

Abstract

Kant's Earliest Solution to the Mind/Body Problem

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In 1747, Kant believed that the mind/body problem presupposed several false and interrelated assumptions that fell under the general view that the essential force of body is *vis motrix*, namely that bodies act only by causing changes of motion, that bodies can be acted upon only by being moved, and that souls and bodies do not share a common force. He argued in *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces* that the traditional *vis motrix* view, which was defended by Wolff, appealed to an unexplanatory and metaphysically incoherent conception of force.

Kant maintained that God acted to unify our world in such a way that all its finite substances possess a *vis activa* capable of producing motion in bodies and representations in souls. Unlike Leibniz's account of *vis activa*, Kant's account was compatible with the existence of transeunt or externally-directed forces. In-

deed, Kant argued that every change in our world involves the exercise of a transient force.

In *Living Forces*, Kant used these ideas to solve the mind/body problem. This study evaluates Kant's solution and traces his responses in later pre-critical texts to several acute difficulties. Chief among these difficulties was that his account of the "divine schema" of our world was incompatible with his metaphysical dualism: to exist in our world, Kant argued, all substances must possess attractive and repulsive forces, but attributing these forces to souls implied that they also possessed the same material nature as the physical monads out of which material bodies are composed.

Kant did not recognize this problem until the early 1760s, and in the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766) he maintained that it was insoluble. In the *Metaphysik L₁* lectures (mid-1770s), Kant articulated a new understanding of the mind/body problem that centered on the idea that the body is an object of outer sense and the soul an object of inner sense.

I conclude that, although his understanding of mind/body connectedness remained inadequate in the mid-1770s, Kant's struggles with this and related issues contributed to the development of systematic critical strictures on metaphysical reasoning and to the critical theory of inner sense.

This abstract is approved:

Chair

Date