elaboration.

Kant remarked at the end of his teaching career that his emerging critical system made its way into his lectures of the 1770s (Hippel, 12:361), and we do see this occurring in the notes, such as in the expanded prolegomena section that could constitute up to a fifth of the entire set of notes (as in *Mrongovius* and *Volckmann*), or in the introductions to the ontology that Kant included just before turning to the topics in Baumgarten (cf. *Pölitiz 1*, ML1, 28:185-91, and also Kant's letter to Herz from 15 December 1778: "I especially would like to procure for you the 'prolegomena' and 'ontology' of my metaphysics, following my new lectures, in which the nature of this knowing or reasoning is explained far better than before," Briefe, 10:246). Kant could have written his own metaphysics textbook, one devoted entirely to expounding the new critical philosophy, or he could have used the 1784 commentary on the *Critique* by his colleague Johann Schultz and which would have made a perfectly serviceable textbook. Kant did neither of these, presumably because he still found much of the traditional metaphysics worth discussing. At the beginning of his career, Kant called Baumgarten's textbook the "most useful and thorough of all textbooks of its kind" (TW 1:503 [1756]/CENS:385) and ten years later was still praising it for "the richness of its contents and the precision of its method" (Pr 2:308 [1765]/CETP70:295); even his later criticisms of the material were tempered by praise for the man, as when he referred to Baumgarten's ontology as "a hodgepodge, gathered up knowledge which is not a system, but instead rhapsodic — although otherwise he was one of the most acute philosophers" (MM 29:785/CELM:141) and among "our greatest analysts" (Briefe, 10:198/CEC:159).

(4) The relation of the metaphysics lectures to Kant's other lectures. Students of Kant's lectures on metaphysics should be aware of three areas of occasional overlap with notes from the logic, anthropology, and natural theology lectures.

Logic. Kant began his lectures on both logic and metaphysics with a brief history of the discipline and a discussion on the nature of concepts and judgments. In the metaphysics notes this was normally followed by similarly brief accounts on the use of philosophy, and of metaphysics in particular. This similarity between the notes offers some explanation for why a section from the *Pölitiz 3.1* logic notes ended up being published as part of the set of metaphysics notes (in *Pölitiz 1821*; cf. ML1, 28:531-40/CELM:299-306).

Anthropology. Kant began lecturing on anthropology with winter 1772/73, and continued every winter semester up to his retirement in 1796. The longer first half of this course was based on the empirical psychology section (§§504-739) of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, and this is also the textbook normally mentioned in the official lecture catalog. Rather surprisingly, Kant continued to lecture on empirical psychology in his metaphysics lectures, although he claims in an October 1778 letter to Markus Herz that his "discussion of empirical psychology [in his metaphysics lectures] is now briefer, since I lecture on anthropology" (Briefe, 10:242/CEC:170). A content comparison of the extant notes from the metaphysics lectures bears this out somewhat. Empirical psychology comprises a large percentage of *Herder* (1762-64), less so of *Pölitiz 1* (late 70s), and considerably less of notes from the 1780's, but then increases in two of the sets from the 1790s (*Königsberg* and *Vigilantius*). Yet it is odd that he did not drop empirical psychology from the metaphysics lectures altogether, given his many comments that it does not belong in metaphysics. In the 1772/73 *Collins* anthropology notes we read that "empirical psychology belongs just as little in metaphysics as does empirical physics" (AC,

25:8/CELA:15), and nearly the same words are used in the *Pölitz 1* metaphysics notes from a few years later (ML1 28:175, 223). Kant claims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) that “empirical psychology must thus be entirely banned from metaphysics” (A848/B876 [1781/1787]; cf. MVo, 28:358, 366-67; MvS, 28:470; ML2, 28:541/CELM:308; MD, 28:670/CELM:371; MM, 29:757/CELM:119). And yet in the last set of metaphysics notes from 1794/95, about 18% of the original notes still concern empirical psychology.

Natural Theology. Kant lectured on natural theology at least four times, although all the notes that we have stem from winter 1783/84 (except for an eight-page overview written by Mrongovius and that may come from winter 1785/86). Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* is listed as a textbook for this course as well; part four concerns *theologia naturalis* (§§800-1000), and Wood finds that, as a whole, the notes read as a running commentary on §§815-982 (CERRT:337).

Kant presumably lectured on natural theology in all of his metaphysics lectures, although it is understandable that he might often have run out of time at the end of the semester. There is some discussion of natural theology in *Herder* (1762-64), *Volckmann* (1784/85), *Pölitz 3.2* (c.1790-91), *Dohna* (1792/93), and *Vigilantius* (1794/95) with relatively extensive notes in *Pölitz 1* (c.1777-80) and *Königsberg* (c.1791/92). These notes discuss transcendental theology, physico-theology, moral-theology, God's attributes, and the divine actions.

One biographical point of interest here: The royal reprimand from Berlin that accused Kant of “distorting and disparaging” Christianity, and that promised him “unpleasant measures” if he persisted in such behavior, was issued on October 1, 1794. Kant responded on Sunday, October 12, the day before the beginning of the winter semester, that he would forgo any further public discussion of religion, both in lecture and in writing, a pledge that he is said to have kept until the death of Friedrich Wilhelm II in 1797 (Briefe 11:525-26, 530/CEC:485-88) — and yet we know from the *Vigilantius* notes from that semester that Kant did indeed lecture on natural theology, some 36 pages worth, although we unfortunately have only the very end of the discussion.