

# Welcome to Critical Idealism!

This site's purpose is, above all, to contribute in the English-speaking world to a thinking with (rather than thinking against or seeking to improve) the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (Critical Idealism). The task to think with Kant constitutes the tradition of Critical Idealism and includes in the German-speaking world, among others to be sure, Benno Erdmann (skeptical methodology and Copernican Revolution), the Marburg Neo-Kantians that include Hermann Cohen (epistemology and mathematical sciences, religion), Paul Natorp (truth as unconcealment, Being as ontological root, and religion), and Ernst Cassirer (functionalism and symbolic forms) to the renewed interest in Kant that one finds in Germany today around Otfried Höffe (Kantian and Aristotelian ethics, Kant's philosophy of history and cosmopolitanism) and Dieter Henrich (subjectivity and epistemology).

The empiricists and pragmatists of the Anglo-American schools of Critical Realism, Logical Positivism, and Analytic Philosophy have eclipsed the contribution made by Critical Idealism to our understanding of our experience and responsibilities. In a world of *technological* necessities over which the individual must gain sovereignty (e.g., computer skills) and in a world in which individuals must find their way through the *pragmatic* necessities of a changing landscape of careers and life choices, it is important to remember that there are additional *necessities* that shape our understanding of who we are in the order of things.

For example, no other representative of Critical Idealism than Ernst Cassirer emphasized more the significance of humanity's inserting a symbol system in the midst of the stimulus/response structure that we share with other conscious beings. It is precisely the *necessary addition* of such symbol systems that make it possible for us not only *to see things that aren't there* but also *to appropriately deny our very senses on occasion* (e.g., the sun is *not* moving). Critical Idealism is concerned with careful reflection and identification of the necessary structures of all that which we must *add to* sense experience in order to make sense of and to act in the world.

Furthermore, it is not just the geniuses of this world who make a creative contribution to the world. Every human being regardless of physical or mental limitations possesses a creative potential that elevates her/him above nature, and Critical Idealism focuses on this fundamental condition of human dignity to remind us that along with our individual, autonomous creativity comes responsibilities. However, in contrast to our having to conform to the blind, causal order of the physical world, our accountability for our creative freedom is anchored in a system of principles that we must legislate for ourselves. In other words, Critical Idealism observes that we are not moral creatures because we have to be; we are moral creatures because we can be.

Welcome to a discussion of Critical Idealism!



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