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0521792657 - *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*

Ian Hunter

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## RIVAL ENLIGHTENMENTS

*Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*

*Rival Enlightenments* is a major reinterpretation of early modern German intellectual history. Ian Hunter approaches philosophical doctrines as ways of fashioning personae for envisaged historical circumstances, here of confessional conflict and political desacralisation. He treats the civil philosophy of Pufendorf and Thomasius and the metaphysical philosophy of Leibniz and Kant as rival intellectual cultures or *paideia*, thereby challenging all histories premised on Kant's supposed reconciliation and transcendence of the field. This landmark study reveals for the first time in English the extraordinary historical self-consciousness of the civil philosophers, who repudiated university metaphysics as inimical to the intellectual formation of those administering desacralised territorial states. The book argues that the marginalisation of civil philosophy in post-Kantian philosophical history may itself be seen as a continuation of the struggle between the rival enlightenments. Combining careful and well-documented scholarship with vivid polemic, Hunter presents penetrating insights for philosophers and historians alike.

IAN HUNTER is Professor of Humanities and Founding Director of the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. He is the author of *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education* (1988) and *Rethinking the School* (1994), as well as numerous articles dealing with the historical conditions and roles of moral and political thought.

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## *Preface*

The prime objective of this work is to reinstate a marginalised intellectual culture to its proper place in the intellectual history of early modern Germany. Although the civil philosophy of Samuel Pufendorf and Christian Thomasius is not unknown in the modern humanities academy, sympathetic treatment of their work is largely confined to the history of political philosophy, jurisprudence, and theology. To the extent that they feature in intellectual history and the history of philosophy more broadly, however, they appear as superseded figures, destined to be absorbed by the great oscillations between rationalism and voluntarism, idealism and empiricism which would reach their culminating reconciliation in the epochal philosophy of Immanuel Kant. We shall see that this reigning dialectical historiography is itself the offshoot of a second, rival intellectual movement, centred in the culture of university metaphysics. In order to recover early modern civil philosophy, therefore, it has proved necessary to criticise and reject a dialectical historiography designed to erase its historical existence and political significance. In place of this reconciliatory history, this book offers an account of two independent intellectual cultures – the ‘rival enlightenments’ of civil and metaphysical philosophy – which remain unreconciled today.

Retrieving civil philosophy from the all-assimilating, all-unifying mill of dialectical philosophical history is no straightforward task. For, by drawing its impetus from the arranged mutual deficiencies of opposed viewpoints, this historiography gives shape not just to history but also to the historian. It treats history as the medium in which the unreconciled dimensions of human subjectivity move towards their harmonisation, in the final recovery of the a priori conditions of experience and morality – the moment of Kant’s critical philosophy. Under these intellectual conditions, the historian views the past in terms of the unreconciled oppositions – between rationalism and voluntarism, intellectualism and empiricism – and finds his or her own ethical impulse in the need to

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repeat the moment of their Kantian reconciliation. This is the moment in which human subjectivity's imagined journey towards self-knowledge terminates, with the recovery of the cognitive and moral laws responsible for the organisation of subjectivity itself. Considering that it was Kant himself who first viewed the history of philosophy in these terms, dialectical philosophical history is uniquely suited to demonstrating the epochal significance of Kantian philosophy, and may indeed be regarded as a sub-species of that philosophy.

By showing that Pufendorbian and Thomasian civil philosophy did not in fact undergo this dialectical assimilation – by uncovering its independent cultural basis and autonomous political viewpoint – this book departs fundamentally from the post-Kantian intelligibility of early modern intellectual history. Many readers will no doubt find the intellectual terrain to be traversed unfamiliar and potentially hostile. The moral world in which Pufendorf and Thomasius lived was not the one whose laws Kant recovered. Further, the forms of personhood they cultivated were not ones governed by the norms of 'pure practical reason'. Their world had its own moral cosmology, unlike the quasi-Platonic one that organised Kant's cosmos, yet one whose 'Epicurean' bleakness was suited to a Europe still dealing with the aftermath of a period of protracted religious warfare. Similarly, their sense of self was shaped by a 'pessimistic' moral anthropology far removed from Christian–Platonic pursuit of pure rational being that drove metaphysical philosophy from Leibniz through Wolff to Kant and beyond. In sketching the relation between civil and metaphysical philosophy in these terms – in treating the worlds they envisaged and the persons they posited as grounded in free-standing rival anthropologies and cosmologies – we begin to measure the distance to be travelled from post-Kantian conceptions of a unified 'humanity' or 'reason'.

In recasting the landscape of early modern intellectual history into these unreconciled and unfamiliar shapes, I have drawn on two main intellectual instruments. Firstly, and fundamentally, I have drawn on a particular approach to the history of philosophy. This is one which focuses on the 'ascetic' or self-transformative work that certain philosophies require their adherents to perform on themselves, only then addressing the objects of knowledge to which they promise access. This approach holds the key to retrieving civil philosophy from its dialectical assimilation, and to placing civil and metaphysical philosophy on the same historical footing – as rival alternative modes of philosophical cultivation. It does so principally by treating their different anthropologies



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and cosmologies not in terms of the self they uncover or the cosmos they reveal, but in terms of the self they seek to shape for a world they envisage. The objective of this approach is not to explain the philosophies by reducing them to a different order of reality – to the structures of society or the forms of subjectivity – but to redescribe the operations of the philosophical discourses themselves, treating them as autonomous and irreducible ‘spiritual exercises’.

Secondly, I have made use of a particular view of the political and religious history of early modern Germany. This is a view that focuses on the role of confessionalisation in precipitating the Thirty Years War (1618–48); the role of the ‘deconfessionalising’ or ‘desacralising’ of politics in ending this war; and the central role of ‘political law’ (*Staatsrecht, jus publicum*) and its jurisprudence in this process of deconfessionalisation. I argue that the post-Westphalian ‘intellectual civil war’ between metaphysical and civil philosophy – first encountered in Leibniz’s unrestrained attack on Pufendorf’s natural law doctrine – is properly understood as a clash between rival ways of responding to this profound historical process. Responding positively to the uncoupling of civil and religious governance, Pufendorf developed a doctrine of natural law in which the exercise of political power (the ‘civil kingdom’) was segregated from the sphere of life in which the pursuit of moral perfection took place (the ‘kingdom of truth’). He thus sought to reconstruct moral philosophy by replacing the unified moral personality with a plurality of personae suited to the diverse ‘offices’ – religious and civil, private and public, ecclesiastical and political – of citizens in desacralised states. Leibniz, however, responded to the post-Westphalian separation of politics and religious morality by seeking their reconciliation at a higher level, through metaphysics. Here it was envisaged that law and politics could once again be grounded in the sacralising pursuit of moral perfection, with all of life’s offices finding their point of unity in the metaphysical recovery of their transcendent intellection.

If these rival intellectual cultures were not destined for reconciliation in Kant’s discovery of ‘the subject’ – or in a ‘history’ tracing the dialectical patterns of such a discovery – then we must look elsewhere for the terrain on which they clashed. We find this in a cluster of religious, political, legal, and cultural institutions housed in the early modern German Empire and the territorial sovereign states which were emerging from its shell. For our immediate concerns, the early modern university plays the key role here. It was responsible for articulating the rival cultures to the religious, juridical and political institutions of Empire and state, through

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the manner in which it formed particular intellectual elites. At the very centre of this nexus, we find the competing anthropologies and cosmologies of civil and metaphysical philosophy; for the personae they cultivated were those suited to the moral callings of a particular institutional array, even as the profound differences between their modes of cultivation bear witness to the deeply divergent ways in which they envisaged this institutional world.

Pufendorf's civil philosophy thus sought to complete the desacralisation of civil governance by transforming the pedagogies through which young Protestant intellectuals – jurists in particular – acquired their sense of self and relation to the world. His Epicurean anthropology was designed to form civil intellectuals who would confine the pursuit of moral truth to a private domain, while placing their political rights and expertise at the disposal of a sovereign who governed without regard for such truth. Conversely, Leibniz's (Platonic) metaphysical anthropology envisaged a person whose self-perfecting ascent to the domain of transcendent concepts ('perfections') qualified them to exercise an integral moral–civil authority, in the persona of the sage–prince. In other words, if early modern civil and metaphysical philosophy were not conflicting theories destined to be reconciled and superseded in Kant's discovery of the transcendental conditions of subjectivity, that is because they were independent rival intellectual cultures. Each represented a programme for reconfiguring the relations between religious and civil governance in its own way, through the 'ascetic' fashioning of the personages it deemed suited to the world it envisaged. Rather than reconciling and superseding these conflicting cultures, Kantian philosophy may be regarded as an extension of the metaphysical one – offering its own 'critical' version of the ascent to the domain of transcendent perfections.

In recasting the topography of early modern German intellectual history in this way, this book does not of course pretend completeness. It is rather a sketch of an alternative kind of historical intelligibility for the period, an essay in reinterpretation and redescription. The Introduction offers further clarification of our points of departure from existing accounts, while the two chapters of Part I provide overviews of the available ways of approaching *Schulmetaphysik* and civil philosophy. In Part II we offer detailed reconstructions of the major civil philosophers, Pufendorf and Thomasius, and their metaphysical rivals, Leibniz and Kant. Here of course we are not referring to personal rivalry between the philosophers – although that perspective partially applies to the relationship between Pufendorf and Leibniz – but to the cultural

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rivalry between the philosophical styles they personified. In exploring this rivalry through the work of some of its central protagonists, our essay takes an interdisciplinary form, centred in intellectual and philosophical history, but drawing on the history of politics, jurisprudence, and theology, with excursions into the history of religion and church law. Although this essayistic strategy might bring discomfort to specialists in these fields, no disrespect for their work is intended. On the contrary, in bringing their several domains together, in order to refashion a part of intellectual history too long under the domination of a particular viewpoint, I pay homage to them. Should this book be regarded as seeing any further than those it challenges, that would be due to the stature of the works on whose shoulders it stands.

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Thanks to the award of a Queen Elizabeth II research fellowship, I have been able to devote four years' undistracted labour to the research and writing of this book. I therefore gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Australian Research Council, without which such a long, intensive, and single-minded project would have been difficult to contemplate and impossible to complete in a reasonable period of time. I am also pleased to acknowledge the continuing support of Griffith University's School of Humanities, where I have worked for so long and so happily, and to thank the staff of the University's Inter-Library Loan service for their tireless searching after obscure volumes. My final institutional appreciation is for the hospitality of the English Department of Johns Hopkins University, where I spent an enjoyable and productive semester in the spring of 1995.

During the writing of this work many colleagues were interested or kind enough to discuss its contents and read sections for me. I have probably not mentioned all of them if I offer my thanks in this regard to Tony Bennett, Natalie Brender, John Frow, Stephen Gaukroger, Wayne Hudson, Jeff Malpas, Thomas Mautner, Alec McHoul, Douglas Magendanz, David Owen, and Dugald Williamson. I am also indebted to Dieter Freundlieb, who offered me both philosophical conversation and linguistic expertise, when my grasp of seventeenth-century German reached its limits. During my visit to Johns Hopkins I was fortunate enough to share the company and conversation of William Connolly and Jane Bennett, enjoying their hospitality and insights in equal measure. At that time I was also fortunate in meeting John Pocock, enjoying one of his seminars on Edward Gibbon and later a conversation on the 'varieties of Enlightenment', both memorable occasions for me. Among the colleagues with whom I have worked closely, I owe special thanks to Denise Meredyth and to Jeffrey Minson and Barry Hindess, both of whom have read several chapters, responding with

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unfailingly helpful commentary and advice. Finally in this regard I take special pleasure in tallying the debt of gratitude owed to my colleague and friend of many years, David Saunders. He has been a constant discussant throughout the development of this project, providing unerring guidance on everything from basic intellectual premises to the translation of early modern academic Latin.

In addition to these friends and colleagues, I owe thanks to several scholars whom I first encountered through their published works, but who were kind enough to offer advice and encouragement to an academic stranger. In addition to all I have learned from their writings, James Tully and Knud Haakonssen have been very helpful in allowing me to see the project from the perspective of the international community of scholars working on similar issues. I owe a similar debt of thanks to Horst Dreitzel, who went out of his way to provide me with extensive and bracing commentary on the Thomasius and Kant chapters, and to Jerome Schneewind, with whom I had several memorable discussions in the northern spring of 1995, even if these resulted in both of us realising how differently we approached the question of Kant. Finally, during 1999, I was fortunate in meeting several scholars who have recently completed doctorates or books on topics closely associated with the subject of this book. Although the revision process has not permitted me to take full advantage of it, I should nonetheless like to record my appreciation for the work of Thomas Ahnert, Robert von Friedeburg, Frank Grunert, Timothy Hochstrasser, Michael Seidler, and Peter Schröder.

Needless to say, few, if any, of these colleagues and friends agreed with everything they encountered in my arguments, and none of them is responsible for the errors that remain in this book, which are all my own doing.

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## *Abbreviations and texts used*

### KANT

Except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, for which I use the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions, all references to Kant are to *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the German (formerly the Royal Prussian) Academy of Sciences in twenty-nine volumes (Walter de Gruyter, 1902–). In referencing Kant's texts I have adopted the convention of first citing the relevant passage in the *Akademie* edition, by volume and page number, pairing this with the relevant reference to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. I have adjusted the Cambridge translations wherever this seemed necessary. Abbreviations of the relevant volume titles from the *Cambridge Edition* follow.

- CPR* *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- LE* *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- LM* *Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- PP* *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- RRT* *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- TP* *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, ed. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

### LEIBNIZ

- CP* *Confessio Philosophi/Das Glaubensbekenntnis des Philosophen*. (Kritische Ausgabe mit Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar von Otto Saame.) 2nd edn. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994.
- DM* *Discourse on Metaphysics*, in *Lm*, pp. 303–30.
- Ge* C. I. Gerhardt (ed.) *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*. 7 vols. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1978.

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- Gr* Gaston Grua (ed.) *G. W. Leibniz: Textes Inédits*. 2 vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948.
- Gu* G. E. Guhrauer (ed.) *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Deutsche Schriften*. 1966 edn, 2 vols. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1838.
- Lm* Leroy E. Loemker (ed.) *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*. 2nd edn. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969.
- Mo* *The Monadology*, in *Lm*, pp. 643–53.
- PW* *Political Writings*, ed. Patrick Riley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Th* *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer. La Salle: Open Court, 1985.
- TS* *Theologisches System/Systema Theologicum*, ed. C. Haas. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966

## PUFENDORF

- DJN* *De Jure Naturae et Gentium Libri Octo/On The Law of Nature and of Nations in Eight Books*. Trans. C. H. Oldfather and W. A. Oldfather. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943.
- DOH* *De Officio Hominis et Civis juxta Legem Naturalem Libri Duo/On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*. Trans. Michael Silverthorne, ed. James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- DHR* *De Habitu Religionis Christianae ad Vitam Civilem/Of the Nature and Qualification of Religion in Reference to Civil Society*. London: Roper and Bosvile, 1698.
- DSH* *De Statu Hominum Naturali/Samuel Pufendorf's On the Natural State of Men, the 1678 Latin Edition and English Translation*, ed. Michael Seidler. Lewiston N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.
- GW* *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996–.

## THOMASIIUS

- ADS* *Auserlesene deutsche Schriften (Selected German Writings, 2 vols.)*. *AW*, vols. xxiii–xxiv.
- ASL* *Ausübung der Sittenlehre (Practice of Ethics)*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968.
- AW* *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Werner Schneiders. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1994–
- EHP* *Einleitung zur Hof-Philosophie (Introduction to Court Philosophy)*. *AW*, vol. ii.
- ESL* *Einleitung zur Sittenlehre (Introduction to Ethics)*. *AW*, vol. x.
- FJN* *Fundamenta juris naturae et gentium ex sensu communi deducta, 1705/Grundlehren des Natur- und Völker-Rechts, nach dem sinnlichen Begriff aller Menschen vorgestellt (Foundations of the Law of Nature and Nations, Deduced from Common Sense)*. Halle: Rengerischer Buchhandlung, 1709.
- IJD* *Institutiones jurisprudentiae divinae, 1688/ Drey Bücher der Göttlichen*

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- Rechtsgelahrtheit (Institutes of Divine Jurisprudence)*. Halle: Rengerischer Buchhandlung, 1709.
- KPK** *Kurzer Entwurf der politischen Klugheit, sich selbst und andern in allen menschlichen Gesellschaften wohl zu Raten und zu einer gescheiten Conduite zu gelangen (Brief Outline of Political Prudence, for the good counsel and sensible conduct of oneself and others in all human societies, 1710)*. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1971.
- KTS** *Kleine Teutsche Schriften (Shorter German Writings)*. AW, vol. xxii.
- PD** *Preliminary Dissertation (to the Institutiones jurisprudentiae divinae)*, in *IJD*, pp. 1–66.
- RFM** *Vom Recht evangelischer Fürsten in Mitteldingen oder Kirchenzeremonien (Of the Right of Protestant Princes in Middle-Things/Adiaphora or Religious Ceremonies, 1695)*, in *ADS, AW*, vol. xxiii, pp. 76–138.
- RFS** *Das Recht evangelischer Fürsten in theologischen Streitigkeiten (The Right of Protestant Princes in Theological Controversies)*. Halle: Christoph Salfeld Verlag, 1696.
- SEG** *Summarischer Entwurf der Grundlehren, die einem Studioso Iuris zu wissen und auf Universitäten zu Lernen nötig sind (Summary Outline of the Basic Doctrines Necessary for a Student of Law to Know and Learn in the Universities, 1699)*. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1979.
- VG** *Vorrede (Foreword to Grotius)*, in *Hugo Grotius: De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri Tres/Drei Bücher vom Recht des Krieges und des Friedens Paris 1625*, ed. Walter Schätzel. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950, pp. 1–28.
- VKR** *Vollständige Erläuterung der Kirchenrechts-Gelahrtheit oder Gründliche Abhandlung vom Verhältniß der Religion gegen den Staat (Complete Explanation of the Jurisprudence of Church Law or Fundamental Treatise on the Relation of Religion to the State)*, 2nd edn. 1740. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1981.

## WOLFF

- GE** *Vernünfftige Gedanken von der Menschen Tun und Lassen, zu Beförderung ihrer Glückseligkeit (German Ethics 1720)*, ed. H. W. Arndt. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1976.
- GL** *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes (German Logic 1713)*, ed. H. W. Arndt. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965.
- GM** *Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt (German Metaphysics 1719)*, ed. C. A. Corr. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1983.
- GP** *Vernünfftige Gedanken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen und insonderheit dem gemeinen Wesen (German Politics 1721)*, ed. H. W. Arndt. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1975.
- VRW** *Von den Regenten die sich der Weltweisheit befeistigen, und von den Weltweisen die das Regiment führen (On Princes who Cultivate Philosophy, and Philosophers who Direct Government)*, in *Gesammelte Kleine Philosophische Schriften* vi. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1981, pp. 529–662.



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### *Note on conventions*

The word economics is spelled in two different ways: ‘oeconomics’ indicates the early modern discipline concerned with household management, while the standard spelling ‘economics’ is used for more general reference.

Where bracketed interpolations occur in quoted text, round brackets indicate the original author’s or translator’s interpolations, square brackets indicate mine.