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A Critique of the Premises of Reification: Hiromatsu Wataru's De-Reification Strategy in the Horizon of Kant

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Abstract: This paper argues that while Kant's Transcendental Deduction establishes the objective validity of the categories by linking givenness to the unity of apperception and to schematized synthesis, it inadvertently leaves a premise-level opening for reification: relations and rule-effects can be misinterpreted as properties of self-subsisting entities. Drawing on Hiromatsu Wataru's concepts of intersubjectivity and the "fourfold structure," a de-reifying account of objecthood is reconstructed that emphasizes the primacy of relations by locating objectivity in appearing mechanisms that are operational, testable, and re-identifiable. The paper first diagnoses the pressure exerted by givenness, unity, and objectivity in Kant's A/B-Deduction and examines the "colored glasses" motif. It then develops a formal grammar (p as [p] for P as [P]) to demonstrate how koto replaces mono as the unit of analysis. Finally, it provides a critical assessment of the risks of idealism and circularity, addresses the question of "hardness" without underlying substrates, and considers unity without transcendental apperception, advocating methodological reinforcements through standards, calibration, and interoperation.

Keywords: Kantian philosophy; transcendental deduction; objecthood; reification; intersubjectivity

1. Introduction

Modern epistemology faces a dual challenge: on one hand, it rejects naive realism, acknowledging that objects cannot simply be taken as given; on the other hand, it must provide an a priori foundation that legitimizes the very possibility of objects as knowable entities. Kant's contribution lies in pushing this project of epistemic legitimacy to its conceptual limits. Yet, in doing so, it inadvertently creates the conditions for a deeper form of reification: that which should emerge within a dynamic web of relations—what Hiromatsu terms "koto"—is too easily interpreted as a self-subsisting entity, or "mono." This misrecognition risks obscuring the relational and operational character of objecthood, reducing interactive processes to static, ontologically fixed things.

Within a philosophical framework centered on intersubjectivity and the fourfold structure, the present work seeks to reconceive objecthood at its most fundamental level. By emphasizing the primacy of relations, this approach treats objects not as substances but as operational mechanisms of appearance-entities that are testable, reproducible, and re-identifiable through intersubjective processes. This shift allows for a more nuanced understanding of how objects are constituted, perceived, and stabilized within epistemic frameworks, while avoiding the pitfalls of unwarranted reification.

The essay unfolds in three parts. Part I identifies and analyzes the premises of reification embedded in Kant's account of objecthood, focusing on the interplay between givenness, unity, and the seeming objectivity of appearances. Part II reconstructs Hiromatsu's fourfold structure, elaborating on the koto/mono distinction as a pathway toward de-reification and highlighting how relational mechanisms operate as epistemic anchors. Part III evaluates the conceptual benefits and potential tensions of this reconstruction in

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relation to Kantian thought, addressing challenges such as the maintenance of unity without transcendental apperception, the question of apparent "hardness" without underlying substrates, and the methodological implications for ensuring operational reliability, calibration, and intersubjective verification.

2. Kant's Dilemmas of Objecthood and the Premises of Reification

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* aims to establish a firm foundation for scientific knowledge by securing the objective validity of the pure concepts of the understanding. This project, encapsulated in the Transcendental Deduction, confronts a fundamental philosophical challenge: how can concepts that originate in the mind necessarily apply to objects given in experience? The resolution of this problem not only grounds objectivity but also, perhaps unintentionally, creates the conditions for a specific type of philosophical error: reification. The following analysis traces the development from the constitution of the object to the premises that allow reification to take hold.

2.1. Objective Validity and the Unity of Apperception

The Transcendental Deduction addresses the question of how the pure concepts of the understanding can possess objective validity. In the A-edition, the argument progresses through the threefold synthesis of apprehension, reproduction, and recognition within transcendental imagination, ultimately resulting in the constitution of the object from a sensible manifold unified under rules [1]. When read in isolation, this narrative can easily give the impression that an object is simply the orderly totality of a manifold in thought—a representation organized according to rules.

The B-edition shifts the focus. It emphasizes that every representation capable of entering cognition must be combinable in the unity of apperception: the "I think" must accompany all representations [1]. Under this requirement, the notion of object becomes more than a mere sum of impressions; it is the correlate of a unification enacted according to the pure concepts. The Deduction thus secures the objective validity of the categories through an original synthetic unity that constitutes the very form of objectivity.

2.2. Transcendental Synthesis as the Basis of Objectivity

Following this line of reasoning reveals a structural pressure inherent in Kant's framework. Objectivity presupposes both a givenness—a this-here that can be taken up in intuition—and a unity, a lawful synthesis that ensures sameness, determinability, and re-identifiability. Empiricist approaches, which treat objectivity as merely the effect of objects on our sensibility, cannot account for the necessity claimed by the categories. Alternatives that posit divine intervention or purely logical ordering fail to meet the condition of finite knowers. Kant navigates this trilemma by showing that the givenness required by cognition is always already form-limited and unified: the forms of intuition, space and time, are not neutral containers but are "colored" by the activity of the understanding through schematized synthesis—the so-called "colored glasses" [1].

2.3. Objective Unity and the Tendency toward Reification

However, this very success introduces a premise-level opening for reification. Stabilized outcomes of synthesis—sameness, permanence, determinability—are habitually interpreted as intrinsic properties of self-subsisting entities rather than as the relational work of rules. Presenting an empirical object as determined in experience involves framing it under the schema of substance (that which persists in time) and correlative schemata of causality, community, and modality. The schematism connects the categories with time, with substance schematized as permanence [1]. Permanence and determinability are not optional attributes; they are essential to how something can be recognized as an object. Yet, because appearances must exhibit persistence, it becomes tempting to treat the law-governed stability of "what there is as" if it were a property of a self-subsisting substrate.

The representational grammar of objecthood can thus lead to the misreading of the "as" and "according to" of that grammar as the inner structure of a thing. Kant avoids naive substantialism, but because objectivity is mediated via unity, and unity must be schematically available to intuition, the results of synthesis are easily misinterpreted as properties of "things in themselves." This provides the premise on which reification thrives.

From the perspective of contemporary analysis, the Deduction's pressure triangle can be summarized as follows: the apparatus that secures objectivity by binding the manifold to the "I think" and to time-bound schemata simultaneously encourages a default interpretation in which relational, rule-governed processes are taken as intrinsic properties of objects [2,3]. The "colored glasses" metaphor captures the insight that cognitively relevant linkages exist only within categorial articulation; the more these linkages are internal to the conditions of experience, the more difficult it becomes to prevent the reflection from being mistaken for an independently existing reality. In short, the Deduction achieves objective validity at the cost of creating a representational situation in which permanence, sameness, and determinability—the phenomenological face of objectivity—can be easily mistaken for the attributes of a self-subsisting entity [1,4].

3. Hiromatsu's Reconstruction: From Mono to Koto by Way of the Fourfold Structure

3.1. *The Fourfold Structure: p as [p] and P as [P]*

Hiromatsu Wataru's critical project begins by diagnosing the modern worldview as the sedimented alliance of substantialism and the subject/object schema. Against this alliance, he asserts the primacy of relation: what is first in explanatory order is not a substrate that bears properties, but relational affairs, or "koto," which present themselves within regulated practices. This primacy is captured by rewriting the syntax of appearing.

On the side of what is known, there is "p as [p]," formulated as "the given as meaningful" and, within the same structural register, "the given as valuable." Meaning and value are not freestanding essences; they occupy functional places within couplings that relate an "as-pect" to a given under rules and operations. On the knowing side, there is "P as [P]," the "someone as Someone," designating the capacity of an agent to act in, and as, a role regulated by public practices. The decisive expression is "acting someone as role-taking Someone." What appears as an individual perspective is, once analyzed, a sequence of role-occupations whose norms are publicly assessable and whose transformations are constrained by correction. The "Someone" is not a hidden ego but a depersonalized role inhabited by concrete agents. Intersubjectivity denotes the historical formation of these roles and norms into an "ideal Someone," a regulative structure that anyone can, in principle, adopt through training and mutual address.

These two two-folds-of the given/meaningful and the someone/Someone-form a single "fourfold structure." To describe a phenomenon is to describe how a given is presented as having a certain sense to an agent acting as a role-bearing Someone. The four limbs have no independent status outside this functional unity: each exists only in relation to the others, and each concrete fourfold formation exists within a field of neighboring fourfold formations that mutually determine one another. The structured region of appearance is what Hiromatsu calls "koto." The modern worldview, by contrast, produces "mono" by abstracting and hypostatizing one limb: treating the given as a self-subsisting thing, the meaningful as an intrinsic property, or the Someone as a mental subject grounding appearances. Reification names this error: mistaking a koto for a mono, or treating a functional term in the fourfold as a freestanding bearer of inner properties.

3.2. *The Social-Practical "Colored Glasses" and Its Operation*

Hiromatsu's reconstruction goes beyond recategorizing objects; it reinterprets and naturalizes the "colored glasses" in a social-practical idiom. In Kant, the "glasses" are sensibility, and the "color" is the categorial limitation delivered by transcendental imagina-

tion. Hiromatsu concurs that there is no neutral given but locates the coloring in historically sedimented mechanisms of appearing across practices: procedures that jointly produce repeatable appearances. What counts as given is delivered through apparatus-guided operations; what counts as meaningful survives public-rule tests; what counts as Someone is determined by role-taking enactable and recognized by institutions. Coloring is thus material-institutional rather than mental or mystical: it is the organized capacity to reproduce a "given-as" in a way accessible to anyone occupying the relevant role [5].

Scientific and technical examples illustrate this grammar. Temperature and electric charge do not exist as inner properties of substrates; they stabilize as re-identifiable meanings through operational definitions and calibration chains, making measurements reproducible across instruments and laboratories. Maps similarly do not represent a pre-parsed world; they constitute mechanisms of appearing, where surveying techniques, projections, unit standards, and navigation tests produce repeatable, commensurable results. The hardness of objects in this view emerges from practical resistance and cost structures imposed by networks. On this account, *p* as [*p*] for *P* as [*P*] is not a philosophical contrivance but a grammar already implicit in best practices.

3.3. Intersubjective Objectivity and the General Theory of Reification

Intersubjectivity, understood in this way, differs crucially from Kant's unity of apperception. For Kant, every representation must be combinable in one consciousness, with the "I think" supplying a formal unity. Hiromatsu relocates the source of unity: objectivity is secured not by a solitary transcendental "I" but through reproducible procedures, role structures, and standards that stabilize appearances across participants. Universality is achieved in practice via institutions of calibration, commensuration, and critique, rather than being posited as a pre-social given [6]. Intersubjectivity is thus the public organization of roles, rules, and tests that confers universality and necessity by successful reproduction.

Reification, in Hiromatsu's generalized sense, is the mistaken treatment of relationally constituted affairs (*koto*) as self-subsisting things (*mono*). In fourfold notation, it is the hypostatization of one limb of "*p* as [*p*]" for "*P* as [*P*]," abstracted from its functional nexus. De-reification is the inverse operation: returning stabilized appearances to the operational chains and role structures that make them public and durable. This framework clarifies why objectivity is not an issue of hidden essences but of acknowledging the practical conditions under which something counts as objective [7]. By making these conditions explicit-through operational definitions, calibration networks, and interoperability-Hiromatsu's grammar prevents the drift from the lawful "as" of objecthood to a hypostatized "is." This same mechanism explains why reality retains its apparent hardness: costs, resistances, and failure modes structured by mechanisms of appearing discipline claims and anchor objectivity in public practice [5].

4. Critical Assessment and Synthesis

One advantage of Hiromatsu's reconstruction, set against Kant's pressure triangle, is that it provides an internal account of the source of objectivity without appealing to unknowable noumena and without encouraging the tacit hardening of functions into properties. Within the fourfold structure, what is "given" is always "given-as" within operational chains; what is "one" is unified through reproducibility across role-takers; and what is "objective" is that which passes tests any qualified participant could, in principle, perform.

4.1. Theoretical Advantages and Responses to Key Challenges

Hiromatsu's framework addresses familiar worries and clarifies the conceptual landscape. First, against the charge of "psychological collectivism" or circularity, intersubjectivity is not a mere aggregation of opinions but a publicly testable system of practices and

rules. Its dynamics are historically constrained by failure, correction, and re-calibration; this constitutes historical self-rectification rather than logical circularity. The "ideal Someone" of intersubjectivity is continuously constrained by processes of failure, correction, and reproduction, rather than being posited as self-evident a priori.

Second, regarding the concern that reducing reality to relations or states of affairs might dissolve the hardness of objects, Hiromatsu distinguishes "substrate-substantial reality" from "relational state-of-affairs reality." The hardness of reality manifests in the resistance and cost structures of stable networks: the punitive costs of mismeasurement in metrological systems, the failure modes in navigation under coordinate standards, and the cross-laboratory reproducibility constraints. Hardness is thus revealed in cross-context, cross-community tests of commensuration rather than in a mute underlying substrate.

Third, regarding unity without transcendental apperception, Hiromatsu locates unity in the reproduction of rule-governed appearing: language, institutions, and technics sediment standards and interoperation. Historicity does not entail arbitrariness. Standardized, reproducible interoperation provides a non-arbitrary source of unity, reframing unity as emerging from forms of life and public practice rather than from a solitary "I think," while preserving the Kantian insight that cognition requires principled unity [6].

4.2. *Translating Kant's Insights into a Practical Grammar*

Hiromatsu's position can be read as a translation of Kantian insights into a grammar suitable for modern practices rather than an outright refutation. Kant's Deduction rejects three models of objectivity: the empiricist effect-model, the divine producer-model, and the merely logical ordering model. The fourfold structure avoids these pitfalls while retaining the positive core of the Deduction: the schematized unity through which appearances become objects for us finds its analogue in appearing mechanisms that stabilize p as $[p]$ for P as $[P]$. Where Kant describes the unity of apperception as the highest principle of cognition, Hiromatsu describes intersubjectivity as the condition under which that unity acquires public life. Where Kant analyzes space and time as forms of intuition enabling synthesis, Hiromatsu identifies standards and protocols as operational forms that enable reproducibility. This continuity shows that the project of epistemic legitimacy can be de-transcendentalized without loss of rigor.

4.3. *Demands and Synthesis: Toward a Practice-Based Critique of Reification*

The reconstruction imposes demands. It calls for a detailed analysis of intersubjectivity's layered architecture: the division of roles, the hierarchy and scope of standards, and the interfaces among scientific communities, metrological institutions, and legal regimes. It also requires careful accounting for interactions among expressive, instrumental, moral, and economic values, to prevent values from being reified as intrinsic properties of things or persons. These demands are productive: they encourage case studies in which the abstract grammar of the fourfold is tested against the persistent details of capital accumulation, technical artifacts, and governance, bringing the critique of reification from theoretical heights to practical arenas where appearances are actively produced and stabilized.

The resulting synthesis is clear. Kant's Deduction remains indispensable for understanding why experience is necessarily rule-governed and why objectivity cannot be a mere impression. Hiromatsu's reconstruction shows how to prevent the necessary "as" of objecthood from collapsing into an unwarranted "is" by tethering it to operational chains learnable by any qualified participant. Reification, then, is not the product of a malign metaphysics but the habitual misreading of stabilized outcomes as properties of self-subsisting entities. De-reification returns these outcomes to the operational and institutional chains that sustain them. Far from deflating reality, this approach redistributes epistemic weight: what is most real is that which withstands the widest range of qualified roles and the most stringent tests while preserving its identity as p as $[p]$ for P as $[P]$. By translating

Kantian insights into the grammar of koto and emphasizing the primacy of relations, Hiromatsu offers not a rival critique but a method for keeping critique from producing mono where there are only relational affairs.

5. Conclusion

With Kant as a referential background, this essay has argued that the fundamental premise enabling reification is not doctrinal substantialism but the representational opening within the "givenness, unity, objectivity" triangle that allows relational states of affairs to be misread as properties of things. Centering on intersubjectivity and the fourfold structure, Hiromatsu affirms the primacy of relation, reducing objects to koto-relational affairs that are operable, testable, and re-identifiable within mechanisms of appearing. Through a generalized critique of reification, he constructs a de-reifying framework that shifts attention from things to affairs.

This reconstruction inherits Kant's realist motivation and his emphasis on rule-constitution while, by providing an internal explanation grounded in practice and institutional frameworks, it loosens the structural premises that otherwise facilitate reification. The forward path of this program involves refining the institutional layers of intersubjectivity and the mechanisms of cross-domain commensuration, as well as applying de-reification to concrete analyses of scientific and technical objects, as well as to phenomena of capital and value. In doing so, it aims to build a testable bridge connecting epistemology, ontology, and social critique, ensuring that objectivity and relational reality remain both practically accountable and theoretically coherent.

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