Lecture-notes and common-places

Reading and writing about experience in late eighteenth-century Prussia

Jens Eriksson

Textual communication allows the few to share their experiences with the many in a perilous manner.[1] Complete transparency may encourage readers to regard themselves as equally knowledgeable about the event accounted for as the writer, physically present at the experiential site. Yet if a dimension of the occurred event is said to escape textualization, thus reserving an extra-textual aspect for the experiencing person to have exclusive access to and authority over, it may as well undermine the idea of experiential transference which motivated the effort of communication in the first place. In late eighteenth-century Prussia, a time and place where institutions of communicative exchange were undergoing dramatic changes, this balancing act was of critical concern.[2] This paper examines how practitioners and readers of natural philosophy responded to these changes in light of a debate about a rarely studied artifact: the note-book, a research tool that students, lecturers and researchers used to store or communicate the details of their activities and experiences to others.

On the 21th of February 1778, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) receives a letter concerning a lecture note-book (*Kolleghefte*) from Karl Abraham Freiherr von Zedlitz (1731–1793), the Prussian Minister of Culture and Education in Berlin. The notes von Zedlitz wrote to Kant about had been recorded by a student note-taker (*Nachschreiber*) in Kant's *Kollegium* on physical geography, a newly inaugurated subject in late eighteenth-century university curricula. von Zedlitz begins his letter in an enthusiastic tone. He thanks Kant for sending him the note-book and praises Kant, a celebrated lecturer in and around Königsberg, for his generosity. The book had afforded him the opportunity and great pleasure of "listening" (*höre*) to Kant's famous lecture from afar.[3] But reading instead of hearing Kant was not frictionless. von Zedlitz informed Kant that, although it may seem fantastic that he attends Kant's *Kollegium* "from the distance of some eighty miles",[4] the reading experience was distorted by severe presentational infelicities. The notational skills of "the evil writer" (*der böse Schreiber*), Wilhelm Albert Ferdinand Philippi (1752–1828), the son of the Director of Police in Berlin, was anything but satisfactory. Reading Philippi's notes, von Zedlitz explained to Kant, was either like "sitting too far from the lectern," or to be "unaccustomed to the professor's

pronunciation [*Aussprache*]".[5] The main paragraph of the letter is worth quoting in full.

> I am now listening to a *Kollegium* on physical geography with you, my dear Professor Kant, and the least that I can do is to give my thanks for this. As wonderful as this may seem to you, at a distance of some eighty miles, I must also really admit that I am somewhat in the situation of a student who either is sitting too far from the lectern, or else has not yet grown accustomed to the professor's pronunciation, for the manuscript of Msct. des HE. Philippi that I am presently reading is rather unclear and sometimes also miswritten, and in some places it appears as though he was paying such close attention to your lecture, that he wrote, concerning many really important matters, only those remarks you made by way of clarification, which is just the advantage of one sitting closer to you, and one which I am lacking.[6]

von Zedlitz' use of *spatial and aural metaphors* to explain his dissatisfaction with *written* notes – Philippi's "rather unclear and sometimes also miswritten" notational fragments robbed von Zedlitz, he argued, of "the advantage of the student sitting closer" to the lectern (*Katheder*) – makes visible a gap between the material form of notes and the manner in which von Zedlitz (attempted to) receive them. von Zedlitz felt sure that he would be able to *hear* Kant more clearly, however, if a better set of notes could be sent to him. "[W]hat I can decipher fills me with such a strong desire to know the rest as well," he explained to Kant. "To ask you to publish your lectures might cause you an unpleasantness, but I would think you could not deny my request for help in procuring a copy of a more careful set of notes."[7]

von Zedlitz' doubt about the transparency of lecture notes has re-emerged in today's Kant-scholarship. The fairly recent addition to the *Akademie Ausgabe* of Immanuel Kant's *gesammelte Schriften*, *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie* (1997), a voluminous collection of lecture notes from the course on anthropology that Kant held for twenty four consecutive semesters at Albertus, has given rise to new possibilities and problems for Kant-scholars. Werner Stark, co-editor of the aforementioned volume, has provided a helpful summary of what kind of research-issues the lecture notes has spawned.

> The following questions have repeatedly arisen: how reliable are the texts? Or: in the attempt to correctly understand what Kant meant, should these notes, Kant's literary remains, and his published writings, be relied upon and cited in the same way? Or: is it justifiable to expend the effort required for a historical-critical edition of the notes of students? What profit could we expect from them?[8]

As indicated by the direction of these questions, Kant-scholars assume a von Zedlitzean position when assessing the value of notes. Although Stark

himself is a notable exception to the trend he outlines – his "Historical notes and interpretative questions" (2003) is the anomaly that proves the rule, being by far the best account of note-taking practices among Kant's students from an historical perspective – scholars study lecture notes for what they can teach us about what Kant meant.[9] In the indispensible appendage to the anthropology lecture note edition, *Essays on Kant's Anthropology* (2003), Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain tries to widen the circle of Kant-scholars beyond the "philosophical community with historical interests"[10] they and Stark identifies themselves as belonging to. They underline that

> a complete appropriation of this new material [that is, the newly published lecture notes on anthropology] can only emerge from a multiple- or inter-disciplinary work. We hope that this collection of essays will serve as an invitation for those with expertise in these other areas [that is, "cultural historians, historians of the human sciences, political theorists, and the range of humanists concerned with aesthetic theory (such as art historians and literature scholars)"] to engage this interesting new material as well, and contribute to this much-neglected area of Kant-studies.[11]

The cultural historian, although certainly interested in the topics Kant addressed in lectures, is more intrigued by the form in which they were communicated to the world outside the lecture hall (*auditorium,* or *Hörsaal*). Studies on writing-practices have in recent years begun, as Ann Blair points out in "Note-taking as an art of transmission" (2003), "to uncover the culturally specific practices of note-taking in various European contexts ranging from antiquity to the eighteenth century".[12] This surge of interest, she argues, is "fueled not only by the rapid growth of the history of reading, of which the study of note-taking is an offshoot, but also by our current experience with new technologies and our sense (often more diffuse than articulate) that the computer is changing both the way we take notes and the kinds of notes and writing we produce".[13] In contrast to the philosopher's interest in notes, a cultural historian, Blair contends, studies notes because they can "shed light on cultural expectations and material practices that are representative of a particular historical context and where methods of note-taking can be shown to contribute to shaping the modes of thought and argument of that milieu".[14]

"You will probably get very little out of these poor notes"

A cultural study of Kantian lecture notes differs in one crucial respect from the study of notes in general, as outlined by Blair. Whereas Blair considers note-taking practices to be interesting as an "often hidden phase in the transmission of knowledge",[15] lecture notes recorded at Kant's *Kollegium* wrote are interesting because they failed to transmit lecture-

event experiences to readers. As Stark has made clear, these notes "reproduce Kant's own words in an attenuated or obscured way".[16] Can one therefore cite passages from the note-books as if they were Kant's own? As Jacobs and Kain put it, do they "provide authentic insight into Kant's views?"[17]

Kant himself was more than doubtful about this. In answer to a lecture note request from Marcus Herz (1747–1803), the Berlin physician and philosopher, he claims to be able to track down a good specimen only with "many difficulties".[18] Kant was sure that Herz would be disappointed with the goods he delivered to him. He regretted that he did not "ha[ve] a better manuscript" to offer than the one "Herr Kraus", Kant's courier in this specific instance, would bring to Herz. Herz, Kant wrote, would probably get "very little out of these poor notes".[19] Kant's "inability to produce" good transcripts of his lectures was caused by a manifold of factors, some of which may be considered trivial.[20] He explained their poor quality by citing the distance between himself and his listeners, arguing that he gets "to know far fewer" or "lose track of [students] altogether" since 1770, the year he became *ordentlicher Professor* and stopped lecturing "publicly".[21] This distance made it "difficult […] to find out which [students] might have accomplished something useful [in their lecture note-books]"[22] and "almost impossible to locate a set of notes from my course on philosophical encyclopedia".[23] In addition, Kant was constantly revising his work. This made it hard for his students to produce updated transcripts of his lectures. "Since I make improvements or extensions of my lectures from year to year, especially in the systematic and, if I may say, architectonic form and ordering of what belongs within the scope of a science, my students cannot very easily help themselves by copying from each other."[24]

A more acute problem was the students themselves, many of which were inexperienced or had not yet reached their "manhood" (*Mannesalter*).[25] The fate of Franz Adolf Josef von Baczko (1756–1823), an officer's son arriving at Königsberg from Hungary to matriculate at Albertus in 1771, is representative of how unmanly newcomers at the Albertus experienced Kant's teaching. Baczko, enthused by Kant's reputed oratorical excellence, arrived at Königsberg during the period in which "Kant had entered his most brilliant period".[26] But after attending Kant's by now increasingly famous *Kollegium,* he quickly became disenchanted.

> When I arrived at the *Akademie*, he was giving public lectures. I attended his lecture and didn't understand it. Considering Kant's reputation and the mistrust that I always have in my own abilities, I simply believed that I needed to study more, so I asked each of my acquaintances whether they didn't own a *Metaphysik* or other work of philosophical content. I soon obtained the works of Wolf [sic], Meyer and Baumgarten, as well as many deeply miserable books that I read through with great effort. I stayed up entire nights, spent

> twenty and more uninterrupted hours with these books, and learned nothing.[27]

Baczko shared his feeling of inadequacy with many of his fellow studiosi. After wallowing in self-deprecation for awhile, he soon "noticed that many students in Kant's classroom knew even less than me, and I began to believe that they were attending Kant's lectures just to show off; I started to tease others about it, and to declare all of philosophy useless".[28]

Bazcko, trying to get his head around the key philosophers of the eighteenth century, expected something Kant was not offering. According to Kant, "the youth who has completed his school instruction has been accustomed to learn. He now thinks he is going to learn philosophy. But that is impossible, for he ought now to learn to philosophize."[29] Kant repeated this insight with untiring vigilance. Ludwig Ernst Borowski (1740–1831), Kant's friend and officially approved biographer, reports that "[s]eldom did teachers warn students of [blind adherence] as often and as earnestly as did Kant. To think for oneself, to inquire for oneself, to stand on one's own feet: these were expressions that constantly came forth."[30] In contrast to the ambition of scholasticism, the dominant pedagogy in late eighteenth-century Prussia, students would not learn and memorize philosophical authors in Kant's *Kollegium*. Kant's course announcement of 1765, *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in der Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, outlining the methodological principles which will guide Kant's forthcoming lectures on diverse subjects such as zoology and ethics was radical. It states that "the philosophical writer […] upon whom one bases one's instruction is not to be regarded as the paradigm of judgment. He ought rather to be taken as the occasion for forming one's own judgment about him, and even, indeed, for passing judgment against him".[31] As reported by one student, this meant that Kant "lectured on logic, metaphysics, ethics, etc., without tying himself to the textbook, and often without any notebook, entirely in the manner described in his *Nachricht* of 1765".[32] William L. Clark writes in his *Academic charisma and the origins of the research university* (2006) that Kant "lectured at a time when a new notion of the professor was emerging: the professor as a researcher".[33] Kant was, unlike most of his colleagues at the Albertus, not teaching established dogma, but producing new knowledge.

For Kant, it was thus not surprising "that difficulties arise when the attempt is made to adapt [his pedagogy] to the less practiced capacity of youth".[34] Students who expected to learn philosophy as an already completed doctrine mistook Kant's method, an inspiring example, for a rule to follow.[35] For note-taking purposes this was catastrophic. The "beginner", Kant writes in his letter to Herz, produces notes that "deviate greatly" from what was actually said and done during lectures.[36] Reinhold

Bernhard Jachmann (1767–1843), a contemporary biographer of Kant, explains that "[w]hoever did not understand this way of his [Kant's] would take his first explanation as the correct and fully exhaustive one, and would not follow him very closely after that, thus collecting mere half-truths, just as several sets of student notes have convinced me".[37]

Those who did understand Kant, on the other hand, did not write at all, or only "the main points".[38] In one of his letters to Herz, Kant contends that

> [t]hose of my students who are most capable of grasping everything are just the ones who bother least to take explicit and verbatim [*ausführlich u. dictatenmäßig*] notes; or rather they write down only the main points, which they can think over afterwards. Those who are most thorough in note-taking are seldom capable of distinguishing the important from the unimportant. They pile a mass of misunderstood stuff under that which they may possibly have grasped correctly.[39]

Kant's mature, or manly, students understood something their juniors did not. The point of the lectures was not informational, but formal. It was not what Kant said, but how he said it, the tone and methodology he used when explicating text-book authors, that students were supposed to focus their attention on. The method was akin to an "entertaining conversation". Kant did not "merely recite a logic to his listeners", but "spoke about his author, thought on his own and often beyond the author".[40] It was a "free discourse" or "constantly re-thought outpouring of his [Kant's] mind".[41] Kant, one student recalls, "attempted to think through the subject in front of his students, just as though he were beginning himself […] thus acquainting the closely attentive student not just with the subject, but also with methodical thinking".[42]

Mature students wrote little about this conversational form because they knew that it could not be captured in text. In a letter to Wilhelm Joseph Kalmann (1758–1842) written on the 30th of April 1795, the Austrian nobleman Wenzel Johann Gottfried von Purgstall (1773–1812) explained why so many experienced Kant as difficult by making reference to this insight. He underlined that "once one has come so far as to understand his *voice*, then it is not so difficult to understand his *thoughts*. He spoke last time about *space* and *time*, and it was as though I had never understood anyone as I understood him".[43] Johann Christoph Mortzfeld, another student, points out that "[t]he opinion had spread among his [Kant's] students that his lectures were hard to comprehend. […] It no doubt must have hard to understand him completely before becoming more familiar with his delivery [*Vortrag*]."[44] Once initial difficulties had evaporated, however, listening to lectures was no longer difficult, but pleasant. Purgstall was unabashedly enthusiastic about Kant's vocal performance. According to him, "this [was] how all professors should speak, how a *Wissenschaft* for the head should be presented".[45]

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who attended Kant's lectures during the 1760s, made a similar analysis. He claimed that it was difficult to understand lecture notes when reading them after the lecture had ended. He argued that it was only by hearing the words from Kant himself that he managed to digest them. Herder, "marveling over the teacher's [Kant's] dialectical wit, his political as well as scientific acumen, his eloquence and intelligent memory," had "noticed that, when he set aside *the gracefulness of the presentation* [my italics], he would become wrapped in a dialectical web of words, within which he himself was no longer able to think".[46] Herder's interest in Kant's voice was not unique. It was a widely spread belief in late eighteenth-century universities that spoken words were expressive in a way that the written ones were not. Theodore Ziolkowski writes in *German romanticism and its institutions* (1990) "that the proper rhetorical mode for the presentation of […] ideas was not the essay or the treatise but the lecture or talk or oration – whether in a university lecture hall, in a public forum, or in a small group of friends".[47] Kant was very much a part of the oral culture Ziolkowski describes. According to Manfred Kuehn, he based "all of his major critical works […] on his lectures".[48] Little or no research has been done on the importance of vocal delivery in the context of Kant's philosophy, though. It remains to be studied how Kant's strong emphasis on the importance of vocality related to his view on writing, especially so against the background of comments like the following: "Text", Kant informed his students in the course *Vorlesungen über philosophische Encyklopädie*, "is just an aid. […] An oral presentation [*Vortrag*] is much more instructive. One always thinks better through hearing because reading is not as natural as listening".[49]

In light of Kant's mild Platonic contempt for the written word, it is not surprising that notes were held in so low esteem and that Kant repeated to his students that he was "not keen on note-taking".[50] von Zedlitz, requesting a more detailed note-book than Philippi's, could thus be nothing but disappointed. The fragmental style of Philippi's note-book, the scriptural *lacunae* of which indexed the missing ingredient, the voice, without which it could not be properly understood, indicated that his was one of the more accurate transcriptions. Philippi, "paying such close attention to [Kant's] lecture, that he wrote, concerning many really important matters, only those remarks [he] made by way of clarification", was an evil transcriber *because* he was a good student. "Angels do not write", as one student ironically noted.[51]

Miszellaneen

Kant's doubt about the value and usefulness of notes is given an additional twist in light of Kant's own investment in note-taking practices. It is well established that lecture notes were invaluable to the professional

career of Kant, the rising star on the firmament of late eighteenth-century philosophy. Lecturers at other universities were eager to give lectures on transcendental idealism because Kant's name attracted students to their otherwise meagerly attended courses. It was not uncommon for university professors to build careers by using lecture notes doing this, a favour they repaid by popularizing their benefactor at their respective universities. Kant's answer to Herz, who used the note-book Kant sent to him to lecture to notables such as von Zedlitz, is telling. "I should be very pleased to gratify your wish," Kant wrote, "especially when the purpose is connected with my own interest."[52]

Herz found Kant's gift extremely rewarding. In his letter of response, he thanked Kant for "a degree of happiness this winter to which I never aspired even in my dreams".[53]

> Today, for the twentieth time, I am lecturing on your philosophical teachings to approbations that exceed all my expectations. The number of people in my audience grows daily. […] It seems to me, my dear teacher, that this course is in many ways one of the most remarkable happenings, and not a day passes when I do not reflect on the impossibility of ever repaying you, through any act of mine, the tenth part of the happiness I enjoy in a single hour, which I owe to you and to you alone![54]

Kant was well aware of how indebted he was to his popularizers. Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1757–1823), an early critic of Kant in the 1770s whose subsequent turn to his former adversary's fold spawned the arguably most important text on Kant ever written, "Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie", a series of installations published in *Teutsche Merkur* between August 1786 and September 1787, turned Jena into a Kantian hotbed. He lectured on critical philosophy to over a hundred students in his *Kollegium*. Reinhold belonged to the group of Idealists who shared Kant's belief that transcendental idealism had revolutionized philosophy and made it impossible to turn back to traditional modes of philosophizing. In contrast to the author of transcendental idealism, however, the Jena Idealists did not think that this revolution had been allowed to reach its full potential, arguing that critical philosophy was too timid in its current form. Kant, irritated by the liberty his popularizers took in re-interpreting him, denounced his followers, of which Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was the most annoying example. In Reinhold's case, however, he was forgiving. Kuehn has shown that it was impossible to mention the Jena Kantians without making Kant furious. But Reinhold, Kant said to his friends, "have done too much for me to be angry with him".[55]

Kant's personal note-taking routine is another case in point. In his *Miszellaneen*, a common-place book, the use of which has been virtually ignored in Kant-scholarship, Kant collected and recorded the preparatory

notes he used during lectures.[56] Common-place books, "storehouses of material gleaned from various authors", have a long tradition in European culture, as recent studies of the tradition of common-placing have made clear.[57] In "Notebooks as memory aids" (2008), Richard Yeo defines its early modern practice

> as a way of organizing arguments, or increasingly, during the 1600s, as a way of collating quotations under thematic Heads (we say headings or keywords). The commonplaces (*loci communes*) were conceived as general Heads under which material relevant to a topic or argument was entered in a commonplace book.[58]

The material form of Kant's collection of excerpts and examples could vary dramatically. "According to the habit of the philosopher", Friedrich Wilhelm Schubert notes, it "consisted of individual scraps of paper [*einzelne Papierschnitzel*]".[59] At other times, Kant "appeared to have prepared a special, hand-written note-book […] whose margins were filled with notes".[60]

> The copy of said compendium of which [Kant] availed himself in his lectures, like all other text-books used by him for the same purpose is interleaved with sheets of paper; his general notes and explanations as well as the more special ones that stand in close relation to the text of individual paragraphs may be found partly on these sheets, partly on the margins of the book itself. And these handwritten records of scattered notes and explanations now make up the store of materials which Kant assembled for his lectures and from time to time expanded by new ideas, revising and improving it again and again in respect of various particular matters.[61]

Kant instructed his students to keep a *Miszellaneen* as an aid in their studies. Whenever they came across something noteworthy, Kant explained, they should ask themselves: "Under which heading or in which order does this belong – where do I put it?"[62] Upon finding the proper place for the topic at hand, they should file their finds and thereby systematize them for the purpose of future retrieval. A vast collection of experiential examples such as his was necessary to keep as a teacher, Kant argued. For it was "impossible to teach philosophy unless there are some examples by means of which the rules [of understanding] can be elucidated *in concreto*".[63] It accumulated "from all fields of knowledge […] what seemed […] important in any way for human knowledge".[64]

Kant's *Miszellaneen* raises the question of experience (*Erfahrung*). On what grounds could Kant consider himself competent about topics such as physics and pyrotechnics just be collecting common-places? Or lecture on, for example, *Artillerie Fortification* to Russian officers during the military occupation of Königsberg in the 1760s? Experience, or "knowledge of the

objects of the senses",[65] is one of the most frequently addressed topics in Kant's oral and written work, in which it is mostly figured as a problem of validity. Since, as Isaac Newton (1643–1723) had shown, occurrences in Nature happen in accordance with lawfulness, what must philosophy assume as transcendental in order to account for that regularity? Alongside the problem of antinomies, this question supposedly awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber and led him to re-organize the order between knowing subjects and known objects, thus revolutionizing philosophy in a Copernican manner.

The towering shadow that concerns about validity casts over Kant's work on experience has obscured a perhaps equally interesting, but certainly a lot less studied, question: how does one get access to experience? Defending Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) against Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) in the pantheism controversy of late eighteenth-century philosophy, Kant wrote "Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientiren?" (1786), a shorter piece in which the transcendental philosopher's relation to experience is given central importance as a problem of method. In the article's first paragraph, Kant writes that

> however exalted the application of our concepts, and however far up from sensibility we may abstract [*abstrahiren*] them, still they will always be appended to image representations [*bildliche Vorstellung*en], whose proper function is to make these concepts, which are not otherwise derived from experience, serviceable for experiential use.[66]

The definition of experience and how it was useful for philosophy was not controversial. Contemporary readers of "Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientiren?" may, however, have found it ironic that Kant, a "theoretical man"[67] (*theoretische Mensch*) according to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) in a letter to Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), advocated a sensualist view on the uses and abuses of philosophy. It is customary to depict Kant's *Lebensform* as anti-thetical to Kant's philosophical ideals.[68] During the period in which Kant's revolutionary work on the validity of experience, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/87), was written, he allegedly disappeared from the world of real-life concerns, leaving his biographers little to write about except his writing process (culminating in a book about experience, ironically enough). As Georg Rolf argues, "[n]ot much can be said about Kant's personal development in that period that would aid us in understanding his work; there are no external influences to be recounted and, indeed, devotion to the work itself left little room for other matters […]. [T]he press of system, the progression from one problem to the next in those years was Kant's life."[69] Wilhelm Dilthey once made a similar point, arguing that, "in the veins of the knowing subject such as Kant has construed him, flows not real blood but rather the thinned fluid of reason as pure thought activity".[70]

Most biographies of Kant thus offer a narrative in which an overly cerebral and pitiful thinker sacrifices life (experience) in favour of theoretical discipline and rigor. Kant's life, these biographies tell us, was so aridly empty and devoid of anything but mental activity that the history of it can be written only as a narrative of how Kant's texts, or better, his thoughts were brought into existence by way of pure thought activity. Otfried Höffe's *Immanuel Kant* (2002), a recent example, argues that "Kant does not have any other biography than the history of his thinking"[71] and can therefore "only be understood through his *Werke*".[72] Readings of this kind, although highly appreciative of Kant's achievements, portray the biographical details Kant's life as "difficult to describe, for he neither had a life nor a history".[73]

Biographical accounts like Öffe's inherit their slightly derogatory attitude towards Kant, a "professional theorist", from two overlapping quarters: his contemporary colleagues at German universities, and his own circle of friends and acquaintances.[74] In a letter to his brother, Ludwig Christian, Georg Cristoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799), professor in *physica experimentalis* at Göttingen, and successor to and friend of Johann Christian Polykarp Erxleben (1744–1777), experimentalist, veterinarian and author of the textbook, *Anfangsgründe der Naturlehre* (1772) in physics on which Kant based his lectures on the subject, downplayed Kant's contribution to contemporary natural philosophy. He argued that Kant, a mere reader of natural philosophy, neither did nor said anything new about the experimental activities of others.[75] Lichtenberg's antipathy towards Kant's teaching should be read in conjunction with Lichtenberg's "Über Selbstdenken, Lesen, und Bücher" (1792). "The greatest thinkers that I have come across," Lichtenberg points out in the text, "were the learned people that have read the least."[76] Though Lichtenberg's portrayal depicted Kant as incompetent in natural philosophy, an activity based on the Baconian conviction that knowledge about nature was gained by intervening in natural processes,[77] it did so in a forgiving tone. It was based on the impression that Kant did "not present himself as a discoverer [*Erfinder*], but only as a systematizer of what other great men [*große Männer*] have thought and done".[78] The wide-spread ridicule of Kant's efforts in natural philosophy was, Lichtenberg wrote to his brother, therefore unjust and uncalled for.

If Lichtenberg's view of how Kant presented himself was correct, many of his colleagues were grossly misinformed. The writers of the books Kant consulted saw in Kant's contribution a serious violation of the division of labour between theorists and practitioners of natural philosophy. In recent years, historians of science have been occupied with dismantling ideologically enforced dichotomies such as this by, as Norton Wise puts it in "Making visible" (2006), "reunit[ing] sensual with ideational knowing".[79] It is therefore noteworthy that natural philosophers made reference to the embodied, or tacit, dimensions of their activities, not in order to overthrow

the difference between theory and practice, but to uphold it. Many notable philosophers and natural philosophers – Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), physical anthropologist and professor at Göttingen; Johann Daniel Metzger (1739–1805), doctor and colleague of Kant's at Albertus; Georg Forster (1754–1794), author of *Reise um die Welt* (1778–1780) and travel companion to Captain James Cook (1729–1779); Karl Leonhard Reinhold, the previously mentioned critic of Kant who later became critical philosophy's most valuable popularizer; Christian Friedrich Ludwig (1751–1823), natural philosopher and author of *Grundriss der Naturgeschichte der Menschenspecies* (1796) – were critical of Kant's contributions to natural philosophy and felt insulted by his dabbling in the field.

Especially annoying was Kant's extensive lecturing and publication on the problem of racial, or varietal, differentiation that "the new travels" had brought to the attention of European savants.[80] As the first to give the concept of race "scientific status",[81] Kant's contribution was anything but modest. Yet, to the irritation of the field researcher, it was not only entirely based on second-hand information, but also highly prejudiced.[82] Kant's three papers on race, *Von der verschiedenen Racen der Menschen* (1775), *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace* (1785), and *Über der Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie* (1788), as well as his lectures on anthropology, were founded upon the second-hand accounts that Kant had harvested when consuming, as Peter McLaughlin has noted, "massive amounts of anecdotal travel literature".[83] Kant's fellow Königsbergian Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) was probably right when he said that Kant did little but "read everything".[84]

In a letter to his close friend, Samuel Thomas von Sömmerring (1755–1830), inventor and anatomist among many other things, Forster announced that he was writing an article in response to the rude indiscretion Kant had committed when publishing on travel reports without having the necessary experiences of travelling to back it up.[85] "It would be good if the shoemaker would stick to his own craft", he wrote, underscoring that readers and doers should not be confused with each other. "Kant is such a fine thinker, but he too yields to the hopeless paradox of the professional philosopher who has to redo nature to fit his logical distinctions. The booty is more harmful than useful."[86] Forster's condemnation was later, and more scathingly, repeated by Metzger, who had earlier written a reply to Kant's second article on race.[87] In an anti-eulogy published in 1804, he reiterated his former position in an even harsher tone, claiming that Kant's *Ruhm* had undeservingly shielded him from just criticism. "It is clear from all that has been written since Kant engaged himself with this material [that is, travel reports], that the natural history of mankind was not really the subject in which he was destined to shine […] Blumenbach, Ludwig, and others have taught us better."[88]

"Travel belongs to the means of broadening the range of anthropology, even if it is only the reading of travel books"

Kant remained unmoved by Forster's criticism, as well as Forster's and Metzger's attempts to exclude him from their circle, but adopted a conciliatory tone in his third article on race with the purpose to calm the stir his previous articles had caused. An unbridgeable gap between Forster, whose readiness to risk physical well-being for the sake of knowledge was regarded by the reading public in heroic and manly terms, and Kant, the proto-typical arm-chair systematizer with little or no contact with the world of real-life concerns, made this attempt troublesome.

For Kant, it was not even necessary for a researcher to be actually present at the experimental or anthropological site. Although Kant's examples are derived from actual experiences, these could, he argued, be extracted from either "one's own experience or the *testimony of other people* [my italics], which constitute what is actually given and which is therefore available for use".[89] In his lectures on anthropology, Kant based his instruction on this assumption, explaining that "[t]ravel belongs to the means of broadening the range of anthropology." But whether one obtained travelling experience first-hand or through "the reading of travels books" was of small consequence.[90]

Two important implications follow from this. First, it enabled Kant to write that, instead of conducting experiments or presenting to his auditors the findings of his own anthropological inquiries, he would collect textual accounts that others had written. He thereafter presented these as substitutes, explaining to his *Zuhörer* that they could use them instead of their own experience of the topics discussed. "As I saw at the very beginning of my academic teaching, a great neglect among young people who are studying lies particularly in the fact that they learn to rationalize early, without possessing enough historical knowledge *which can substitute for experience* [*Erfarenheit*; my italics], I therefore undertook the project of composing a pleasant and easy *compendium* on the history of the present state of the earth or geography in its broadest sense."[91]

Second, it altered the spatial relation between the knowing person's physical location and the objects he was knowledgeable about. Kant informed his students that their current place of residency, Königsberg, a bustling port-town in north-eastern Europe with global commercial networks connecting it to the rest of the world, was the perfect place for an observer of nature to conduct his investigations in.

> A large city such as Königsberg on the river Pregel, which is the center of a kingdom, in which the provincial councils of the government are located, which has a university (for the cultivation of the sciences) and which also has the right location for maritime commerce – a city which, by way of rivers, has the advantage of commerce both with the inte-

> rior of the country and with neighboring and distant lands of different languages and customs, can well be taken as an appropriate place for broadening one's knowledge of human beings as well as of the world, where this knowledge can be acquired *without even travelling* [my italics].[92]

Kant's description of Königsberg as a nodal hub, connecting commercial, cultural and scientific networks, is striking. It gives weight to Bruno Latour's characterization of the changed relation between European institutions and the personnel they sent out to produce knowledge about the outside world as a "Copernican Revolution".[93] As testified by Kant's conviction that Königsberg, a "centre of calculation", was the most suitable place to be in if one wanted to do research, the authority of the field naturalist was replaced in late eighteenth century natural philosophy in favour of sedentary systematizers. Latour claims that this shift was paralleled by the Kantian argument that, "instead of the mind of the scientists [sic] revolving around the things […] the things are made to revolve around the mind".[94] If researchers had previously cited their intimate knowledge of their objects of study, it was now, as Dorinda Outram puts it in her analysis of Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), the "psychical distance from the object of their study [that] guaranteed the superior truth-value of their brand of natural history".[95]

"How it was possible to know the entire field of experimental chemistry, just by reading Lektüre and without any help from exemplifying experiments"

Latour's description is useful as a characterization of this shift between researchers and systematizers, but fails to take one important aspect into account. While the late eighteenth-century rerouted the flow of information between the European centre and the agents contracted by it to report on and gather specimens from the outside world, it also gave birth to a new kind of field researcher, the *Humboldtian Naturphilosoph*, of whom Forster was cited as the ideal to be imitated.[96] It was this self-sacrificing field-researcher, rushing head-on to face unknown dangers on foreign shores or, like Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), subjecting his body to experimental contraptions, who stood closer to the proper meaning of transcendental idealism, not Kant. Transcendental idealism is a theory about the mediation of experience. It asks the question how the way experiences are received by the knowing person affects the cognitive grasp he or she is allowed to have of them. Natural philosophers shared this insight with Kantian philosophy, basing their professional identities on the assumption that reading and doing related to experience in two wholly different registers. Text and experience were separated by a gap, as if the they were related to each other as "appearance" (*Schein*) and "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich)*.

Kant's *Miszellaneen*, a pre-critical artifact, if Latour's metaphor can sustain further perversions, was usable only if that kind of gap was non-existent, or at least traversable. Common-placing and lecture note-taking shared the presupposition that it was possible to "duplicate the information"[97] stored in one mind and copy it onto another, as Rudolf Stichweh characterizes the pedagogical aim of scholasticism. In the context of lecture note-taking, this was annoying to Kant since it suggested to him that it was possible for others to reproduce him at locations he was not physically present at. von Purgstall made an interesting comment in his letter to Kalmann in this light. He explained to Kalmann that "[o]ne never leaves [Kant's] auditorium without bringing home some elucidating hint into his writings, and it is as though one had arrived at the easiest and shortest way to understanding many difficult sentences in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and *praktische Vernunft*".[98] Kant's colleagues, on the other hand, shed little light upon critical philosophy, or made it more difficult than it actually was. von Purgstall writes that

> [t]he other gentlemen [*Herren*], I mean his interpreters, but here I am not thinking of Reinhold exactly, remain standing with a great deal of talk about the difficulty, and make such a quantity of preparations, while [Kant] simply enters directly into the subject and talks about it, so that it appears that he would never dream that the materials could be so hard, and that he is wholly convinced that anyone is able to understand it.[99]

von Purgstall's point is that Kant's originality, or "*Eigenthümlichkeit*" as Kant called it, registers as a textual distortion in lecture note-books. As a protean form of copyright protection, the performative dimension of philosophizing made it impossible to multiply Kant through the dispersion of notes, either too fragmentary or incoherent to be useful. It was only when performed by Kant himself that Kantian philosophy made sense. Lacking Kant's vocal expression, the key unlocking the meaning of the text, lecture note-books made Kant's colleagues stammer when lecturing on his philosophy. As Kant put it a propos of his students' expectations to learn Wolffianism, "no one can philosophize like Wolff" except Wolff himself.[100] It is easy to see that scholasticist duplicability, depriving authors of their proprietary exclusivity, did not appeal to Kant, the bourgeois philosopher. It was important for him to stress that lecture note-books could not reproduce site-specific experiences, nor transport von Zedlitzean readers to lecture halls "from the distance of some eighty miles".

This scholastic collapse of the border between text and experience was useful, however, if aimed at natural philosophers. Common-place books were endowed with the powers that lecture note-books lacked. Kant used, in Ernst Cassirer's words, "secondary sources of all sorts […] to make up for what [he] lack[ed] in the way of first-hand impressions and experi-

ences: geographical and scientific works, travel descriptions and research reports [*Forschungsberichte*]".[101] But, from Kant's point of view, reading and doing did not necessarily constitute two different activities. Herman Schmalenbach's analysis in *Kants Religion* (1929) is helpful in this respect, being far more sensitive to the historical specificity of Kant's reading habits than Cassirer is, or, for that matter, anyone else who has commented upon them. He writes that "[t]he yearning to travel that [Kant] carried inside himself, and that could not be realized directly because of other, even more hidden internal resistances, was transformed and given an outlet in reading great quantities of travelogues. *But this act of transference could be made possible only if descriptions of travel could accomplish what Kant would have been able to expect from travelling himself* [my italics]. This would include features not only of what he read […] but also characteristics of the reader: an extraordinary fantasy, an uncommonly intricate sensual imagination."[102]

Kant described his reading technique, conducted with "the rational curiosity of a traveller who everywhere seeks out what is noteworthy, peculiar, and beautiful, and collates it in his collection of observations, and reflects on its design",[103] in similar terms. According to Jachmann, Kant, gifted with "astounding inner powers of intuition and imagination"[104] (*Anschauungs- und Vorstellungskraft*), was endowed with an extraordinary ability. He envisioned what he read so vivaciously that he was able to give descriptions of places he had never visited in such a detailed manner that even locals find them convincing.[105] "One day," Jachman reports,

> he described, in the presence of a born Londoner, Westminster Bridge, in its shape and orientation, length, breadth, and height and the specific masses of every particular part so precisely that the Englishman asked him how many years he had lived in London, and whether he was especially absorbed in architecture; whereupon he was assured that Kant had never gone outside Prussia and was not an architect by profession. He conversed in an equally detailed way with Brydone, so that the latter inquired how long he had stayed in Italy.[106]

Another anecdote contends that Kant, who never witnessed one single experiment in experimental chemistry during his entire life, but was a voracious consumer of research reports and text-books on the topic, baffled Dr. Karl Gottfried Hagen (1749–1829), a professor in *Experimentalchemie* at the Albertus and a frequent dinner guest at Kant's residence, with his detailed knowledge of his field of study. Dr. Hagen, whose textbook on experimental chemistry, *Grundriß der Experimentalchemie* (1786), Kant referred to as a logical masterpiece, corresponded with Kant about experiments. It was through him that Kant got in contact with practical knowledge about chemistry. Kant was a shrewd student, to say the least. "After turning sixty", Jachman reports,

> Kant has completely fallen in love with chemistry [*Chemie*] and studies the new chemical system with the greatest enthusiasm. Even if he has witnessed [*gesehen*] not one chemical experiment, he has not only perfectly learned chemical nomenclature, but also all chemical experiments so precisely and detailed that he at one time, in a conversation at his dinner table, completely astonished the chemist Dr. Hagen with his knowledge. Dr. Hagen said to Kant that it was unfathomable to him how it was possible to know the entire field of experimental chemistry as thoroughly as Kant did, just by reading *Lektüre* and without any help from exemplifying experiments.[107]

The reader of the anecdotes is supposed to be amazed. Kant knows minute details of foreign buildings and experiments, although he has seen neither for himself. According to Dr. Hagen and the practitioners' camp, Kant's knowledge about these details was supposed to be attainable solely through direct, physical interaction. Jachman, whom Kant describes as "formerly an industrious and alert auditor of my lectures, now a most treasured friend", is clearly idealizing the reading skills of his friend and philosophical mentor. However, it does not matter much whether Jachmann's anecdotes are true or not. They are interesting for what they say about eighteenth-century beliefs in the powers of textual transmission and communication of supposedly tacit knowledge.[108]

"Unserem Kant"

The view that it was possible to gain knowledge about "the entire field of experimental chemistry" by way of imagination and intuition was, contrary to Schmalenbach's intimation, not one of Kant's individual eccentricities. Reading was for many late eighteenth-century text-consumers a powerful way to attain knowledge, as argued by another great reader of natural philosophy, Goethe. In "Der Versuch als Vermittler zwischen Objekt und Subjekt" (1792), Goethe describes his reading technique in terms similar to Kant's. "My current reading of the history of physics is an endeavor to *bring before my mind* [*vergegenwärtigen;* my italics] the general features of how distinguished men have done service as well as disservice to the scientific study of nature."[109] Goethe's reading technique was firmly rooted in the literary theory of its time. In 1778, Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel (1741–1796), mayor of Königsberg, close friend of Kant, and anonymous author of Sternean satires, published the first volume of his novel, *Lebensläufe nach aufsteigender Linie*. The novel is interesting for many reasons, but in particular for how it engages its reader. He, or she, is not a passive consumer of text, but a "*Mitarbeiter*".[110] In *The elusive 'I' in the novel. Hippel, Sterne, Diderot, Kant* (1982), Hamilton H. Beck points out that Hippel achieved this inclusive effect by denarrating his novel. Hippel's "narrator draws attention not to himself but

to the events, so that he becomes as it were a transparent medium through which the events can be seen without distortion".[111]

Hippel derived his view on anti-narrative narration from a multitude of sources, of which Henry Home (1696–1782), whose work on natural history Kant referred to in his lectures on race and physical anthropology, was especially important. In *Elements of criticism* (1762), Home offers a set of writing guidelines that instructs writers how to achieve anti-narrative effects in their novels. "The writer of genius", he says, "sensible that the eye is the best avenue to the heart, represents everything as passing in our sight; and from readers or hearers, transforms us, as it were, into spectators. Skilful [sic] writers conceals himself, and present his personages".[112] Home's point was that, since second-hand narratives have less sensory impact than first-hand experiences, the author should transform his readers into witnesses. Home's ideal text-consumer, "*forgetting that he is reading* [my italics], conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye-witness".[113]

As Home and Hippel made clear, forgetful reading demanded certain requirements of the reader, but also of the text. It needed the power to lure readers, to engage them as active participants in the plot that the text unfolded before their eyes. Literary theorists shared this ambition with natural philosophers. In 1798, Blumenbach sent Kant his influential work on physiology, *Über den Bildungstrieb* (1789), asking him if he would be willing to grant him his "*gütigen Beyfall*", a stamp of approval that would earn Blumenbach's experiment factual status.[114] Blumenbach's friend and biographer, Karl H. Marx, notes that Blumenbach took great professional satisfaction from receiving confirmations from theorists like Kant.[115]

> His studies upon the formative force [*Bildungstrieb*] were taken up by great thinkers, and were made use of, though with alterations of expression and manner of representation, as foundations for further developments, by Kant, in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Fichte, Schelling, and Goethe in his *Morphologie*. From this he derived particular satisfaction, as it was a proof of their solidity and productiveness.[116]

Kant was more than happy to validate Blumenbach's work as solid and productive. In a letter sent to Blumenbach 1790, he wrote that

> I have found much instruction in your writings, but the latest of them has a close relationship to the ideas that preoccupy me: the union of two principles that people have believed to be irreconcilable, namely the physical-mechanistic and the merely teleological way of explaining organized nature. Factual confirmation is exactly what this union of the two principles need. I have tried to show my indebtedness for your instruction in a citation that you will find in the book that de Lagarde, the book merchant, will have sent you.[117]

Kant made this acknowledgment public in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1789). He portrayed Blumenbach as the most important contributor to the theory of epigenesis, the vitalist argument that life is not preformed. "No one", he wrote, "has done more for the proof of this theory of epigenesis as well as the establishment of the proper principles of its application […] than Herr Hofr. Blumenbach."[118]

Many of Blumenbach's peers followed suit. Cristoph Girtanner (1760–1800), a now rarely studied chemist, and von Sömmerring, a highly esteemed *Fachmann*, provide two representative examples. In a letter that Kant received on the 17th of January 1793, Johann Benjamin Erhard (1766–1827), a friend of Girtanner, told Kant in a gossipy fashion that Girtanner "always wants to know whether you have read his chemistry book and what you think of it".[119] Girtanner was probably not aware of it, but Kant frequently referred to his work in his lectures on chemistry. Girtanner did not have to suffer for long, though. A few years later, Theodore Rink (1770–1811) published Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), in which Kant, instead of writing a chapter on "The character of races", simply referred to Girtanner's book on the same subject. "With regard to this subject", he wrote, "I can refer to what Herr Hofr. Girtanner has presented so beautifully and thoroughly in explanation and further development in his work (in accordance with my principles)."[120] The work Kant is referring to is Girtanner's *Über das Kantische Prinzip für Naturgeschichte* (1796), a book that tried to validate itself as "factual" by being written as if Kant, "the deep thinker", had written it himself.[121]

von Sömmerring was not as successful as Girtanner. In 1795, he sent Kant his manuscript for *Über das Organ der Seele* (1796) with a two-fold request. He wondered if Kant could "test" it (*zur prüfung*), and if he would be willing to write a shorter introduction, to be inserted as an appendage to the main text.[122] Like Girtanner, von Sömmerring looked forward to have his treatise validated as Kantian. In his contribution to the treatise, however, Kant doubted whether their projects really converged the way von Sömmerring had hoped. von Sömmerring did not seem to have cared much about Kant's qualms, though. He gladly printed the dedication "*Unserem Kant*" on the cover, explaining that "the pride of our age, Kant, had the kindness not only to grant his approbation [*Beyfall*] to the idea governing the following treatise, but even to expand and refine it, and so to render it more perfect. His kind permission allows me to crown my work with his own words".[123]

Natural philosophers' desire to have Kant read their works can be interpreted in two different, but not mutually exclusive, ways. It is obvious that many of Kant's early critics, of whom Forster was preeminent, sought Kant's approbation because of the fame his name was associated with from the 1780s and onwards. When *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* had won

over most readers, it was no longer a wise career-move to be a critic of Kant. Forster, for example, revised his methodological stand-point during the writing of *Reise um die Welt* in favour of Kant's research methodology. Harry Liebersohn has shown that Forster "had actually come much closer to a Kantian methodology of scientific observation when he argued that travel writers had to know what they were looking for and make it meaningful by applying concepts to their empirical material".[124] It is also clear that Forster, previously a cultural relativist and critic of Europe's colonial expansion, now advocated the Kantian conviction that non-European cultures had to be submitted to enlightened Europe's civilizing force. On a personal note, Forster tried to settle his differences with his former adversary by suggesting a truce, communicated to Kant through a go-between, Kant's and Forster's mutual friend, Jachmann. Jachmann had stayed two nights at Forster's house in Mainz during his *Bildungsreise* to a string of university towns. In a letter to Kant, he related the following about his meeting with the seasoned seafarer.

> I stayed two and a half days in Mainz, mainly in Herr Hofr. Forster's house. He is a most amiable and accommodating man. In his library I found all your recent writings and even some of your earlier writings, but he regretted that his other literary work did not leave him enough time to study your writings as they deserve. […] He regrets very much the tone he assumed in his controversy with you. Allow me to show you a few words from his letter to me: 'Please express my veneration to the excellent Kant. My essay against him had an ill-tempered, polemical tone which I wanted to take back as soon as I saw it in print, for it is appropriate neither to the subject-matter nor to a man like Kant. To excuse myself I must say that everything I wrote in Vilnius at that time had the same tone and I am enough of materialist to think that the source of this was a physical indisposition which really existed then.[125]

This analysis answers the question why natural philosophers chose Kant as the desired reader of their research reports. But it does not say why these texts needed to be read or written in the first place. The term "virtual witnessing" is helpful in this respect. Steven Shapin's "Pump and circumstance: Robert Boyle's literary technology" (1984) has established that the turn from the cloistered natural philosophy of scholasticism in early modern Europe to its modern successor was made possible by the transformation of science into a seemingly public activity. One of the more important ways through which the experimental philosopher was able to do this, was by devising a set of literary technologies, of which virtual witnessing was especially important. Shapin argue that "the technology of virtual witnessing involves the production in a reader's mind of such an image of an experimental scene as obviates the necessity for either its direct witness or its replication".[126] According to Richard Cunningham,

it describes "the use of a variety of techniques, from simple description to the provision of visual images, to enable a reader, as vividly as possible, to imagine herself into the arena of the experiment offered as proof of the scientific claim at hand".[127] To collapse the border between first- and second-hand experience was necessary. Experimental philosophy could only confirm something as factual if it had been asserted as such through the communication of the experiment to a public realm.[128]

As Goethe's attempt to bring the history of physics "before his mind" indicates, the nature of natural philosophy was no different in the late eighteenth century. This is shown, to cite one example, by Forster's conviction that an ideal researcher was an "impartial observer [who] only faithfully and reliably reports what he perceives without pondering for a long time which theory [*Spekulation*] his perception favours".[129] This impartial observer, Forster noted, "needs to know nothing about the relevant philosophical disputes but must instead follow only accepted linguistic usage".[130] By pointing beyond interpretation to the objects of observation themselves, the impartial observer made himself invisible to the reader. The narrator cloaked himself as a conduit through which readers might experience travelling for themselves.

Conclusion

Although theorist readers threatened the professional identities of practitioners, this threat was also a gift. A poison (*Gift*), as Kant argues in his first Critique, is always also a gift (*Heilmittel*), toxin and cure at the same time[131] Kant's participatory reading granted research the status of natural philosophy, and enabled him to regard himself as "not wholly incompetent in knowledge about nature [*Naturkunde*]".[132] Shielded by the protective spell of Homean forgetfulness, Kant's "trust in his knowledge and the desire to take classes from him went so far during his years as a lecturer that one believed he was able to teach *anything* that could be considered part of the philosophy faculty".[133]

Kant's display of rather extreme confidence allows us to nuance the notion of the virtual witness and the concept of publicity it is associated with. It is clear that the term virtual witnessing, looking at the reader from the natural philosopher's perspective, fails to capture the full ramifications of what participatory reading meant during the late eighteenth century. The question – "how a *universal* knowledge-claim about the natural world", as Peter Dear puts it, "can be justified on the basis of *singular* items of individual experience?"[134] – to which virtual witnessing is a solution is answered through violence: it solves the problem of assent by destroying the singularity of the experience about which assent is sought. To perform forgetful reading when consuming literature on travelling or experimentation was not to experience these activities second-handedly,

as if a difference existed between virtual and actual experiences. This particular brand of reading enabled readers to experiment and travel for themselves.

Once this distinction between virtuality and actuality, guaranteeing the integrity of the natural philosopher's experiential body and professional identity, is dropped, two items become obvious. First, although virtual witnessing is conjoined by historians of science with modern notions such as publicity and the public sphere, it is a wholly pre-critical, even scholasticist, phenomena. The communicative traffic in notes that Kant engages in and is engaged by has no place for originality and exclusivity. Second, the forgetful, von Zedlitzean text-consumer is best described as a body snatcher. He or she invades a targeted body to feed on the experiential input that its sensory organs receive by interacting with physical surroundings. Thus the Philippean shell, or avatar, the physiological interface von Zedlitz uses to access embodied experiences of lecture hall sense data, corrupts the identity of both the vessel and its user. Forgetful reading, allowing experiences to be copied and re-experienced without informational loss, robs the experiencing person of the exclusivity of his body and the sense impressions that it is receiving. It is thus a small wonder that practitioners like Forster and Metzger, host-bodies to Homean readers, responded so ambiguously to Kant, the body-snatching invader *par excellence* of late eighteenth-century culture. The collective enterprise of natural philosophy desired the *gift* of assent it received from readers. But it treated the forgetful invader as an intruding *Gift*, compromising the identity of the host by blurring the distinction between actual and imagined experiences. This g/*Gift* thus made natural philosophy possible by making the professional identity of the natural philosopher impossible, and vice versa.

Summary

Lecture-notes and common-places. Reading and writing about experience in late eighteenth-century Prussia. By Jens Eriksson. This paper revolves around the late eighteenth-century problem of participatory reading in Prussian university education: can textual accounts give readers access to real-life experiences, even though he or she is not physically present at the site where they are made? By highlighting two kinds of note-taking practices, lecture note-taking and common-placing, two sets of answers are given. Immanuel Kant, the focal point of the article, informs his students that their note-taking efforts were to no avail. In order to understand his lectures, it was necessary to listen to them *in situ*. This view was highly negotiable, though. Kant's own note-taking practices, used to prepare his lectures, were based on the assumption that an imaginative reader could share the experience that experimenters and travelers described in their research reports. This, the analysis argues, provoked two reactions from

the natural philosophical camp. On the one hand, they were irritated by readers like Kant, upsetting the division of labour between readers and doers. On the other hand, this participatory reading was actively encouraged by practitioners. The outcome of the analysis therefore throws new light upon the hitherto unexamined relation between experience and textualization in late eighteenth-century Prussia.

Notes

1. I am indebted to several people for the completion of this article. H. Otto Sibum assisted me with last minute translations of some passages in German. Two anonymous peer reviewers gave intelligent and immensely helpful comments on an early draft. Bosse Holmqvist has been tremendously helpful with linguistic issues. I thank him for his patience as well, without which this paper would not have made it to print.

2. See, for example, Peter Josephson: "Böcker eller universitet? Om ett tema i tysk utbildningspolitisk debatt kring 1800" in this book.

3. Abraham Freiherr von Zedlitz: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe von Zedlitz*, AA:X: 222–23. References like this one point to the volume and page number of the *Akademie Ausgabe* of Kant's *gesammelte Schriften*. I have consulted *Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant in translation* (Cambridge, 1995–) for translational matters.

4. von Zedlitz., AA:X:222–23.

5. Ibid., AA:X:222–23.

6. Ibid., AA:X:222–23.

7. Ibid., AA:X:222–23.

8. Werner Stark: "Historical notes and interpretative questions" in Brian Jacobs & Patrick Kain (eds.): *Essays on Kant's anthropology* (Cambridge, 2003), 16. See also Reinhard Brandt & Werner Stark: "B. Die Textzeugen: Entstehung und Datierung" in Reinhardt Brandt & Werner Stark (eds.): *Kants gesammelte Schriften* 25 (Berlin, 1997).

9. To my knowledge, no one has studied the "*mediageschichtliche Aspekte*" of Kantian lecture notes. For studies on writing practices in eighteenth-century Germany, see Paul Goetsch (ed.): *Lesen und Schreiben im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert: Studien zur ihrer Bewertung in Deutschland, England und Frankreich* (Tübingen, 1994).

10. Brian Jacobs & Patrick Stein: "Introduction" in Brian Jacobs & Patrick Kain (eds.): *Essays on Kant's anthropology* (Cambridge, 2003), 7.

11. Ibid., 7.

12. Ann Blair: "Note taking as an art of transmission" in *Critical inquiry* 31:1 (2004), 89.

13. Ibid., 89.

14. Ibid., 89.

15. Ibid., 89.

16. Stark: "Historical notes and interpretative questions", 19. See also Brandt & Stark: "B. c3. Geschriebene Texte und mündlicher Vortrag" in Brandt & Stark (eds.): *Kants gesammelte Schriften Bd. 25*.

17. Jacobs & Stein: "Introduction", 7.

18. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe an Marcus Herz*, AA:X:242.

19. Ibid., AA:X:247.

20. Rudolph Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch* (Hamburg, 1990), 151–152.

21. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe an Marcus Herz*, AA:X:245–46.

22. Ibid., AA:X:242.

23. Ibid., AA:X:245–46.

24. Ibid., AA:X:242.

25. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA: II:306. The auditorium was a thoroughly homosocial space, exclusively reserved for males. Manliness is a frequently referred to ideal in Kant's *gesammelte Schriften*. This strong focus on manliness has not been studied enough. See Jens Ljunggren: *Kroppens bildning. Linggymnastikens manlighetsprojekt 1790–1914* (Stockholm/Stehag, 1999); "Bildningselitens sociala och könsliga formering under 1800-talet" in *Känslornas krig. Första världskriget och den tyska bildningselitens androgyna manlighet*, (Stockholm/Stehag, 2004); George L. Mosse, *The image of man. The creation of modern masculinity* (Oxford, 1996).

26. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 117–118.

27. Ibid., 117–118.

28. Ibid., 117–118.

29. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA: II:307.

30. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 28.

31. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA: II:307.

32. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 28–29.

33. William L. Clark: *Academic charisma and the origins of the research university* (Chicago, 2006), 411.

34. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA: II:307.

35. David Lloyd: "Kant's examples" in *Representations* 28 (1989), 41.

36. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe and Marcus Herz*, AA:X:240–241.

37. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 217–222.

38. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe an Marcus Herz,* AA:X:242.

39. Ibid., AA:X:242.

40. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 57.

41. Ibid., 218.

42. Ibid., 218.

43. Wenzel Johann Gottfried von Purgstall: "Briefe über Kant. Mitgeteilt von Karl Hügelman in *Altpreussische Monatsschrift* 16 (1879), 608.

44. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 32–33.

45. **Von Purgstall: "Briefe über Kant. Mit**geteilt von Karl Hügelman", 608.

46. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 59–60.

47. Theodore Ziolkowski: *German romanticism and its institutions* (Princeton, 1990), 255.

48. Manfred Kuehn: *Kant. A biography* (Cambridge, 2001), 408.

49. Kant: *Kleinere Vorlesungen (Enzyklopädie, Mathematik, Physik) und Ergänzungen*, AA:XXIX:30.

50. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 27.

51. Quoted from Hamilton H. Beck: *The elusive "I" in the novel. **Hippel, Sterne, Diderot, Kant*** (New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main & Paris, 1987), 111.

52. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe an Marcus Herz*, AA:XX:240.

53. Marcus Herz: *Briefwechsel, 1778. Briefe von Marcus Herz*, AA:X:244–45.

54. Ibid., AA:X:244–45.

55. Kuehn: *Kant. A biography*, 391.

56. For Kant's use of metaphors, examples and analogies, see Hans Ingensiep: "Die biologischen Analogien und die erkenntnistheoretischen Alternativen in Kants *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B §27" in *Kant-studien* 85 (1994), 385; and Michael G. Lee: *The German 'Mittelweg': Garden theory and philosophy in the time of Kant* (New York & London, 2007), 215.

57. See, for example, Richard Yeo: "Ephraim Chambers's Cyclopaedia (1728) and the tradition of commonplaces" in *Journal of the history of ideas* 57:1 (1996), 157–175.

58. Richard Yeo: "Notebooks as memory aids: Precepts and practices in early modern England" in *Memory studies* 1:1 (2008), 134.

59. Karl Rosenkranz & Friedrich Wilhelm Schubert (eds.): *Immanuel Kants sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1838–9), 9.

60. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 26.

61. Ibid., 132.

62. Ludwig Ernst Borowski: *Darstellung des Leben und Characters Immanuel Kants* (Königsberg, 1804), 61.

63. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA: II:309.

64. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 78.

65. Kant: *Anthropologie in der pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA:VII:128.

66. **Kant: "Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientiren?"**, AA:VIII:133.

67. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Briefe 1798. 486. An Schiller" in *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe: Vierte Auflage Erster Band, mit einem Titelbild und einem Brieffaksimile* (Stuttgart, 1881).

68. I borrow the term *Lebensform* from Ernst Cassirer's biography on Kant. See Ernst Cassirer: *Kants Leben und Lehre* in *Immanuel Kants Werke II* (Berlin, 1921), 1–4. Cassirer is the most striking example of the opposite tendency. He regards Kant's life and

work as inseparable from each other. In contrast to virtually everyone else, Cassirer sees this as a good thing.

69. Rolf George: "The lives of Kant" in *Philosophy and phenomenological research* 47:3 (1987), 493.

70. Wilhelm Dilthey: *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* in Bernhard Groethuysen (ed.): *Gesammelte Schriften* (1883; Leipzig & Berlin, 1922), viii.

71. Otfried Höffe: *Immanuel Kant* (München, 2000), 15. For a similar analysis, see Arsenji Gulyga: *Immanuel Kant*, tr. by Sigrun Bielfeldt, (Frankfurt, 1981), 7, 9. Manfred Kuehn has criticized this kind of interpretation of Kant's life and work. Readers are advised to consult his "Introduction" in *Kant. A biography* for a critical evaluation of Kant biographies.

72. Öffe: *Immanuel Kant*, 15.

73. Heinrich Heine: *Zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Religion in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1832), 241.

74. See Manfred Kuehn: *Kant. A biography*, 325.

75. I have quoted the letter correspondence between the two Lichtenberg brothers from Gerhard Lehman: *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Interpretation der Philosophie Kants* (Berlin, 1969), 67.

76. Georg Cristoph Lichtenberg: "Über Selbstdenken, Lesen, und Bücher" in Wilhelm Herzog (ed.): *Gedanken, Satiren, Fragmente Band I* (Jena, 1907), 78–79. For a more in-depth analysis of Lichtenberg's view on reading, see Stephan Goldmann: "Lesen, Schreiben und das topische Denken bei Georg Cristoph Lichtenberg" in Paul Goetsch (ed.): *Lesen und Schreiben im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert: Studien zur ihrer Bewertung in Deutschland, England und Frankreich* (Tübingen, 1994), 79–91.

77. My use of the term natural philosophy is based on Peter Dear's analysis of how the practice of natural philosophy changed during the early modern period from Aristotelian speculation to Baconian interventionism. Peter Dear: *The intelligibility of nature. How science makes sense of the world* (Chicago, 2006), 8.

78. Lehman: *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Interpretation der Philosophie Kants*, 67.

79. Norton Wise: "Making visible" in *Isis* 97:1 (2006), 97. See also Lissa Roberts and Simon Schaffer: "Workshops of the hand and mind" in Lissa Roberts & Simon Schaffer (eds.): *The mindful hand. Inquiry and invention from the late Renaissance to early Industrialization* (Cambridge, 2007); Andrew Warwick: *Masters of theory. Cambridge and the rise of mathematical physics* (Cambridge, 2003).

80. Kant: *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace*, AA:VIII:91.

81. Robert Bernasconi: "Who invented the concept of race? Kant's role in the Enlightenment construction of race" in Robert Bernasconi (ed.): *Race* (Malden, 2001), 11.

82. The question of Kant's racism has attracted a lot of attention in recent years. I have elsewhere examined the rhetorical function that racial hybrids played for Kant's work on racial differentiation, as well as critical philosophy in general. See my "Race mixing and contradiction: Kant's ambivalence toward hybridity" in Lisa Folkmarson Käll (ed.): *Normality/Normativity* (Uppsala, 2009), 131–154. See also: Pauline Kleingeld: "Kant's second thoughts on race" in *The philosophical quarterly* 57:229 (2007).

83. Peter McLaughlin: "Kant on heredity and adaption" in Staffan Müller-Wille & Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (eds.): *Heredity produced. At the crossroads of biology, politics, and culture, 1500–1870* (Cambridge & London, 2007), 282.

84. See Rolf George: "The lives of Kant", 490.

85. Late eighteenth-century travel writing is a thoroughly studied field. See, for example, Peter J. Brenner: *Der Reisebericht in der deutschen Literatur* (Tübingen, 1990).

86. Georg Forster: *Werke, vol. 8. Kleine Schriften zu Philosophie und Zeitgeschichte* (Berlin, 1975), 400.

87. The *Auseinandersetzung* between Kant and Forster deserves more scholarly attention. See Thomas Strack: "Philosophical anthropology on the eve of biological determinism. Immanuel Kant and Georg Forster on the moral qualities and biological characteristics of the human race" in *Central European history* 29:3 (1996), 285.

88. Johann Metzger: *Aeusserung über Kant, seinen Charackter und seine Meinungen* (Königsberg, 1804), 42–43.The English translation of the passage is borrowed from: Sara Eigen Figal: *Heredity, race, and the birth of the modern* (New York & London, 2008), 63.

89. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht*

von der Einrichtung Vorlesungen in der Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766, AA:II:307–307.

90. Kant: *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA:VII:120.

91. Kant: *M. Immanuel Kants Nachricht von der Einrichtung Vorlesungen in der Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–1766*, AA:II:307–307.

92. Kant: *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA:VII:120.

93. Bruno Latour: *Science in action. How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, 1987), 224.

94. Ibid., 224.

95. Dorinda Outram: "New spaces in natural history" in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord & E. C. Spary (eds.): *Cultures of natural history* (Cambridge, 1996), 262–263.

96. See Michael Dettelbach: "Humboldtian science" in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord & E. C. Spary (eds.): *Cultures of natural history*; and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra: "How derivative was Humboldt? Microcosmic nature narratives in early modern Spanish America and the (other) origins of Humboldt's ecological sensibilities" in Londa Schiebinger & Claudia Swan (eds.): *Colonial botany. Science, commerce, and politics in the early modern* world (Philadelphia, 2004).

97. Rudolf Stichweh: "The unity of teaching and research," in Stefan Poggi & Maurizio Bossi (eds.): *Romanticism in science. Science in Europe, 1790–1840* (Dordrecht, Boston & London, 1994), 191.

98. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 418–21

99. Ibid., 418–421.

100. Kant: *Logik Herder*, AA:XXIV:3–6.

101. Ernst Cassirer: *Kants Leben und Lehre* (Berlin, 1921), 45.

102. Herman Schmalenbach: *Kants Religion* (Berlin, 1929), 41.

103. See Robert Burch: "On the ethical determination of geography. A Kantian prolegomena" in Andrew Light & Andrew M. Smith (eds.): *Space, place and environmental ethics* (London, 1997), 28.

104. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 215.

105. Ibid., 246.

106. Ibid., 216.

107. **Sabina Laetitia Kowalewski & Wer**ner Stark (eds.): *Werke. Königsberger Kantiana* (Hamburg, 1987), 40.

108. Kant is in this sense highly interesting for recent debates among historians of science about the status of tacit knowledge and the embodied self. See Michael Polanyi: *Personal knowledge. Towards a post-critical philosophy* (Chicago, 1958), 60; and Robert Evans & Harry Collins: *Rethinking expertise* (Chicago, 2007), 79.

109. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: "Der Versuch als Vermittler zwischen Objekt und Subjekt" in Ernst Beutler (ed.): *J. W. Goethe. Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche Herg* (Zürich, 1949), 845.

110. See Hamilton H. Beck: *The elusive "I" in the novel. Hippel, Sterne, Diderot, Kant*, 89.

111. Ibid., 57.

112. Henry Home: *Elements of criticism, the seventh edition with the author's corrections and additions* Vol. I (Edinburgh, 1788), 351.

113. Home: *Elements of criticism, the seventh edition with the author's corrections and additions* Vol. II (Edinburgh, 1788), 93.

114. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: *Briefwechsel, 1790. Von Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, AA:XI:211.

115. A great deal of scholarly energy has been spent on the Kant-Blumenbach connection. The majority of the studies dedicated to this topic are interested in the question if Kant had an actual influence on Blumenbach, and vice versa. For two recent examples, see Robert Richards: "Kant and Blumenbach on the *Bildungstrieb*. A historical misunderstanding" in *Studies in the history and philosophy of biology and biomedical sciences 31 (*2000), 11–32; and Robert Bernasconi: "Kant and Blumenbach's polyps. A neglected chapter in the history of the concept of race" in Sara Eigen & Mark Larrimore (eds.) *The German invention of race* (Albany, 2006). To my knowledge, none has studied the Kant-Blumenbach correspondence from a network perspective.

116. K. F. H. Marx: *Zum Andenken an Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Eine Gedächtnissrede gehalten in der Sitzung der königlichen Societät der Wissenschaft den 8 Februar, 1840* in Thomas Bendyshe (ed.): *The anthropological treatises of Blumenbach and Hunter* (Göttingen, 1840), 18.

117. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1790. Briefe an Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, AA:XI:185.

118. Kant: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA:V:424.

119. Johann Benjamin Erhard: *Briefwechsel. 1793. Briefe an Kant,* AA:XI:406.

120. Kant: *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA:VII:321.

121. Christoph Girtanner, *Über das Kantische Prinzip für Naturgeschichte* in Robert Bernasconi (ed.): *Concepts of race in eighteenth century* 7 (Bristol, 2001), 55.

122. For a more detailed account of the correspondence between Kant and von Sömmerring, see: Peter McLaughlin: "Soemmerring und Kant. Über das Organ der Seele und den Streit der Fakultäten" in Gunter Mann & Franz Dumont (eds.): *Samuel Thomas von Soemmerring und die Gelehrten der Goethezeit* (New York & Stuttgart, 1985).

123. **Quoted from: Friedrich Willh. Schu**bert (ed.): *Kants sämmtliche Schriften. Kants kleine Anthropologish-Praktische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1838), IX.

124. Harry Liebersohn: *The travelers' world. Europe to the Pacific* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 2006), 206.

125. Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann: *Briefwechsel, 1790. Briefe von Johann Benjamin Jachmann*, AA:XI:221.

126. Steven Shapin: "Pump and circumstance. Robert Boyle's literary technology" in *Social studies of science* 14:4 (1984), 491.

127. Andrew Cunningham: "*Virtual witnessing* and the role of the reader in a new natural philosophy" in *Philosophy and rhetoric* (2001), 208.

128. Much has been written on the public nature of science. For a general overview of research on this topic, see Jan Golinski: "Introduction. Science as public culture" in *Science as public culture. Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760–1820* (Cambridge, 1992). See also Jacob Orrje: "Reading art, reading nature. Forming the seventeenth-century gentleman through art and nature in readings of microscopic literature" in this book.

129. Georg Forster: "Noch etwas über die Menschenraßen" in *Der Teutsche Merkur* 4 (1786), 62.

130. Ibid., 62.

131. I have examined this overlooked aspect of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* elsewhere. See my "Race mixing and contradiction. Kant's ambivalence toward hybridity" in Lisa Folkmarson Käll (ed.): *Normality/Normativity* (Uppsala, 2009), 131–154. See also Marcel Mauss: "Gift, gift" in Alan D. Schritt (ed.): *The logic of the gift* (New York & London, 1997); and David Martyn: *Sublime failures. The ethics of Kant and Sade* (Detroit, 2003), 106, 120.

132. Kant: *Briefwechsel, 1795. Briefe an Samuel Thomas Soemmerring*, AA:XII:30.

133. Malter: *Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, 28.

134. Peter Dear: *Discipline and experience. The mathematical way in the scientific revolution* (Chicago, 1995), 13.