

**Paul Redding**

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After more than two centuries of intensive study, there is still no agreement on even the main outlines of Kant's position. In the 1960s, a series of analytic philosophers, including Bird, Bennett and Strawson, reinterpreted the critical philosophy from a specifically analytic point of view. The latter famously reread the critical philosophy in discarding transcendental idealism. Strawson's non-idealist reading of Kant's position as an early version of analytic empiricism has been very influential. Analytic observers have continued to study Kant, often in recasting the critical philosophy as a (semantic) theory of reference.

Redding is committed to an analytic approach to Kant. He repeatedly refers to so-called category mistakes, refers to Wittgenstein to make sense of various idealist thinkers, such as Hegel, and cites almost exclusively analytic sources. Yet unlike most analytic observers, he is concerned to rehabilitate Kantian idealism, hence idealism, in considering rather than in ignoring a wide range of figures. His reason is that German idealism sometimes anticipates positions analytic philosophers now favor. The result is a well-informed, revisionary reading of Kant's critical philosophy and its relation to German idealism.

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, was greeted by an uneasy silence, which was broken by the publication of the notorious Garve-Feder review. The review claimed that the critical philosophy was a higher form of Berkeleyanism. Kant, who was deeply offended, believed his position was misunderstood. He called attention in the *Prolegomena* to the desire to respond to Hume as the catalyst that allowed him to surmount his early dogmatism and become a critical philosopher. He further noted his concern to provide a generalized solution to the problem following from Hume's attack on causal connections in experience.

Redding innovates with respect to Kant scholarship in simply ignoring Kant's relation to Hume in favor of his relation to Leibniz. His view rests on a number of central 'contentions' following from Kant's supposed ideality with respect to the form of representation as distinguished from Berkeley's ideality with respect to matter, in short the latter's immaterialism. He notes that for Kant the mind contributes the spatiotemporal form and the conceptual form of objects. He understands this to mean that Kantian and Fichtean idealism can only be understood against the Aristotelian hylomorphic background (2).

Redding discerns two views of transcendental idealism. T1, or the weak interpretation, is the well-known skepticism about knowledge of things-in-themselves.

T2, or the strong interpretation, asserts that ‘everything into which traditional metaphysics inquired and which it took to be ultimately real was, in some sense, mind-dependent, and did not have per se existence’ (2). For Redding, continental idealism is idealist rather than realist about form. With this in mind, he offers the following preliminary sketch of his view: ‘Thus Leibniz can be interpreted as attempting to reconcile the modern mechanistic worldview of Galileo and Newton with ancient Greek metaphysical notions based on the Aristotelian concept of “substance”; Kant, as trying to reconcile the existence of moral action with the causally determined world of Newtonian science; Hegel, as attempting generally to reconcile opposed philosophical points of view by appealing to a “dialectical” theory of the unity of opposites, and so on’ (3).

Redding’s suggestion that we read Kant through Leibniz in effect reads Kant against Kant. He points out that Berkeley, who is widely understood as the prototypical idealist, is in fact an immaterialist who never uses the term ‘idealism’ to designate his own position. According to Redding, Kant’s position is deeply dependent on Leibniz’. One way to put the point is to say that if Berkeley is an immaterialist, and Leibniz is a materialist, in calling attention to Leibniz Redding is by inference pointing to a materialist dimension in the critical philosophy.

Redding stresses Leibniz’s concern to bring together ancient metaphysics and modern science. The latter reconciles modern science and Christian dogma through a pre-established harmony established by God. Redding suggests that in his pre-critical critique of Swedenborg mysticism in ‘Dreams of the Spirit-Seer’ (1766) Kant is committed to a monadological conception of the world that, unlike Leibniz’ position, allows causal interaction between monads (34). Kant objects to the Leibnizian view of monads as windowless in insisting on local causal interaction (37).

Redding’s interpretation of Kant and post-Kantian German idealism through the former’s relation to Leibniz as well as the specific readings of ‘transcendental idealism’ are controversial. It is not surprising to say that Kant is skeptical about knowledge of things in themselves. It is surprising to cast the strong reading of ‘transcendental idealism’ as a claim that the objects of metaphysics are mind-dependent. ‘Metaphysics’ in Kant, as in Descartes, seems to mean ‘epistemology’, not ‘ontology’, hence something other than the contents of traditional metaphysics, which is ontologically directed, as it were. The Copernican revolution, a term Kant never uses to refer to his own position but which Kant’s contemporaries (e. g. Reinhold, Schelling) employed to refer to the critical philosophy, goes beyond mind-dependence in suggesting we can only know what we in some sense ‘construct’.

Redding’s claim for Leibniz as the progenitor of German idealism appears difficult. Others, for instance Cassirer, analyze this relation. One problem lies in understanding what Kant and the post-Kantian German idealists have in common through the former’s relation to Leibniz. Redding emphasizes Leibniz’s materialism. He follows Rutherford’s interpretation of monads as individual substances in adding further characteristics (21).

Yet it would be odd to think of either Leibniz or Kant as committed to idealism if this term in effect amounts to ‘materialism’. If, as I suspect, German idealism turns on the formulation and later development of the Copernican revolution, then calling attention to Leibniz’ materialism does not enable a grasp of the relation among Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

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