

KANT AND RÖDL ON THE IDENTITY OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND OBJECTIVITY

A CRITICAL STUDY OF SEBASTIAN RÖDL'S *SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS
AND OBJECTIVITY: AN INTRODUCTION TO ABSOLUTE IDEALISM*

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ABSTRACT · Sebastian Rödl's 2018 book articulates and unfolds the thought that judgment's self-consciousness is identical with its objectivity. This view is laid forth in a Hegelian spirit, against the spirit of Kant's merely formal or transcendental idealism. I review Rödl's central theses and then offer a criticism of his reading of Kant. I hold that we can agree with Rödl that self-consciousness is identical with objectivity (though only in a 'formal' sense). We can also agree with Rödl that this identity enables us to see the completeness and the incompleteness of judgment as two sides of one coin. And, it is not necessary to reject the formality or 'emptiness' of Kant's 'I think' in order to establish these points. Indeed, the virtue of these Kantian theses flows directly from Kant's formal identification of self-consciousness with objectivity. And, because Rödl need not reject these features of Kant's formal idealism, he also need not locate them as the source of the need for a turn to Hegel.

KEYWORDS · Self-consciousness; Objectivity; Idealism; Kant; Hegel.

INTRODUCTION

IN *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity: An Introduction to Absolute Idealism*, Sebastian Rödl articulates and unfolds what I shall here call the *identity thesis*: that judgment's self-consciousness is identical with its objectivity. The following thought represents Rödl's introduction to the topic:

In judging, I think it valid so to judge (...) Thinking it valid to judge as I do, I think my judgment true; I think that things are as I judge them to be. As I think my judgment valid in judging, I take my judgment to be, not only true, but non-accidentally so. I take my judgment to be knowledge.¹

To judge that *S is P* is to be conscious *that I am* judging that *S is P*. In being conscious of so judging, I am conscious of the correctness of so judging, in one and the same act of the mind. I do not judge that *S is P* in one act, and then judge, in a second act, that it is correct so to judge.² The judgment that *S is P* is nothing but the assertion of the truth of *S is P*. And, because the judgment of the truth of *S is P* is internal to the

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¹ S. RÖDL, *Self-Consciousness and Objectivity: An Introduction to Absolute Idealism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2018, p. 14 (henceforth referred to as SCO).

² Although, in the case of false judgment, my judgment of error *must* be an external point of view on my original act of judging (SCO, p. 90 n. 2).