

Im einzelnen gliedert sich die vorliegende Abhandlung in vier Abschnitte. Im ersten Kapitel soll es um die Klärung der Bedeutung und Herkunft der Ausdrücke „Antinomie“ und „Antithetik“ gehen. Im zweiten Kapitel werden Kants Selbstzeugnisse zur Genese seiner Philosophie vorgestellt und kommentiert. Das dritte Kapitel versucht, die verschiedenen Positionen zu referieren und zu bewerten, die bezüglich der Einschätzung der entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Äußerungen Kants eingenommen wurden, „um dann die Kontroverse darzustellen, die sich an der Frage entzündete, ob eine Differenz zwischen einer vorkritischen und einer kritischen Antinomie-Lehre anzusetzen sei“ (S. 23). Das vierte Kapitel gibt dann explizit die angestrebte Neubewertung der Inauguraldissertation von 1770.

Trotz des grundsätzlichen, den Begriff der Kantschen Philosophie betreffenden Einwands ist der vorliegende Band jedem an der Genese der kritischen Philosophie Interessierten zur Lektüre zu empfehlen.

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James Van Cleve: *Problems from Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. xii + 340 pages.

Problems from Kant purports to be a clear exposition, logical analysis, and thorough assessment of twelve distinct but interrelated themes arising out of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the order of the first twelve chapters, Van Cleve examines: the veracity of transcendental idealism, how necessity relates to analyticity and apriority, geometry and the ideality of space, the implications of incongruent counterparts, the ideality of time, the ideality of matter, how experience of objects arises, the nature of substance, the nature of causation, noumena and things in themselves, the self, and arguments for the existence of God. The final (thirteenth) chapter assesses the relation between Kantian idealism and contemporary forms of "irrealism", especially those defended by Putnam and Dummett. Fifteen related side topics are addressed in a series of appendices.

Van Cleve is only partially successful in achieving his aims. His exposition is usually commendably clear and rigorously logical, but it is not always as thorough as his rigorous style makes it appear. For the literature on any one of the twelve topics under consideration is so voluminous that a genuinely thorough treatment would require a far lengthier treatment. Van Cleve's appeal to the secondary literature tends to be limited to the analytic tradition of Kant interpretation, where Kant is typically interpreted as defending a form of phenomenalism (such that the objects of our experience have an entirely mental existence and nature). As a result of this relatively narrow focus, many (if not most) of the "problems" Van Cleve analyses are not properly attributed to Kant at all, but to the phenomenalism the author attributes to Kant (see e.g., p. 124) – quite inappropriately, in this reviewer's estimation. With this in mind, the word "from" in the title should be taken to carry the implication that the problems "have been drawn from" or "have arisen out of an analytical reading of", rather than "belonging essentially or explicitly to" Kant (as Van Cleve's use of "from" in the title wrongly implies). Instead of seeking to find the interpretation that gives Kant the best chance of making sense (as the principal of charity would seem to require), this book adopts the phenomenalist interpretation

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on the basis of relatively meager evidence. An even more accurately descriptive title, therefore, would be *Kantian Problems in Analytical Phenomenalism*.

If assessed for the author's skill in mental gymnastics, this book would certainly deserve a medal – at least a bronze, and possibly even a silver or gold. As such, it is bound to be instructive for anyone interested in exploring the depth of Kant's argumentation and how it *might* be construed as a defense of analytical phenomenalism. Yet for all its lucidity and depth, the book suffers from what could be called the Flamingo Syndrome: Van Cleve "stands on one leg" most of the time, in the sense that he wholly neglects the crucial role of systematicity (i.e., architectonic) as the necessary complement to all (Kantian) argumentation. The reader, therefore, should not approach this book with the hope of being shown the "forest" of the Kantian System. On the contrary, what glimpses are shown of such a forest are of *Van Cleve's* (analytical phenomenalism's) forest, not Kant's. Thus, the reader should approach each chapter of this book with the expectation of being plopped down in a different part of the forest, with no map of Kant's terrain in hand, and asked to follow the author in his attempt to dissect the minutiae of the trees that happen to be standing nearby – and perhaps also a few that have fallen! (The extent of Van Cleve's attention to systematic connectedness is his use of ample cross-references to other passages in his own book, to remind readers of the relations between the various problems being discussed.) To make matters still more difficult for unsuspecting readers, many of these trees have actually been transplanted relatively recently into the Kantian forest by Van Cleve himself (and/or by his analytical forerunners).

Not surprisingly, the most significant kind of secondary literature ignored by Van Cleve is the type that attempts to see Kant whole – seeking to grasp the systematic connections and interrelationships between the three *Critiques* at the bare minimum – before attempting to understand his specific arguments. Van Cleve has not only failed to do this, he has shown no awareness that anyone has tried. (He does briefly consider Allison's interpretation on several occasions, but without acknowledging this crucial holistic aspect of such approaches.) Consequently, he consistently overlooks the growing school of Kant-scholarship that emphasizes the perspectival character of Kant's way of philosophizing. As a result, his logical gerrymandering repeatedly appears to paint Kant into an inescapable corner, either by failing to distinguish between different perspectives Kant employs within the first *Critique* itself, or by neglecting to take into account the way some problems therein are left intentionally unresolved as a pointer toward the standpoint of one of the other two *Critiques*.

Two examples of Van Cleve's strategy will suffice to illustrate and substantiate the above observations. The first has to do with his way of taking a stand on certain fundamental issues of Kant-interpretation. While Van Cleve's analysis of the *problems* he isolates tends to be thorough in the extreme (always considering numerous alternative logical possibilities before settling on one, if any, that seems to provide the best solution), on some of the most important issues he merely takes a stand with little or no defense of his choice. To his credit, Van Cleve does tell the reader at the very outset what stands he will be taking on these crucial interpretive issues (see pp.vii-viii). The issue of this sort that give rise by far to the most serious "problems" is Van Cleve's conviction that Kant is a phenomenalist. He does briefly consider other possible interpretations, including the perspectival (via Allison), but quickly

rejects such alternatives and takes his stand with phenomenalism. After his first, uncharacteristically weak arguments in defense of this choice, he merely assumes this interpretation to be correct. Thus, for example, he reminds the reader at one point (p. 93) “Kant is a phenomenalist, like Berkeley before him and Russell, Ayer, and Lewis after him.” In the same dogmatic style, I respond: “No, he is not. He is a philosopher of perspective, who sometimes adopts positions resembling phenomenalism as a step on the way to the construction of a complete philosophical System. Those who regard Kant as a phenomenalist are taking isolated passages out of context and reading them as if they stand on their own. They are failing to read Kant whole.” The phenomenalist foundation for Kant interpretation is, in a nutshell, *Van Cleve's* “problem”. Indeed, the book ends right where it begins, with the following closing sentence (p. 225): “In the meantime, I continue to regard Kant as an old-fashioned [i.e., Berkeleyesque] idealist.”

The second example is also an illustration of the first, arising mainly in Chapter 7 (“Experience and Objects”). Instead of carefully examining Kant’s *own* usage and sticking by it as much as possible, Van Cleve’s consistent strategy is to translate Kant’s technical terms into *other* terms that Van Cleve finds more satisfactory. Thus, Van Cleve hardly uses the six key object-terms, careful distinction between which is the *sine qua non* of any accurate interpretation of Kant’s epistemology. (See Chapter VI of my book *Kant’s System of Perspectives* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993], for an example of how this can be done in a clear and systematic way.) Instead, for instance, “appearance” becomes “virtual object” throughout the entire book – a translation that is itself responsible for many of the “problems” that vex Van Cleve. Elsewhere he calls attention to Kant’s distinction between the appearance and the phenomenon (without acknowledging that Kant himself ever made such a distinction) by renaming it “object₁” vs. “object₂” (p. 91). As a result of such terminological transformations, when he does use Kant’s terms, he tends to misapply them. Just to cite one case in point, he claims Kant is not only a phenomenalist but “also a *noumenalist*” (p. 11), on the grounds that “he believes there are some objects, the things in themselves, that resist phenomenalist reduction.” But Kant believes nothing of the kind. For the thing in itself is not an object at all, but a pre-objective place-holder, referring to reality as it is (or would be) apart from all human perspectives on it; as such, it is both necessary and unproblematic as a way of getting Kant’s synthetic method off the ground. (That is, Kant’s analysis of the object starts at “ground 0”, where there is no object, but merely a presupposed context in which objective knowledge arises.) Kant can be seen to be no more a noumenalist than a phenomenalist, once his object-terms are interpreted in terms of the principle of perspective. And when this happens, most of the problems Van Cleve attributes to Kant can either be readily resolved or else simply never arise.

Examples such as the foregoing aptly illustrate that, when we take into consideration the fact that Van Cleve is arguing with a “handicap”, we can surely award him with a “gold” medal in the “mental gymnastics” category of philosophical interpretation – but only in the “Special Olympics” of the analytic tradition.

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