

*published in: *Arbitrium: Zeitschrift für Rezensionen zur germanistischen Literaturwissenschaft*. Vol. 38, Issue I (April 2020), pg. 81-83.

Johann Georg Heinrich Feder. Ausgewählte Schriften. Hrgb. Von Hans-Peter Nowitzki, Udo Roth, Gideon Stiening. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018. Werkprofile Band 9.

and

Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821): Empirismus und Popularphilosophie Zwischen Wolff und Kant. Hrgb. Von Hans-Peter Nowitzki, Udo Roth, Gideon Stiening. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018. Werkprofile Band 10.

These volumes are the ninth and tenth installments of De Gruyter's *Werkprofile* series, which showcases both new interpretations as well as editions of works by lesser-known philosophers, intellectuals, and writers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Following volumes on J.G. Sulzer (Vol. 1), Michael Hißmann (Vols. 2, 3, and 8), J.C. Gottsched (Vol. 4), J.H. Tetens (Vols. 5 and 6), and G.F. Meier (Vol. 7), these two volumes are devoted to Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821). Feder's approximately 30-year career as an important intellectual in late eighteenth-century Germany, which he spent almost entirely in Göttingen, had both highs and lows. He published important textbooks on theoretical philosophy (*Logik und Metaphysik*, 1769) and practical philosophy (*Lehrbuch der Praktischen Philosophie*, 1770), the former of which being so successful that it went through eight editions during Feder's lifetime. Feder's name is perhaps best known in the history of philosophy as one of Immanuel Kant's first public critics. Notoriously, Feder edited Christian Garve's (1742-1798) early review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which was published in 1782 in the *Göttinger Gelehrten Anzeigen*. Feder's editing made the review seem more critical than Garve originally intended and it caused Kant to write a response in his *Prolegomena* (1783). Feder's outspoken criticism of Kant's philosophy continued with a monograph (*Ueber Raum und Causalität*, 1787) and the founding of the *Philosophische Bibliothek* with Christoph Meiners (1747-1810). Feder's opposition to Kant arguably hurt his career; the journal performed so poorly that it was discontinued after four volumes. Feder's reputation continues to suffer the consequences, for his involvement in the 'Garve/Feder' review has had the unfortunate consequence that he is often now only understood in Kant's shadow. These volumes are to be praised for doing much to correct this situation. The editors have done an excellent job presenting Feder's thought as worthy of study in its own light, as well as advancing our understanding of his popular and eclectic philosophy, which

incorporated elements of both Wolffianism, Locke's empiricism, and Scottish common-sense philosophy.

As its title suggest, the first of the two volumes, *Johann Georg Heinrich Feder. Ausgewählte Schriften*, offers a selection of Feder's writings. As the editors note in the introduction, Feder's literary contributions fall into four main categories: monographs, editorial activities, articles and essays, and scholarly reviews. This selection includes samples from all but the second category, meaning the famous Garve/Feder review is excluded, and quite rightly as this was not written by Feder himself. With respect to Feder's monographs, the editors had the difficult task of selecting which books to include. Feder's most important monographs are his book-length critique of Kant, (*Ueber Raum und Causalität*, 1787), his popularization of Rousseau (*Der neue Emil*, 1768/71), and his four-volume study of the will (*Untersuchung über den menschlichen Willen*, 1779-86). None of these are included in the present volume, likely due to the fact that the first and third monographs just listed were already re-printed in the mid-twentieth century. Instead, the editors have included selections from *Über das moralische Gefühl* (1776/92) and *Über den Ehrtrieb* (1778). The most space, approximately 60 pages of the present volume, is given to the first text, and for good reason: in it we find an excellent statement of Feder's practical philosophy, which illustrates both the systematic nature of his ethics, as well as his relation to figures like Wolff, Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, and Hume. The second selection from Feder's monographs showcases Feder's theory of education, an aspect of his thought rarely appreciated but deserving attention. Next, the volume offers a sample of Feder's articles and essays. In the present volume we have examples of Feder as a popular philosopher, having written articles on the death penalty and posthumous fame, as well as examples of Feder's controversies with Kant on topics such as eudaimonism and the a priori. The editors have included excellent selections because they represent samples from the beginning, middle, and later periods of Feder's career. The final section of the first volume includes selections of the many reviews Feder wrote. Readers can find here Feder's review of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which is largely responsible for Smith's economics being widely known in eighteenth century Germany, as well as reviews of Kant's second *Critique* and works by Garve, Reinhold, and Fichte. The first volume has the goal of offering readers "einen repräsentativen Ausschnitt aus seinem [Feders] vielfältigen und umfangreichen Werk" (XXXIV), and it certainly achieves this. New readers will find here an excellent sample whereby to enter Feder's thought, and scholars are offered modern editions of some of Feder's more difficult to find texts.

The second volume, *Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821): Empirismus und Popularphilosophie Zwischen Wolff und Kant*, is an edited collection of essays representing new research on all aspects of Feder's writings. The volume is the result of a conference that took place in Weimar in March 2014, which the present reviewer had the pleasure of attending. The volume's 19 chapters cover an immense variety of topics, illustrating the broad reach of Feder's academic interests. After an initial two chapters, one introducing the volume authored by the editors and another on the biographical details of Feder's life (Sören Schmidtke), there are five main sections. In the first section, 'Erkenntnistheorie und Psychologie', there are chapters on Feder's understanding of psychology and its relation to logic and metaphysics (Paola Rumore), his account of inner sense (Udo Thiel), his engagement with Kant on the concept of space (Andree Hahmann), Feder's textbook on logic and metaphysics and its influence on Kant (Giuseppe Motta), and Feder's branding of Kant as a sceptic (Kichiro Fukuda). The second section, 'Ethik und Theologie', also consisting of five chapters, includes discussions of Feder's contribution to the debate on the foundations of morality (Achim Vesper), his important and unique conception of the moral sense (Nele Schneider), his conception of happiness (Frank Grunert), his review of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (Gideon Stiening), and the relation between reason and revelation in his thought (Stefan Klingner). In the four chapters of the third section, 'Rechtstheorie und Pädagogik', there are contributions on Feder's conception of practical philosophy and natural law (Dieter Hüning), his thoughts on the rights of an author (Frank Zöllner), *Neuer Emil* and his views on the proper education of humankind (Jutta Heinz), and the theoretical underpinnings of Feder's conception of pedagogy (Udo Roth). In the fourth section, 'Popularphilosophie in der Kontroverse', there are three chapters dealing with a variety of subjects such as Feder's anthropology (Stefanie Buchenau), his text on posthumous fame (Dirk Werle), and the influence of Feder's philosophical textbooks on university instruction in eighteenth-century Germany (Hans-Peter Nowitzki). The volume concludes with an appendix, which includes a chronology of Feder's life and works, an index of persons, and an extensive and immensely helpful bibliography. Indeed, the bibliography (which is included in both volumes) is a significant contribution and an immensely helpful resource in its own right: it includes not only a complete list of Feder's monographs, articles, and activities as an editor, but also a chronological list of the immense number of reviews that Feder wrote. This list (itself spanning 50 of the present volume's nearly 60-page bibliography!) is a testament to the fact that scholarly reviews made up a significant portion of Feder's intellectual activity (see XXXIV). The bibliography also includes a comprehensive

list of secondary-literature on Feder's thought. At less than five pages, one hopes these volumes will do much to expand this list in the future.

A student or scholar approaching a figure like Feder for the first time is looking for a few things: an informative introduction to the life and works of the figure in question, a guide to the figure's writings, up to date scholarship on the most important aspects of the figure's thought, and resources that enable one to do further research. These volumes provide all of the above, and more. From those who are simply curious about one or more aspects of Feder's thought, to scholars who wish to conduct more serious research, these volumes should be every reader's first point of contact. They offer a selection of important primary texts that one will need to reference, as well as an impressive collection of the most recent scholarship on Feder, all of which advances our understanding of Feder and his relation to his contemporaries quite significantly.

michaelwalschots@trentu.ca

Michael H. Walschots
Trent University
Department of Philosophy
1600 West Bank Drive
Peterborough, ON
Kanada K9L 0G2