

**Disclosing the Possibly Actual:**  
**Skepticism and the Method of Critique**

Ethan H. Jacobs

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All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument... as the element in which arguments have their life.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 107

If Dasein discovers the world in its own way [*eigens*] and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way.

—Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 27: 167

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## Section 0: Introduction: The Problem of Metaphysics

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* has been invariably interpreted in light of its engagement with skepticism since its publication. Indeed, many interpreters have judged the success or failure of Kant's project on the basis of its ability to convincingly resolve skeptical problems. Some have held that the *Critique* is explicitly anti-skeptical, and hence if successful will need to in some measure "refute" skepticism. G. E. Schulze's 1792 publication of *Aenesidemus*<sup>1</sup>, defending Pyrrhonian skepticism against Kant's critical philosophy, might be said to inaugurate such a reading. Other of Kant's contemporaries, including Salomon Maimon and F. H. Jacobi, alleged that the failure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could be explained not merely in terms of a failure to adequately address the skepticism they held it to have in view, but also in terms of the new, unacknowledged forms of skepticism it made possible.<sup>2</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an influential line of interpretation led by P. F. Strawson sought to rescue a philosophically fruitful anti-skeptical core of the first *Critique*, identified in the transcendental deduction of the categories, from the fruitless metaphysical baggage of transcendental idealism.<sup>3</sup> Recent interpreters, inspired by careful attention to the development of

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<sup>1</sup> Full title: *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie. Nebst einer Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmassungen der Vernunftkritik* (English: *Aenesidemus or Concerning the Foundations of the Philosophy of the Elements Issued by Professor Reinhold in Jena Together with a Defense of Skepticism against the Pretensions of the Critique of Reason*). The lengthy subtitle already suggests that Schulze conceives of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (whose central aim Schulze abridges as the "Critique of Reason") as a mere "pretension [*Anmaßung*]" set against the inevitability of skepticism.

<sup>2</sup> See Franks 2014 for an in-depth survey of the way in which Maimon and Jacobi's criticisms of the *Critique of Pure Reason* interpret Kant's philosophy as opening the door to different forms of post-Kantian skepticism.

<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to *The Bounds of Sense*, immediately after introducing the doctrine of transcendental idealism, Strawson writes that "there is no doubt that this doctrine is incoherent in itself and masks, rather than explains, the real character of his inquiry; so that a central problem in understanding the *Critique* is precisely that of disentangling all that hangs on this doctrine from the analytical argument which is in fact independent of it" (1966, 16). Guyer 1987 similarly claims that insofar as transcendental idealism is not merely dogmatic, it can only be "an anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty" (336). See also Van Cleve 1999.

Kant's conceptions of philosophy and skepticism during his "pre-Critical" period leading up to the publication of the *Critique*, emphasize the inseparability of the *Critique's* anti-skeptical aspirations from the doctrine of transcendental idealism. On this view, Kant's project is not to be understood as targeting a Cartesian "external world" skepticism but rather a Humean and/or Pyrrhonian "justificatory" skepticism,<sup>4</sup> opening the door to more nuanced understandings of Kant's engagement with skepticism in which skepticism is not "refuted" but rather used as a pedagogical tool that prepares the ground for the critical philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of exactly how each of these interpretations sees Kant as (successfully or unsuccessfully) grappling with skepticism, all are in agreement on the fundamental place of *some* notion of skepticism in motivating and understanding Kant's project. Whether skepticism is to be refuted, resolved, subverted, or even tactfully avoided, the specter of skepticism looms large on the *Critique's* interpretive horizon.

In particular, the transcendental deduction of the categories has often been considered a kind of Archimedean point in making sense of Kant's orientation towards skepticism. By paying attention to the role of skepticism in Kant's conception of philosophy, recent commentators have been able to shed light on the structure, goals, and purpose of this centrally regarded (both by Kant himself and his interpreters) piece of the *Critique*.<sup>6</sup> These investigations have succeeded in making sense of several long-standing textual problems of the deduction: in connecting the justificatory

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Engstrom 1994, pgs. 359-80, Franks 2005, pgs. 148-52, Forster 2008, pg. 4, and Allison 2015, pgs. 8-10, 429. Though each account differs with respect to which "skeptical impetus" predominates for Kant and how (Forster arguing for the predominance of a Pyrrhonian skepticism throughout the *Critique*, Engstrom for the predominance of a Humean skepticism throughout, and Allison and Franks finding separate places for the expression of anti-skeptical arguments targeting both forms), all agree on the central figuration of some form of non-Cartesian skepticism in the deduction.

<sup>5</sup> Franks writes: "This is how skepticism defines the task of philosophy for Kant. It is not that philosophy must seek, above all, to refute skepticism. Rather, philosophy must learn from skepticism which questions to ask, while transmuting the skeptic's mood of despair." (2014, 21)

<sup>6</sup> Henrich 1969 more or less set the stage for the identification of the Humean skeptical worry within the argumentative structure of the transcendental deduction of the categories. See also Förster 1989, Engstrom 1994, Allison 2004, Franks 2005, Conant 2006, Forster 2008, Chignell and McLearn 2010, Allison 2015, Shaddock 2015, and Gomes 2017.

question of *quid juris* raised at A84-5/B117 with the entertainment of the skeptical worry of a distinctly Humean<sup>7</sup> “subjective imposition” of our need to apply the categories at A89-91/B122<sup>8</sup>, we are better able to make sense of the “unavoidable necessity” and “inevitable difficulty” of the transcendental deduction while also providing an interpretation of the second “step” of its argument as designed precisely to foreclose this skeptical worry.

In spite of this, much less attention has been paid to Kant’s engagement with skepticism in the second major division of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Transcendental Dialectic. Indeed, many interpreters continue to regard the central contribution of this part of the *Critique* to be itself a form of skepticism directed against transcendent Rationalist metaphysics.<sup>9</sup> Conspicuously, however, in the notoriously obscure Appendix to the Dialectic, Kant suggests that yet another transcendental deduction is needed, claiming that “that deduction is the completion of the critical business of pure reason, and it is what we will now undertake” (A670/B698),<sup>10</sup> and that the result of this deduction is, like its cousin in the Analytic, “unavoidably necessary” (A677/B705). Taking their cue from longstanding interpretive work on Kant’s philosophy of science<sup>11</sup>, others have identified a skeptical worry expressed in the Dialectic analogous to the one identified in the Analytic, motivating the need

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<sup>7</sup> “Distinctly Humean” by Kant’s lights only; I make no interpretative claims, nor are they here necessary, with respect to Hume’s actual position regarding this skeptical worry.

<sup>8</sup> For now, it is helpful to gloss the worry as the potential mismatch between our (subjective) need for systematicity and the (objective) need for givenness. If the transcendental deduction merely establishes the necessary systematicity of our need but not the necessary systematicity of intuitions, the fact that intuitions are necessarily “given” objects will seem to possibly threaten their necessary systematicity. I will show that Kant’s formulation and conception of philosophy makes this justificatory deduction central to his project. See also McDowell 1996 for the connection between this formulation and contemporary epistemological and metaphysical problems.

<sup>9</sup> Strawson 1966 claims that “all that is actually achieved [in the Transcendental Dialectic] is negative [...] The rest is unpalatable claim and fallacious argument” (156). Guyer 2014 accepts a positive role for the Dialectic, but only with respect to pure practical reason and not speculative reason (145). See also Waxman 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Against this, those that see a primarily negative, skeptical role for the Dialectic either claim that this deduction is merely subjective (and hence fails in its attempt to secure objectivity), or else that it simply doesn’t exist or isn’t developed textually (Guyer 1987). Of course, even amongst those who see a significant positive, anti-skeptical role for the Dialectic, Kant is typically assumed to have changed his conception or at least presentation of the problem in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

<sup>11</sup> See especially Kuhn 1957, Buchdahl 1969, 1974, Beauchamp and Rosenberg 1981, and Friedman 1992.

for this second transcendental deduction.<sup>12</sup> But in construing this skeptical worry as merely threatening the possibility of empirical natural science (and in particular the legitimacy of induction), they fail to register the worry's urgency and integrality to the project of the *Critique* as a whole, and hence also the importance of skepticism to Kant's resolution to the "problem of metaphysics."

What is the problem of metaphysics? The problem of metaphysics consists of two opposing facts, laid out in the B-edition Preface to the *Critique*: on the one hand, metaphysics encapsulates "one of the most important parts of our desire for knowledge" (CPR, B xv), but on the other, it has "up to now not been so favored by fate as to have been able to enter upon the secure course of a science" (CPR, B xiv). Thus, Kant continues, it will be "the concern of this critique of pure speculative reason [to] attempt to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics, undertaking an entire revolution," (CPR, B xxii) alluding to the revolutionary Copernican idea that objects should conform to our cognition instead of our cognition conforming to objects.<sup>13</sup> This, then, will be an important criterion in gauging the scope and success of Kant's project in the *Critique*: to what extent, and how, has Kant succeeded in re-conceiving the method of philosophy in order to set metaphysics upon the secure course of a science? Is it through merely cleaving off the misguided dogmas of Rationalist metaphysics, or through reflecting on what drew us (i.e. reason) to include them in the first place? And if the latter, was our interest in their inclusion driven by the mere need to guarantee the validity of the empirical sciences, or was it rather the unreflecting consciousness of the constant need for justification whenever objects are posited, such that a reflecting, self-conscious critique (in the guise of reason) which takes up reason (itself) as its object is thereby able to justify itself?

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<sup>12</sup> As we shall see, Allison notably calls the earlier skeptical worry motivating the transcendental deduction of the categories a worry of "transcendental chaos" while this later skeptical worry is the worry of an "empirical chaos" (2015, pg. 429).

<sup>13</sup> CPR, B xvi

In this essay, I claim that it is precisely through the skeptical worries motivating both transcendental deductions, and the common skeptical method of philosophy that underlies both<sup>14</sup>, that Kant is able to ground metaphysics as a science. On my interpretation, the skeptical worry of the Dialectic is not a mere afterthought threatening natural science, but instead indicative of the very same challenge to metaphysics presented by the skeptical worry of the Analytic. In Section 1, I will offer a reading of the transcendental deduction of the categories in line with contemporary interpretations that highlights the Humean worry of subjective imposition as an instance of the skeptical method. In Section 2, I will connect the identification and resolution of this subjective imposition with the notion of transcendental reflection, which enacts the discursivity of the human subject. In Section 3, I will offer a reading of the transcendental deduction of the pure ideas in the Appendix to the Dialectic that reinforces the integrality of this much maligned section of the *Critique* to Kant's project while assigning it a much more substantive role in justifying the method of the *Critique* itself (seen as an instance of the drive to secure metaphysical knowledge), pace a widespread current reading that holds that its positive role is primarily to secure the possibility of our engaging in natural science.<sup>15</sup> Finally, in Section 4, I will recapitulate the way in which the regulative transcendental subject constructed on the basis of the deduction of the pure ideas, in licensing the distinction between finite, human, discursive cognizers and an intuitive intellect, completes the system of the critical method, ultimately securing a path for metaphysics' elevation to the secure course of a science, epitomized in the scientific systems of the three *Critiques*. In this way the critical

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<sup>14</sup> We might equivalently refer (as Kant himself does many times) to this new method of philosophy as the "critical method." I use the phrase "skeptical method" here only in order to emphasize that the critical method (i.e. critical philosophy) crucially consists in a particular constructive employment of skepticism, which must be contrasted with a merely destructive use. See especially A424/B451 and A761/B789, where Kant carefully distinguishes these two forms of skepticism, claiming that the former is indispensable to transcendental (critical) philosophy.

<sup>15</sup> This view is most clearly articulated in Buchdahl 1969, and subsequently developed with a view towards skepticism in Grier 2001 and Allison 2004 and 2015.

method will succeed in justifying our pretensions to metaphysical knowledge, but merely according to the regulative ideal of philosophy.

Thus, despite widespread agreement among interpreters that the *Critique of Pure Reason* must be understood in light of Kant's engagement with skepticism, none have gone far enough in understanding this engagement as foundational to both the problem of metaphysics and its resolution through the critical method. I will argue that the critical method is only able to elucidate its post-Copernican conception of objectivity through the progressive unfolding of skeptical deconstructions of objectivity which take place at different architectonic levels of the critical philosophy.

## Section 1: Skepticism in the Transcendental Analytic

Both Anglo-American interpreters and more broadly speaking, analytic philosophers concerned less with interpretation than with deriving philosophical insights from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, have more often than not centered their engagement with the text around the transcendental deduction of the categories, and in particular its relation to various forms of skepticism.<sup>16</sup> Whereas earlier interpreters saw the transcendental deduction of the categories as exemplifying an anti-skeptical strategy principally targeting a Cartesian-inspired "veil of perception" skepticism,<sup>17</sup> contemporary interpreters largely agree that insofar as the deduction advances an anti-skeptical

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<sup>16</sup> In this vein, P. F. Strawson and Paul Guyer can be seen as the forerunners of a 20<sup>th</sup> century revival of the Neo-Kantian project of extracting epistemological insights from the *Critique* and bringing them to bear against contemporary issues in analytic philosophy. Responding to this tradition, interpreters like Henry Allison, Eckart Förster, Karl Ameriks, and Michael Forster have sought to defend core tenets of Kant's system without sacrificing its contemporary relevance. Other contemporary philosophers have emphasized the ability of Kantian insights to transcend the so-called analytic-continental divide, for example John McDowell, Stanley Cavell, and Michael Friedman.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Strawson 1966 and Stroud 1968.

strategy, it does so as directed against a type of justificatory skepticism attributed to Hume.<sup>18</sup> On the former account, the transcendental deduction of the categories assumes some thin, empirically-minimal conception of experience, and then argues progressively in order to establish the validity of a thicker, objective conception of experience as a condition of the thin conception. On the latter account, the deduction's chief aim is to demonstrate *by what right* we take experience to be objective, namely by justifying the objective validity of the pure concepts of the understanding (the categories) in their application to any and all objects that can appear to finite cognizers such as ourselves.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, many interpreters take Kant to be entitled to the assumption that we actually have objective experience, since, on this interpretation, his goal is to demonstrate that we have objective experience *in virtue of the objects* of finite cognition, and not in virtue of some subjective necessity impressed upon us, i.e. not in virtue of the *subject* of finite cognition.<sup>20</sup> In this section I will reconstruct Kant's argument in the transcendental deduction of the categories, interpreting his engagement with skepticism largely in line with this second set of interpreters, emphasizing the hermeneutic role played by the deduction's two steps in establishing the objective (as opposed to merely subjective) validity of the categories with respect to appearances.

In the un-numbered paragraph immediately prior to the actual transcendental deduction of the categories itself, titled the "Transition" to the latter, Kant claims that "there are only two

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<sup>18</sup> See especially Engstrom 1994, Franks 2005, and Allison 2004 and 2015.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Ameriks 1978, Longuenesse 2005, Franks 2005, Forster 2008, Allison 2015, Gomes 2015, 2017, and Shaddock 2015, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> As noted by Ameriks 1978, Kant does not in fact simply assume that we have objective experience (i.e. make objective judgments of experience using categories), but rather that we merely have some empirical knowledge: "On this interpretation Kant's premise is not, as is often assumed, Newtonian and Euclidean, but is the relatively weak assumption of some empirical knowledge" (Ameriks 1978, 282). Kant's strategy is then to show that even these empirical judgments "presuppose the transcendental unity of apperception" (Franks 2014, 44). Although this interpretation can seem to make the deduction collapse into the Strawsonian "empirical perception cum objective experience" argument, it should rather be seen as a way of differentiating the *analytic* method of the *Prolegomena*, in which the fact of (objective) experience is assumed and its conditions then determined, from the *synthetic* method of the *Critique*, in which the conditions of the possibility of experience are shown to be the very same conditions of the possibility of objects of experience (cite CPR here).

possible cases in which synthetic representations and objects can come together, necessarily relate to each other, and, as it were, meet each other: either if the object alone makes the representation possible, or if the representation alone makes the object possible” (A92/B124).<sup>21</sup> Since objects do not make our representations possible, our representations must make objects possible (this is the Copernican revolution of the B-edition Preface). And, since we are dealing with the prospects for cognition and not desire (the representations of the latter making possible the *existence* of objects of desire, i.e. satisfactions), the only remaining possibility of undertaking a transcendental deduction of the categories’ objective validity is to prove “that they must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experiences,” (A94/B126) where experience (empirical cognition) is that which furnishes us with the cognition of empirical objects. In particular, the possibility of experience depends on two conditions: the “given-ness” of the object through intuitions and the thinking of the object through concepts.

Kant goes on to remark that Locke’s attempted justification of the categories failed because Locke himself failed to distinguish between these two conditions of the possibility of objects of experience (i.e. the necessary combination of intuitions and concepts in empirical cognition). Locke’s justification amounted to only an empirical deduction, since he treated the categories as though they derived their justification from the *actuality* of experience (and not its *possibility*). For this reason, he compared the various pure concepts qua representations with empirical representations, logically reflecting on these representations through abstraction in order to ascend to the categories

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<sup>21</sup> In his 1772 letter to Marcus Herz, Kant had already outlined these two possibilities, noting that except in the case of the will and the faculty of desire, our capacity for spontaneous representation (the understanding) is not the cause of objects of experience, and furthermore objects of experience do not make the categories possible. Kant claims that “therefore the pure concepts of the understanding must not be abstracted from sense perceptions, nor must they express the reception of representations through the senses; but though they must have their origin in the nature of the soul, they are neither caused by the object nor do they bring the object itself into being” (10:130).

and indeed even beyond, to the realm of the supersensible.<sup>22</sup> It is in this sense that he “opened the gates wide to *enthusiasm*” (A95/B128).

On the contrary, Hume recognized the insufficiency of this procedure of logical reflection. Since empirical concepts have an *a posteriori* origin, and the supposed categories, as pure concepts, have an *a priori* origin, mere abstraction from the former can never yield the apodicticity of the latter. However, Hume still found it necessary to ground (or, rather, explain) our empirical concepts, even if it could be done only *a posteriori* and subjectively, and so remained satisfied in relegating the categories to mere subjective associations in order to prevent the Lockean inconsistency of empirically deriving *a priori* concepts. It is in this sense that Hume “gave way entirely to *skepticism*,” (ibid.) by proclaiming the impossibility of an objective deduction of pure concepts.

Kant thus characterizes the project of the transcendental deduction of the categories as the attempt to “steer human reason between these two cliffs [of enthusiasm and skepticism]” (ibid.) through a *transcendental* (versus empirical) deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding, which fundamentally depends on our comparing representations not merely logically, but transcendently, i.e. comparing them to the possibility of experience through our faculty of (empirical) cognition and thereby differentiating between representations (objects) of pure sensibility and representations (objects) of pure understanding. The challenge of the deduction is therefore to show how, even in light of this necessary bifurcation of our representations, our subjective forms of thinking (the categories) can, *pace* Hume, be objectively valid with respect to even representations of pure sensibility.

Kant had earlier connected the (Humean) skeptical worry with the motivation behind the transcendental deduction of the categories in the first section of both the A and B editions, titled

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<sup>22</sup> A95/B127

“On the principles of a transcendental deduction in general.”<sup>23</sup> Given the architectonic structure of the *Critique*, Kant is pressed to show why the conclusion of the Transcendental Aesthetic (TA), which relativized objects to appearances, was insufficient to address the skeptical worry. In two famous passages, Kant addresses this insufficiency and explains its special character, claiming that “the reader must be convinced of the unavoidable necessity” of this transcendental deduction and moreover “he must also clearly understand from the outset its inevitable difficulty” (A88/B121).<sup>24</sup>

The inevitable difficulty is evident from the fact that

“the categories of the understanding [...] do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their a priori conditions” (A89-90/B121-122)

It is important to note here that the difficulty posed is neither a denial of the conclusion of the deduction nor simply an interlocutor’s worry: either interpretation would trivialize the deduction’s difficulty. There is no reason why an interlocutor could not raise similar “difficulties” for the TA,

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<sup>23</sup> As I will show in Section 3, these principles (and hence a need to respond to some skeptical concern) will indeed apply to all transcendental deductions *in general*, as claimed in the title of this first section, and so not merely to the deduction of the pure concepts but also to the deduction of the pure ideas. At the heart of every transcendental deduction is the need to differentiate between subjective criteria and objective criteria, since concepts can be both logically possible (as in the case of transcendent applications of the categories, where no object can be *really* furnished in intuition) and really possible (where an object can be *really* furnished, i.e. actualized, in intuition). It is for this reason that a deduction of concepts whose object is mathematically constructed is both unnecessary and impossible, since space and time provide the criteria for their construction immediately in intuition and hence without the opportunity for any “subjective imposition” of concepts that are merely logically possible but really impossible.

<sup>24</sup> With respect to the unavoidable necessity of the transcendental deduction, Kant claims that despite the Aesthetic, the reader may yet be inclined “to use the concept of space beyond the conditions of sensible intuition” (A88/B120-1). In the Aesthetic, the arguments all relied on an exposition of the concept of space, and it was seen from this exposition that space was an *a priori* form of intuition, and hence preceded experience in general (A25/B40). But insofar as concepts may conceivably be applied to things-in-themselves, the concept of space is in danger of legitimizing the cognition of things-in-themselves through their supposed spatiality.

something which Kant specifically prevents by differentiating between the roles of sensibility and understanding and the corresponding application of pure representations (i.e. pure intuitions and the categories, respectively). This difficulty is not present in the TA, due to the passivity of sensibility: space and time were shown to be our subjective forms of sensibility, so that all objects qua intuition are spatiotemporal. Because the manifold of intuition is given to us without any spontaneous activity, identifying and proving the nature of this “given-ness” reveals a necessary structure to all that can possibly be given, i.e. objects qua appearances. In the deduction, however, even if we can prove that the categories are our subjective forms of understanding (a claim Kant makes in the Metaphysical Deduction), the spontaneous nature of the understanding means that our application of the categories might be a mere subjective imposition, and objects qua appearances might not be categorial.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the fact that we must necessarily, actively apply concepts to objects brings up the Humean skeptical problem: it may simply be the case that we are (necessarily) accustomed to applying the categories, without being able to adduce any rational grounds for this application.

I follow Dieter Henrich’s seminal essay, “The Proof-Structure of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction,” in framing my interpretation of the deduction around an explication of the coherence of its two discrete “steps” and their relation to Kant’s anti-skeptical strategy.<sup>26</sup> Any charitable

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<sup>25</sup> McDowell frames the worry in precisely these terms in “Hegel’s Idealism as Radicalization of Kant” (2009, 77). McDowell claims that “the B Deduction is framed to avoid a certain objection,” (2009, 73) the objection that due to the rigid distinction between sensibility and the understanding, Kant must not only show that we are justified in applying the categories to objects that can be thought (or conceptualized, or apperceptively unified), but also to objects that can be given (or intuited) (2009, 73). In *Mind and World*, McDowell further characterizes Kant’s above claim about the interdependence of concepts and intuitions as a commitment to steering a course between the skeptical hazards of “a play of concepts without any connection with [...] experiential intake” (1996, 4) on the one hand, and a picture of strictly causal impingement (i.e. the subjective imposition) that “offers exculpations where we [and Kant] wanted justifications” (8) on the other. Kant attempts this difficult task in the deduction, which finally establishes that “empirical knowledge results from a co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity” (9).

<sup>26</sup> See Henrich 1969. The challenge is to make sense of the two steps without making them either trivial or implausible. As noted by Shaddock 2014, many of the most prominent solutions to this problem in the

solution to the problem-of-two-steps-in-one-proof must cohere with and rely on an account of both the unavoidable necessity and inevitable difficulty of the deduction presented above. To see how Kant executes the project of the deduction, I will differentiate between two conceptions of objects as conceived of by Kant. On the one hand, objects may be seen as representations that are brought under concepts through the activity of the understanding (and thereby unified). On the other, objects may be seen as representations that are given in the manifold of intuition through the passivity of sensibility. It is clear that Kant took these two types of objects to be coextensive, as evidenced by the famous claim that “thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,” (A51/B75) but there is no reason to think that this coextension is trivial in any way: the understanding and sensibility are two fundamentally distinct components of cognition. The first independent step of the deduction may be seen as establishing the applicability of the categories to the first class of objects, those that get apperceptively unified. The second step then examines the second class of objects, those that are sensibly given in space and time (i.e. appearances), and justifies our application of the categories to these specific objects. If the deduction were to consist in only the first step, then one could imagine objects given to us in sensibility without reference to the categories, so that the representations comprising this intuition may not, for example, be causally related. Alternatively, if the deduction were to consist in only the second step, then even though all objects of the senses would be apperceptively unified, there is no reason to think that this unification must be effected by the categories.

The heading to section 20 of the transcendental deduction of the categories claims that “all sensible intuitions stand under the categories, as conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness,” (B143) a claim which is subsequently modified by Kant’s

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secondary literature make one or the other step either trivial or implausible. See Shaddock 2015 and 2017 for an attempt at a non-trivializing, plausible solution fundamentally in agreement with my interpretation.

“remark” in section 21 that it is “abstract[ed] from the way in which the manifold for an empirical intuition is given, in order to attend only to the unity that is added to the intuition through the understanding by means of the category” (B144). In other words, step one establishes the result that objects that are brought under concepts (through their apperceptive unification) must be categorial in order for us to make objective judgments on their basis.

The basic structure of this argument is two-fold: in section 16, Kant establishes the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception, that “the I think must be able to accompany all my representations,” (B131)<sup>27</sup> and further that this synthetic unity is necessary for the combinatorial action of the understanding (i.e. the spontaneous action of bringing representations under concepts) in any given manifold (section 15). Then, in section 19, Kant relates the logical form of all judgments to this principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception. Kant claims that “a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception,” (B141) since a judgment by way of the copula suggests something more objective than mere concordance with the laws of the reproductive imagination, i.e. habitual association or “custom.” In other words, to make a judgment is to relate concepts in a particular way (even if they are empirical concepts) *because of* the way judgeable objects are represented to me as being: namely, as

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<sup>27</sup> As we shall see, rational psychology is the (futile) attempt to systematically investigate this “I think,” or the transcendental subject. The futility of this investigation is revealed through the paralogisms of reason, in which we see that “through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x, which is recognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and about which, in abstraction, we can never have even the least concept” (A346/B404). See Longuenesse (1998) for an interpretation of the deduction emphasizing the role of this transcendental object as a structural feature in Kant’s “anthropological” account of cognition. Now just as the “transcendental object = X” (A109) introduced in the A-edition of the deduction is “undetermined” and hence un-cognizable, as Kant claims in the A-edition of the chapter titled “On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into *phenomena* and *noumena*,” (A253) so too is the transcendental subject (considered as a boundary to cognition) un-cognizable. If, as I have suggested, Kant’s elevation of metaphysics to the secure course of a science will involve reason (as finite cognizing subject) taking reason itself as its own object, Kant must crucially answer the question of how the pure rational subject (i.e. reason) can be taken up as an object *methodologically*, if the *doctrine* of the *Critique* suggests that this transcendental subject (“= x”) can never be brought to concepts. This question, posed skeptically, will provide the basis for the transcendental deduction of the pure ideas, which I will develop in section 3.

conforming to the original synthetic unity of apperception. That this is true is evident from an analysis of a simple proposition, e.g. “Bodies are heavy.” To make such a judgment is evidently more than a habitual association such as “If I carry a body, I feel a pressure of weight;” (B142) indeed, the missing component must be “the necessary unity of the apperception in the synthesis of intuitions” (B142), else the judgment would not be objectively valid. In this way Kant has examined what it is to be an apperceptively unified object: such an object must be thought in accordance with the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception (sections 15 and 16), and this principle is nothing other than what the logical form of judgments consists in (section 19), and finally the logical form of judgments corresponds exactly with the pure concepts of the understanding, or the categories (section 13).

Thus, Kant has shown that insofar as objects are to ground the judgments we make, these objects must be categorial. While we do in fact make associations, as in the claim that “whenever I look at my coffee mug, I think of Beethoven’s piano concerto no. 5,” the salient point is that when we make such a claim, we justify it not on objective grounds (not on any objective features of the coffee mug), but rather on the subjective grounds of a contingent connection within experience. To justify the associative claim, we can refer to the empirical history of our own subject: perhaps at every performance of Beethoven’s piano concerto no. 5, I brought my coffee mug with me, or perhaps my neighbor just happened to practice the concerto every day at the exact same time that I filled my mug in the morning. Although we can make this subjective, empirical history intelligible to others, since both “my coffee mug” and “Beethoven’s concerto” are concepts of objects, we do not expect others to be able to adduce the same grounds to justify the *connection* between the concepts (unless they too were at the same points in space and time as me during the formation of my association and similarly attentive to the same features of space and time as I was, namely the mug and the concerto). On the contrary, in a judgment, as in the claim that “my coffee mug is toroidal,”

our justification of this claim is made not on the basis of a subjective, spatiotemporal history but rather on the basis of *the conceptualizable objects themselves* (i.e. on the basis of features shared by my coffee mug and tori in general), and hence on the basis of pure concepts of objects in general, the categories.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, it is clear that Kant has not yet justified the application of the categories to whatever objects may be presented to me through sensibility. After all, sensibility is passive (which accounts for the immediacy of intuitions) as opposed to the activity of the understanding (corresponding to the mediacy of concept-application)<sup>29</sup>. Thus, it might *prima facie* seem that objects of the senses (appearances) are therefore given to us independently of the spontaneous activity necessary for these objects to be categorial: if some, or indeed all, appearances given to us are “nothing for us,” then they will fail to be apperceptively unified, and the first step of the deduction will be irrelevant to the demonstration of the categories’ objective validity with respect to appearances. Kant must then, in the second step, demonstrate that we are justified in applying the categories *a priori* to the objects of sensibility (i.e. the “objects of the senses” (B145)), and not merely to apperceptively-unified objects.

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<sup>28</sup> In this case also we can distinguish between the components of the judgment (or association), namely the concepts “my coffee mug” and “toroidal.” While the possession of these particular concepts will need some sort of empirical origin (since we are not born with knowledge of tori or coffee mugs), it is the *connection* between the concepts that we take to be objective. In the case of association, even someone who is familiar with my coffee mug and the concerto would be unable to objectively connect them in a judgment. It is evident that one could also make an association which just so happens to be justifiable on the basis of an objective judgment, e.g. “whenever I look at my coffee mug, I think of a torus,” but someone who made this associative claim (versus the judgment that “my coffee mug is a torus”) would distinguish herself by the reasons she adduces in support of this claim (spatiotemporal conjunction, i.e. features of space, and not features of objects). As we shall see in the second step, the crucial move will be to show that space and time are themselves objects, and hence we can regard features of space as features of objects. Of course, Kant will need to non-trivially distinguish the sense in which features of space are objective from the above subjective sense.

<sup>29</sup> This is Kant’s worry, expressed in section 21, that this first step “could not abstract from one point, namely, from the fact that the manifold for intuition must already be given prior to the synthesis of understanding and independently from it; how, however, is here left undetermined” (B145). In the second step, Kant will need to explain how the understanding is nonetheless involved *a priori* in the determination (i.e. constitution) of objects in space and time.

In section 26, Kant reiterates the worry from section 21: “if the categories did not [apply a priori to objects of the senses], it would not become clear why everything that may ever come before our senses must stand under the laws that arise a priori from the understanding alone” (B159-60). Since the first step only established that the source of the applicability of the categories to objects was the conceptualizing activity of the understanding, there is no reason to think that this applicability of the categories will apply to objects of the senses (and hence objects of experience in general).<sup>30</sup> Put in terms of the motivating skeptical worry, even though the first step showed that we must apply the categories in order for objects to be brought to the unity of apperception, it still may be the case that objects (of the senses, and hence of experience) are not themselves apperceptively unified; we may only be subjectively forced to regard them as so unified, in which case the categories would fail to be objectively valid with respect to objects of experience. However, in the second step, Kant claims to have resolved this worry:

“all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories, and since experience is cognition through connected perceptions, the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience, and are thus also valid a priori of all objects of experience” (B160).

The second step thus turns on the idea that perception (i.e. the passivity of sensibility) requires a kind of synthesis (i.e. the activity of understanding), even though the reception of any given empirical intuition is independent of any particular conceptualization. Then, since experience is

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<sup>30</sup> It is helpful to recall that in the A-edition of the deduction, Kant glosses the result of the deduction (“just what we really wanted to know [*welches dasjenige war, was wir eigentlich wissen wollten*]” (A111)) as the demonstration that “the *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience” (A111). In this way the categories restricted to space and time constitute experience.

nothing other than the cognition of perception, it follows that the categories make possible experience and we are thus justified in our application of them to objects of experience.

The structure of Kant's argument here is relatively straightforward. Since space and time are the forms of intuition (of sensibility), it is clear that all intuited objects (of the senses) must be in space and time. But space and time play a dual role: "space and time are represented a priori not merely as forms of sensible intuition, but also as intuitions themselves," (B160) so that space and time actually contain within themselves all possible intuited objects and also the unity of these intuited objects (as in space in time). Kant thus claims in the footnote to B160 that "space [...] contains [...] the comprehension of the manifold given in accordance with the form of sensibility in an intuitive representation" (B160n). This is the productive imagination (i.e. the figurative synthesis of section 24), which brings synthetic unity to bear against the manifold of intuition. In particular, in mathematics we treat space and time themselves as our objects of investigation, and not contingent empirical objects that appear within space and time. My determination of the geometrical properties of a triangle and the arithmetical properties of numbers (both through construction) are descriptions of space and time as objects, and are hence universally valid for every space and every time (considered as limitations).<sup>31</sup> It is precisely for this reason that the constructions of space and time undertaken in mathematics have an unproblematic *a priori* validity: space and time themselves immediately present us with these constructions, providing a touchstone for their description or representation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In the footnote B155n, Kant writes that "motion of an *object* in space does not belong in a pure science, thus also not in geometry; for that something is movable cannot be cognized *a priori* but only through experience. But motion, as *description* of a space, is a pure act of the successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive imagination, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental philosophy."

<sup>32</sup> And indeed on this account we can even acknowledge, pace Kant, that space itself is not necessarily Euclidean (that is to say, we can countenance a non-Euclidean concept of space, or indeed a higher-dimensional space). Nonetheless, we still adjudicate mathematical disputes about constructions in non-Euclidean geometry on the basis of immediately presentable non-Euclidean space (as, say, the surface of a

In other words, the intuited objects in space and time must be subject to the same **constraints** placed upon apperceptively-unified objects, since some manner of conceptualization (i.e. comprehension) is implied from the fact that a non-sensory synthesis is presupposed in order to cognize any given manifold, and these intuited objects are themselves contained within (in a “whole-precedes-parts” mereological relation) the manifold of space and time as formal intuitions.<sup>33</sup> But these constraints are simply that they must be in accordance with the categories, as was established in the first step of the proof. Thus, the categories apply equally to intuitable objects and conceptualizable objects, which are by definition the only possible objects of experience (since “experience is cognition through connected perceptions” (B161) and cognition is divided only into intuitions and concepts), so that the categories indeed make possible experience in general.

### Transition: Possibly Actual Objects

We are now in a position to see how Kant has managed to steer reason between the cliffs of dogmatism and skepticism, as claimed in the beginning of this section. By carefully distinguishing our representations—the components of cognition—into products of sensibility and products of understanding, Kant is able to articulate what is at stake in an *a priori* deduction of the categories.<sup>34</sup>

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sphere or the surface of a pseudosphere, i.e. a space with hyperbolic curvature). The key claim of the second step that the consideration of the whole of space as an object licenses the validity of our claims to particular spaces remains in place.

<sup>33</sup> Pure space and time themselves, taken as formal intuitions, are merely “empty intuition[s] without an object,” (A292/B348) yet we nonetheless synthesize these pure manifolds (by constructing objects within them) in order to adjudicate concepts of these objects in mathematics and mathematical physics.

<sup>34</sup> It is precisely this distinction (which, as we shall see in Section 2, is an act of **transcendental reflection**) which Kant argues in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method distinguishes the “bad” skepticism of Hume (resulting in the “*euthanasia* of pure reason” (A407/B434)) from the “good” skepticism of the critical method, i.e. of “the *critique* of pure reason, whereby not merely *limits* but rather the determinate *boundaries* of [reason] [...] are proved from principles. Thus skepticism is a resting-place for human **reason, which can reflect** upon its dogmatic peregrination **and make a survey of the region in which it finds itself** in order to be

Any attempted derivation of the categories from the former class of representations alone can only be an empirical deduction: even if we could attribute some unity (say, an apperceptive unity) to the objects of the senses, this unity would not necessarily (and hence not apodictically, not *a priori* but merely *a posteriori*) be effected through *pure* concepts of the understanding. At the same time, a derivation of the categories from the latter class of representations alone can never hope to secure their objective validity with respect to intuitable objects, i.e. all objects which come before our senses. For this reason, the deduction had to be accomplished in two steps, the first step showing the categories to be conditions of the thinking in experience, and the second step showing the categories to be conditions of the intuition that is encountered in experience.<sup>35</sup>

In this way the key to overcoming the Humean skeptical worry motivating the transcendental deduction of the categories was contained in the *possible actuality* of perception. To clarify this gloss on the method of the deduction, we must turn to the part of the *Critique* immediately following the transcendental deduction, titled “The Analytic of Principles.” Here, Kant delineates which actual synthetic *a priori* judgments are made possible through (i.e. licensed by) the objective deduction of the categories. These principles are divided into two groups, the mathematical and the dynamical (A160/B199). The former principles are related to the determination of appearances according to the categories of magnitude and quality, while the latter are related to the existence of appearances according to the categories of relation and modality,

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able to choose its path in the future with greater certainty, but it is not a dwelling-place for permanent residence” (A761/B789, my emphasis).

<sup>35</sup> “The transcendental deduction of all *a priori* concepts therefore has a principle [*Principium*] toward which the entire investigation must be directed, namely this: that they must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experiences (whether of the intuition that is encountered in them, or of the thinking). [...] Without this original relation to possible experience, in which all objects of cognition are found, their relation to any object could not be comprehended at all” (A94/B126). As we shall see, it is this *Principium* as an act of transcendental reflection which reason (as the faculty of principles) will need to ground, and in this way justify the critical method. Section 2 describes this act of reflection in more detail, and Section 3 examines its dependence on the regulative use of the psychological idea of pure reason.

abstracted from the concrete determination of their substantiality in intuition. In particular, Kant claims that “the categories of modality have this peculiarity: as a determination of the object they do not augment the concept to which they are ascribed in the least, but rather express only the relation to the faculty of cognition” (A219/B266). The synthetic *a priori* principles delineated according to the category of modality (which Kant refers to as “the postulates of empirical thinking in general”) will answer the question: “how is the object itself [...] related to the understanding and its empirical use, to the empirical power of judgment, and to reason (in its application to experience)?” Thus, Kant continues, “the principles of modality are also nothing further than definitions of the concepts of possibility, actuality, and necessity in their empirical use” (ibid.). The postulates will explain the different modes of an object’s objectivity (i.e. the different ways its existence stands against the subject: *Gegenständigkeit*<sup>36</sup>).

To establish the objective validity of the categories, we had to distinguish between “the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts)” on the one hand, and “the material conditions of experience (of sensation)” on the other (A218/B265-6). Objects which agree with the former condition are apperceptively-unified objects, and hence *possible*, while objects which agree with the latter condition are objects of the senses, and hence *actual*. Since concepts precede perception (in the sense adduced above, given the spontaneity of our sensible intellect), the mere possibility of an object (through a concept) by no means guarantees that we will ever be able to find an object of experience (in intuition, as an object of the (human) senses) commensurate with this concept upon which to ground objective judgments. It was thus not sufficient to show that the

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<sup>36</sup> Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant similarly employs this term to elucidate Kant’s notion of objectivity. Indeed, the Latin-derived word “objectivity” itself comes from *ob-* (“against”) and *jacio* (“I throw”). For Heidegger, Kant’s Copernican revolution abandons the traditional metaphysical investigation of objects as received by us and re-orientates metaphysical investigation towards objectivity conceived through the subject’s positing of objects (through the thrownness (*object*) of the world which stands against (*Gegenstand*) us).

categories were merely logically possible, but Kant had to further demonstrate their *real possibility*;<sup>37</sup> that is to say, their realization in perception. As Kant clarifies in the earlier dynamic principles of the understanding (the “analogies” governing the category of relation), this real possibility of realization, strictly speaking, requires the presentation of the object in a possible experience (i.e. in space and time), and yet through the analogies of experience “one can cognize the existence of the thing prior to the perception of it, and therefore cognize it comparatively *a priori*, if only it is connected with some perceptions in accordance with the principles of their empirical connection (the analogies)” (A225/B273). For this reason, we must, prior to carrying out the transcendental deduction itself, understand by “experience” (empirical cognition) the realm of objects whose possibility and actuality can be distinguished (i.e. we must recognize that two different kinds of representation are represented through our faculty of (empirical) cognition: concepts and intuitions).

It is only through this distinction that the objective deduction of the categories was possible, i.e. by demonstrating their “connection with the actual [...] determined in accordance with general conditions of experience” (A218/B266). As Kant explains in the postulates, this connection with determinate actuality in accordance with the possibility of experience (what I have above called the *possibly actual*) constitutes the *necessity* and hence *a priority* of the categories. We had earlier seen just how this establishment of the categories’ *a priority* was designed to repudiate the Humean skeptical worry of the categories’ alleged *a posteriority*. Concepts provide the possibility of experience through the connection of the objects of experience with the understanding (via transcendental

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<sup>37</sup> Kant had developed an advanced account of the difference between real and logical possibility—an account that would coalesce together with his developing account of the difference between synthesis and analysis as different modes of inquiry in mathematics and philosophy, respectively—already in the 1760s in the essays “Negative Magnitudes” and the “Inquiry.” See Chignell 2014 for an excellent discussion of how this line of Kant’s thought influenced the doctrine of transcendental idealism. While I agree with Chignell on the importance of understanding the evolution of Kant’s view of these modal categories, I take Kant’s “soporific encounter” with Hume as more substantively related to these modal conditions through the act of transcendental reflection, as will see in Section 2.

apperception), while intuitions provide the actuality of experience through the connection of the objects of experience with sensibility.<sup>38</sup> Cognition is only possible through the combination of concepts and intuitions in a possibly actual experience of an object. The transcendental deduction of the categories thus had to show that the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience considered as the collection of objects which are possibly actual, i.e. objects which can possibly come before our senses in connected perception. If we fail to make this distinction, we can only either derive the categories from experience considered as a mere actuality, abstracting from the conditions of its possibility and connection to the understanding (this would be an empirical deduction à la Locke or Hume), or else from their mere logical possibility, abstracting from the conditions of the actuality of experience through sensibility (this would leave open the skeptical worry that we are merely subjectively required to apply the categories to objects of the senses, not because of the constitution of these objects but because of our own subjective constitution).

## Section 2: Transcendental Reflection

In the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic, titled “On the amphiboly of the concepts of reflection [*Reflexion*] through the confusion of the empirical use of the understanding with the transcendental,” (A260/B316) Kant defines just the above act of distinguishing the origin of our representations in either the understanding or sensibility as “transcendental reflection” (A261/B317). In particular, the act of transcendental reflection assigns each representation a

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<sup>38</sup> In a footnote to a passage in the “Postulates” where Kant writes that the principles of modality do not augment our concept of objects but rather specify their relation to our cognitive capacities, Kant claims that “*through the actuality* of a thing I certainly posit more than possibility, but not *in the thing*; for that can never contain more in actuality than what was contained in its complete possibility. But while possibility was merely a positing of a thing in relation to the understanding (to its empirical use), actuality is at the same time its connection with perception” (A234-5n/B287n).

“transcendental place” in one of the sources of representation. Taken as a whole, the rules whereby we assign every representation its transcendental place is called the “transcendental topic” (A268/B324). This act [*Handlung*] of transcendental reflection is, moreover, “a duty from which no one can escape if he would judge anything about things *a priori*,” (A263/B319) for precisely the reasons adduced above. If we fail to reflect on our representations in order to determine whether the representation originates in sensibility (as appearances) or the pure understanding (as things-in-themselves), we will fall into the amphiboly of either “intellectualizing” appearances or else “sensitivizing” pure concepts. Since Leibniz took our sensibility to be merely a confused or obscured form of representation of things-in-themselves, whose clear and distinct form was represented through understanding, he compared all objects with each other merely in the pure understanding (even appearances), and hence derived the justified applicability of the pure concepts (the categories) to objects merely logically, through abstraction. On this intellectualized view, the understanding (and its concepts) is taken to be a paradigmatic form of representation which the sensibility (and its intuitions) must be sculpted into through logical analysis. Conversely, Locke took our understanding to be merely empirical (not, as with Kant, in its use but rather in the constitution of its representations). On this sensitivized view, the sensibility (and its intuitions) can indeed furnish us with the concepts of the understanding through repeated empirical presentations, but only because these concepts of the understanding are understood merely empirically (yet nonetheless, on Locke’s account, necessarily and not merely probabilistically<sup>39</sup>). Lacking the rules of a transcendental topic formulated on the basis of transcendental reflection, both Leibniz and Locke compared all

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<sup>39</sup> In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke asks, “From where does [our mind] have all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*; our knowledge is founded in all that, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either about *external sensible objects* or about the *internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves*, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge from which all the *ideas* we have, or can naturally have, do spring” (2000, 17).

representations whatsoever with each other merely logically within the domain of the understanding or the sensibility, respectively.

Against both Locke and Leibniz, Hume maintained that logical analysis could never ground our knowledge of objects (through justifying the necessity of certain concepts of objects). In the preface to the *Prolegomena*, Kant writes that “since the Essays of *Locke* and *Leibniz*, [...] no event has occurred that could have been more decisive with respect to the fate of [metaphysics] than the attack made upon it by *David Hume*” (4:257). On Hume’s view, all objects of experience were known *a posteriori*, and yet both Locke and Leibniz had attempted to secure *a priori* concepts like substantiality, causality, etc. by the mere subjective re-ordering of the former *a posteriori* concepts. No amount of logical analysis would therefore be sufficient to ground *a priori* knowledge (knowledge in principle independent from experience) on *a posteriori* knowledge (knowledge in principle dependent on experience, because taken from experience). Although Hume recognized that mere logical reflection (and its corresponding rules for a logical topic) was insufficient to ground the objective validity of *a priori* concepts with respect to objects of experience, he also lacked a developed doctrine of the transcendental topic, and hence was forced to conclude that the only way to ground concepts was subjectively, not on the basis of objects but rather on the basis of our subjective constitution.

It is precisely in grounding the transcendental deduction of the categories in a prior act of transcendental reflection that Kant is able to demonstrate the categories’ objective validity with respect to objects of experience. Insofar as this act of transcendental reflection is understood as a recognition of the distinctness in kind between sensibility and understanding, and therefore the recognition of the difference between synthetic and analytic representations, the act designates the boundary of experience as everything that can be possibly actual (namely, objects as appearances). Indeed, it is this act that makes possible the inaugural question of transcendental philosophy: How is synthetic *a priori* judgment possible? For Leibniz, Locke, and indeed even Hume, the criterion of

objectivity in experience (i.e. of there being objects in experience) is not the possibly actual but rather the absolutely possible (i.e. the merely logically possible instead of the really possible). On each of these accounts, our cognition is compared to God's cognition, the cognition of an intuitive intellect for which there is no distinction between possibility and actuality, and hence no distinction between synthetic and analytic representations. For both Leibniz and Locke, we can approximate this divine knowledge with more or less arbitrary precision, depending on either how far we go with our logical analysis or how immersed we are in experience, respectively. For Hume, though we are enticed by the prospect of reaching towards divine, *a priori* certainty with respect to our representations of objects, the fact that all objects presented to us through experience are *a posteriori* forecloses this possibility of such a project's success, leaving us only able to claim that we just happen to be subjectively constituted such that we are inclined to reach towards inaccessible knowledge.

The doctrine of the transcendental topic, by contrast, directs our metaphysical gaze away from objects qua things-in-themselves (in which we measure our knowledge by the yardstick of divine knowledge) and towards ourselves as finite rational cognizers. Indeed, this is the Copernican revolution of the critical method, in which we experiment with the idea of objects conforming to our faculty of cognition. In particular, through reflecting on our finite faculty of cognition, we recognize that our representations are not only to be distinguished with respect to their independence or dependence on experience (whether they are *a priori* or *a posteriori*), but also with respect to their origin in our faculty of cognition (whether analytic or synthetic). The question of how cognition of supersensible objects is possible is transformed into the question of how synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible. The answer offered by the deduction is that in serving as both the conditions of synthetic (intuitions) and analytic (concepts) representations, the categories structure experience by supplying its *a priori* form. Although the categories are not objectively valid with

respect to anything that is merely logically possible, they are nonetheless objectively valid with respect to that which is really possible, i.e. possibly actual, namely, objects of experience or appearances.<sup>40</sup>

The connection between transcendental reflection and the solution to the skeptical worry targeted by the transcendental deduction of the categories brings into focus a hermeneutic issue in the *Critique*. Why should the *Critique* not end with the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic? After all, Kant has claimed that the transcendental topic is “a doctrine that would thoroughly protect against false pretenses of the pure understanding and illusions arising therefrom by always distinguishing to which cognitive power the concepts properly belong” (A268/B324). And yet the Transcendental Dialectic is frequently taken to be Kant’s most sustained engagement with transcendental illusion and the attempt at its domestication (not by eliminating it but by keeping it in view and thus “prescrib[ing] only the end of infinite errors” (Bii)). If we have available to us the doctrine of the transcendental topic, why should such a further endeavor be necessary?

The textual riddle in turn brings into focus a more significant contextual problem. How does Kant justify the doctrine of the transcendental topic? That is to say, if an act of transcendental

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<sup>40</sup> In summary, under the four category headings, the concepts of transcendental reflection teach us to: (1) distinguish between mere logical difference (e.g. the **logical possibility** of a representation contained under another representation) and real difference (e.g. the **real possibility** of two representations represented as spatially distinct, as in two equivalent raindrops in different spatial locations), (2) distinguish between mere logical opposition (e.g. the **logical impossibility** of both A and not-A) and real opposition (e.g. the **real possibility** of opposite real forces acting on the same spatiotemporal object), (3) distinguish between mere logical internality (e.g. distinct feature(s) which pick a particular object out in distinction from all others different from it within the domain of **logical possibility**) and real internality (e.g. the real relations of the community of objects which affect all other objects through real forces within the domain of **real possibility**), and (4) distinguish between mere logical form/determination (e.g. the specification and limitation of that which is **logically possible**, as logical matter) and real form/determination (e.g. determination in general by the empirical use of the understanding of that which is **really possible**, as the *possibly actual* appearances). From this schematic we can readily verify Kant’s claim that the modal concepts of reflection pertaining to the fourth category “ground all other reflection, so inseparable are they bound up with every use of the understanding” (A266/B322). Every act of transcendental reflection ultimately consists in the distinction between logical and real possibility, and hence in the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances.

reflection had to precede any attempt at the objective deduction of the categories (and indeed Kant claimed it was a duty), the deduction's success in overcoming the Humean skeptical worry will depend on our justification of transcendental reflection. It is not enough to merely catalogue the forms of sensibility and the categories, and then demonstrate their objective applicability to appearances and appearances only (as was demonstrated in the Aesthetic and the Analytic, respectively); we must further justify this very methodological cataloging of the components of experience. And we are here faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, if the doctrine of the transcendental topic is to be a doctrine of appearances, it seems we would need a second-order act of transcendental reflection (and so on) in order to ground the first-order act. The worry of subjective imposition would recur at every level, forcing us into a vicious circle. On the other hand, if the doctrine of the transcendental topic is to be a doctrine of things-in-themselves, the very same doctrine, through the argument of the deduction, will have foreclosed our ability to ground determinate cognition on that basis. How, then, can transcendental reflection (and hence the deduction) be justified?

### Transition: Circumscription of the Possibly Actual

Before turning to Kant's strategy for grounding transcendental reflection in the Transcendental Dialectic in Section 3, it will be helpful to take a brief look at section 76 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.<sup>41</sup> In this section, bearing the unassuming title of "Remark," Kant

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<sup>41</sup> The relation between the first and third *Critiques* is highly contentious amongst contemporary interpreters. Much of the controversy stems from the degree to which interpreters take Kant to have either revised or even abandoned the account of both reflection and the regulative use of ideas found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Although Kant's account of both of these notions is central to my interpretation, reconciling the accounts of the first and third *Critiques* is tangential to my project. By citing the third *Critique* in support of my reading of the first *Critique*, I intend only to hint at the outlines of an argument entirely contained within the

begins by qualifying what is to come with the claim that while it “certainly deserve[s] to be elaborated in detail in transcendental philosophy, [it] can come in here only as a digression, for elucidation (not for the proof of what has here been expounded)” (5:401). Despite this constraint, interpreters of all stripes have found contained within this section a wealth of useful materials for understanding the critical system.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, a mere five short years after the third *Critique*'s publication in 1790, Schelling ended his first article, “On The Ego as the Principle of Philosophy or Concerning the Unconditional in Human Knowledge,” by praising precisely this section: “But never, perhaps, have so many profound thoughts been compressed into so few pages as has happened in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, par. 76.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, cognizant of both the section's famed inexorability and Kant's own warning, I propose only to use the passage as a clue to the critical demonstration of Kant's elucidation that I will take up in Section 3.

Kant begins his elucidation with a familiar definition of reason as a faculty of principles, which therefore outstrips the understanding as a faculty of rules. Whereas the latter faculty always requires “a certain condition, which must be given,” reason by contrast “reaches to the unconditioned” (5:401). Insofar as reason constantly moves beyond any given condition (including and especially the conditions of the possibility of experience), its principles will not be objectively valid (since as we saw in the *Transcendental Analytic*, “the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*, and on this account have objective validity in a synthetic judgment *a priori*” (A158/B197)). Thus, Kant says that he will “adduce examples” of principles of reason which are not constitutive of objects of experience but merely regulative. In the middle of section 76, Kant cites the idea of an intelligible world (and

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latter. If my account is correct, then I suggest that we will have more reasons to emphasize the critical continuity between the first and third *Critiques* (and, indeed, the second *Critique* as well).

<sup>42</sup> See especially Hegel *GW*, pgs. 90-101, Heidegger 1973, Longuenesse 2000, pgs. 257-9, Förster 2012, and Beiser 2002.

<sup>43</sup> *Philosophische Schriften*, Erster Band, 1809, p. 114. WW. I, 242.

freedom as its formal condition) as one of reason's regulative principles which "makes the rules of actions in accordance with that idea into commands for everyone and indeed does so with no less validity than if it did determine freedom objectively" (5:404). Then, at the end of the section, Kant cites the idea "of the purposiveness of nature in its products"<sup>44</sup> as a regulative principle which supplies lawfulness "in the connection of particular laws of nature" (ibid.). These ideas, then, seem to be none other than the cosmological idea of reason and the theological idea of reason, respectively, discussed in the first *Critique*, and here in their regulative employment. But, following Kant's implicit allusion to the architectonic of the first *Critique*, what of the first idea of reason—the psychological idea?

Immediately prior to his discussions of the cosmological and theological ideas, Kant claims that

"it is absolutely necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things. The reason for this lies in the subject and the nature of its cognitive faculties [...] Now, however, all of our distinction between the merely possible and the actual rests on the fact that the former signifies only the position of the representation of a thing with respect to our concept, and in general, our faculty for thinking, while the latter signifies the positing of the thing in itself (apart from this concept)" (5:401-2).

As we have seen, making this distinction (through the act of transcendental reflection) is "a duty from which no one can escape if he would judge anything about things *a priori*" (A263/B319).

Without such a distinguishing act of reflection, it would not have even been possible to formulate the question of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments, let alone to demonstrate their

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<sup>44</sup> Although Kant here refers to "the purposiveness of nature in its products" as a concept, it is clear from the context that he is using "concept" in the same non-technical way as in the "concepts of reason" of the first *Critique*, i.e. to mean ideas of reason.

possibility through a transcendental deduction. To attempt to philosophize (i.e. to attempt to ground rational cognitions through concepts) without such a prior act of transcendental reflection would be to treat ourselves as if we were an intuitive intellect, for which representations qua intuitions and representations qua concepts are fundamentally similar in kind and hence logically comparable, as in the investigations of Locke and Leibniz.

We must hold apart and distinguish possible and actual objects, since from our finite point of view, cognition can only result from their unison in the possibly actual objects of experience. We cannot merely posit objects in relation to our understanding, as apperceptively-unified objects, but we must also posit objects in relation to our sensibility, as spatiotemporally available. If we forego the latter, we are merely thinking of a logically possible object, and if we forego the former, we are not even thinking of the object and it is “nothing for us”.<sup>45</sup> Because of the subjective constitution of our cognitive faculties, it is only through positing objects as both apperceptively-unified and spatiotemporally available that we can achieve cognition. Crucially, the necessity of this distinction is grounded on our *subjective* faculties: “the distinction of possible from actual things is one that is merely subjectively valid for the human understanding, since we can always have something in our thoughts although it does not exist, or represent something as given even though we do not have any concept of it” (5:402). How, then, can we be sure of the necessity of the distinction between possible and actual effected by transcendental reflection?

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<sup>45</sup> For example, we may be wholly unfamiliar with the empirical concept of an LCD screen (say, because we were born in a remote community in the Amazon) and hence fail to recognize the object when it is in front of us. Nonetheless, we still have the object spatiotemporally available to us. The object is at hand, but our lack of the requisite empirical concept will prevent certain ways of interacting with the object, or with others who do have the requisite, more fully-determined concept of the object. We will not, then, be able to make sense of moving images on the screen, even if we were acquainted with and could make sense of the objects represented graphically on the screen.

Kant claims that even though we cannot extend the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience to objects qua things-in-themselves (thereby licensing cognition of things-in-themselves), we can still ground the subject-object relation unique to human beings *regulatively*:

“even where the cognition of them outstrips the understanding, we should conceive all objects in accordance with the subjective conditions for the exercise of our faculties necessarily pertaining to our (i.e., human) nature; and, if the judgments made in this way cannot be constitutive principles [...] there can still be regulative principles, immanent and secure in their use and appropriate for the human point of view” (5:403).

Could this grounding regulative principle be the regulative use of the psychological idea, which instructs us to regard our subjective faculty of thought (the understanding and the spontaneous production of its intellectual representation “I think”) *as if* it constituted a rationally simple soul set in opposition against the world of actually present external objects?

We may also consider the preface to the first *Critique* for further confirmation of this connection between transcendental reflection and the ideas of pure reason. In a footnote to the B edition, Kant compares the synthetic method of critique with the synthetic procedure of the chemists:

“The *analysis of the metaphysician* separated pure *a priori* knowledge into two very heterogeneous elements, namely those of the things as appearances and the things in themselves. The *dialectic* once again combines them, in *unison* with the necessary rational idea of the *unconditioned*, and finds that the unison will never come about except through that distinction, which is therefore the true one” (Bxxi).

The Transcendental Analytic, through its originating act of transcendental reflection, distinguishes heterogeneous representations according to their corresponding subjective mental faculty. The

Transcendental Dialectic is then tasked with justifying this distinction (i.e. justifying the act of transcendental reflection, and thereby the whole of the transcendental deduction of the categories) by grounding it in the regulative use of ideas of reason, which alone (through the addition of the idea of the unconditioned) are capable of satisfying reason.<sup>46</sup>

Keeping in mind the suggestive if opaque connection between transcendental reflection and the regulative employment of the psychological idea, let us then now turn to the Transcendental Dialectic, whose appendix undertakes some form of justification for the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason.

### Section 3: Skepticism in the Transcendental Dialectic

The Transcendental Dialectic (itself the second part of the Transcendental Logic, which also contains the Transcendental Analytic) begins with a discussion of transcendental illusion and its relation to the structure of our human cognitive faculties. Regarding transcendental illusion, Kant takes care to distinguish this form of error from both empirical illusion and logical illusion.

On the one hand, empirical, or optical, illusion consists in erroneous judgments made on the basis of our imagination, still in conformity with the conditions of experience but arriving at an incorrect inference through the omission of some empirical concept. For example, consider the “moon illusion,” which Kant himself cites as a paradigmatic example of empirical illusion (A297/B354). Although the interpretation of this illusion is contentious, one prominent theory holds that the moon appears larger to our eyes when near the horizon (compared to higher in the

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<sup>46</sup> In Section 4, I will connect this justificatory arc with the critical method, which, through the justificatory court of the critique of pure reason, “take[s] on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge” (Axi).

sky) because of the other, relatively small objects dotting the horizon, which we perceive as spatially near to the moon absent any visual indication of the moon's distance from us. By contrast, when the moon is high in the sky, the objects surrounding it (e.g. vast expanses of the sky, large clouds, the sun, etc.)—which we again perceive as near to the moon—are comparatively larger than the small objects on the horizon.<sup>47</sup> If we become aware of the empirical fact that our visual system operates in this way (e.g. that our visual cortex determines the size of objects relative to other objects near to it modulated by their closeness to the sized object) and the empirical fact that both expansive objects in the sky and smaller objects on the horizon are both much more distant to the moon than to us, then we can avoid the specious conclusion that the moon's size changes as it rises and sets.

Empirical illusion is thus inevitable, in a sense, although it is essentially dependent on our contingent possession of empirical concepts for its deceptive character: without the concept of the moon as a massive satellite with constant size we would be untroubled by its apparent alteration, and with this concept but without the empirical information about our visual system we become troubled by the consistent application of the empirical concepts we do possess to experience.

Logical illusion, on the other hand, simply consists in omitting a logical rule, as in syllogistic fallacies like affirming the consequent or deriving an affirmative conclusion from negative premises. In this sense logical illusion is artificial, since we must actively omit the rule in order to be deceived. Transcendental illusion, however, “is a *natural* and unavoidable *illusion* which itself rests on subjective principles and passes them off as objective” (A298/B354). Like empirical illusion, transcendental illusion is inevitable because of the way we are. Unlike empirical illusion, transcendental illusion cannot be prevented from deceiving us through the consciousness of empirical concepts. Like

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<sup>47</sup> This optical illusion is often called the Ebbinghaus illusion, due to Hermann Ebbinghaus, a 19<sup>th</sup> century German psychologist (coincidentally, his son Julius Ebbinghaus was a prominent neo-Kantian scholar of the Heidelberg school). In its canonical form it is represented by two circles of the same size, with the first surrounded by comparatively smaller circles and the second by comparatively larger circles. Our eyes perceive the first circle as much larger than the second circle.

logical illusion, transcendental illusion will be able to be explicated (not in its ground but in its consequences) in terms of syllogistic fallacies. Unlike logical illusion, transcendently illusory inferences will go to objects themselves and hence pretend to make objective claims about things(-in-themselves) which cannot be possibly actual and hence cannot be subject to objectively valid principles. Transcendental illusion impels us to disregard the origin of our representations in either our sensibility or our understanding, on which account transcendental reflection was necessary. But if transcendental reflection was sufficient to dispel transcendental illusion with respect to the mere understanding through the construction of a method (the two steps in one proof of the deduction) designed to fix the domain of empirical objects (that which conforms to the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience) to the domain of the possibly actual (that which conforms to the conditions of the possibility of experience), how is transcendental illusion still a relevant concern?

The reason is reason itself. Whereas the mere understanding was defined as the faculty of rules, Kant distinguishes reason from understanding by defining the former as the faculty of principles. It is important to distinguish these principles (*Prinzipien*) which reason is the faculty of from the synthetic *a priori* principles (*Grundsätze*) of the understanding discussed in the Transcendental Analytic. While these principles of the understanding are able to play the same logical role as principles of reason as the major premise of a syllogism (and thus as the ground of synthetic *a priori* cognitions), these *Grundsätze* depend upon the conditions of the possibility of experience. For this reason, while cognition from *Grundsätze* is *a priori* (indeed this was what the Transcendental Analytic sought to show), it is only comparatively *a priori*, in the sense that its apodicticity is predicated on the availability of possibly actual objects of experience. By contrast, the

question posed for the faculty of *Prinzipien* is: “Does reason in itself, i.e., pure reason, contain *a priori* synthetic principles [*Principium*] and rules, and in what might such principles consist?”<sup>48</sup>

Mirroring the architectonic structure of the *Critique*, Kant traces out the progression of our cognition: “all our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking” (A298/B355). In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, transcendental illusion was impossible, since taken by itself sensibility (even pure sensibility) is not the source of judgments (which could judge erroneously). In the *Transcendental Analytic*, transcendental illusion was impossible, provided that we took care to hold apart sensible and intellectual representations, thereby restricting even the pure understanding’s material to possible sensible intuitions. It was this very holding apart of sensibility and understanding that allowed the latter to determine the former through the figurative synthesis; the understanding took the entire field of sensibility (space and time as forms of intuition) as its object (as formal intuitions, within which all possibly actual representations inhere) in order to thereby ground the objective validity of the categories. Pure reason, however,

“never applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called ‘the unity of reason,’ and is of an altogether different kind than any unity that can be achieved by the understanding” (A302/B359).

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<sup>48</sup> For our purposes, it is helpful to recall Kant’s claim at A94/B126 that “the transcendental deduction of all *a priori* concepts therefore has a principle [*Principium*] toward which the entire investigation must be directed, namely this: that they must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experiences (whether of the intuition that is encountered in them, or of the thinking).” In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, we now ask for the grounding of this *Principium*.

Reason takes the entire field of the understanding (both sensible and intellectual representations insofar as they are capable of being thought, i.e. accompanied by the “I think” of apperception) as its object. In particular, reason treats transcendental apperception qua form of representation as itself a representation, but does not reflect on the origin of this empty representation in our cognitive faculties. It is thus incapable of attaining to the fruits of transcendental reflection, and it is for just this reason that “no *objective deduction* of [the] transcendental ideas is really possible, such as we could provide for the categories” (A336/B393).

In taking the understanding and its cognitions (both empirical and *a priori*) as its object, pure reason seeks to effect a synthetic unity of these cognitions in ideas, just as understanding sought to effect synthetic unity of possible experience in pure concepts. Just because the principles which would ground the former synthetic unity (of understanding, not of possible experience) must be absolutely and not merely comparatively *a priori*, we see that the principle of reason is to always ascend to the condition of conditioned cognitions until reaching the unconditioned ground, where the principles of understanding only had to ascend to the conditions of conditioned appearances until reaching the ground of possible experience. But, as Kant emphasizes, this principle of reason can only “become a principle [*Principium*] of *pure reason* [if] we assume that when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e. contained in the object and its connection)” (A307-8/B364). This unconditioned is attained through the repeated application of the syllogistic process of reason, at each stage giving greater unity to the manifold of the understanding’s cognitions by subordinating more and more cognitions under a more expansive title until the unconditioned idea is found, from which everything else in the series may be inferred.

The Transcendental Dialectic investigates these dialectical inferences, i.e. the different ways of taking subjective principles as objective according to the forms of the syllogism, which are really

forms for the derivation of cognitions from principles (and solely on the basis of concepts, without reference to possible experience and hence without reference to the domain of the possibly actual). In a word, the dialectic of pure reason arises because of a confusion between logical subjects and metaphysical objects. Because pure reason is unconstrained by any empirical conditions, it rightfully establishes its principles as occupying the place of a kind of ur-premise of the syllogism, a premise from which we can trace a derivative path through a series of descending syllogisms towards any arbitrary cognition. Transcendental illusion arises when we confuse this logical subject of the syllogism for a genuine metaphysical object, a confusion which arises naturally and unavoidably since we (in our capacity as rational beings) ascribe predicates to both logical subjects and metaphysical objects in the exact same way.

Similar to the Analytic's metaphysical deduction, we must then first "consider the logical form of rational cognition [through syllogism], and see whether in this way reason will not perhaps also be a source of concepts, regarding objects in themselves as determined synthetically *a priori* in respect of one another function of reason" (A329/B386). The syllogism, insofar as it stands as a schema for the operation of reason (just as judgment stands as a schema for the operation of the understanding), is fundamentally a relating of cognitions (comprising reason's field of objects) to concepts (rules of the understanding), in order to thereby secure synthetic *a priori* principles which condition all other cognitions (perhaps through complicated inferential chains of syllogistic mediation). There are thus three logical forms of syllogism, corresponding to the three categories of relation: categorical syllogisms, hypothetical syllogisms, and disjunctive syllogisms (A304/B361). Transcendental illusion causes each of these forms of relation to culminate in the illusory positing of an unconditioned object which conditions all other cognitions that can be related to that unconditioned object through the appropriate syllogism. The illicit, illusory move is the identification of the unconditioned (which is properly speaking merely a logical title) with a genuine,

metaphysical object to which we therefore go on to apply the categories, beyond the domain of the possibly actual (i.e. the really possible). The categorical syllogism leads to the supposition of the soul as an absolutely simple, substantial, subject distinct from accidental external appearances in its identity. The hypothetical syllogism leads to the supposition of the world-whole, which when subjected to the categories yield four antinomies regarding the possibility of circumscribing the world-whole (in space and time in the case of the mathematical categories and with the concept of possible experience in the case of the dynamical categories). The disjunctive syllogism leads to the supposition of the most real being, which when subjected to the categories is determinate with respect to every single possible predicate. For our purposes, we will limit our investigation to the supposed simple soul posited in the dialectical inferences of categorical syllogisms.

### Section 3.1: The Absolute Subject of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason

The chapter titled “On the paralogisms of pure reason” develops these dialectical inferences of categorical syllogisms. The paradigmatic form of the paralogism involves what Kant calls the fallacy “*per Sophisma figurae dictionis* [‘sophism by figure of speech’],” (B411) which is an equivocation, or category error. Thus, transcendental illusion here comes down to the same words being used in different senses in the major and minor premises of the categorical syllogism, such that the conclusion is invalid (in at least one of the respects that the shared term is used).

The ground of the doctrine of rational psychology the paralogisms attempt to develop is the empty representation “I” which must be able to accompany all my representations for them to be something for me. But just because this form of representation is an abstraction from all particular empirical intuition, “through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x, which is recognized only through the

thoughts that are its predicates, and about which, in abstraction, we can never have even the least concept” (A346/B404). Divorced from the sensible condition of experience, we can never be given an object corresponding to this empty representation “I” in experience, but rather we can only attend to the empty “I” as a form of representation, which must accompany all my representations. If we wanted to then take this form of representation as itself a representation (similar to how in the deduction we were licensed to treat the forms of intuition as themselves formal intuitions), we would err in thereby supposing we had determinable matter for this representation totally abstracted from inner sense.

Kant substantially revised the Paralogisms in the B edition of the *Critique*, shortening his discussion of each individual paralogism and moving what would become the “Refutation of Idealism” back to the Transcendental Analytic. In the A edition of the Paralogisms, the equivocated term is “absolute subject.” Absolute here can be taken in two senses, either as logical subject or as transcendental subject. Considered as a logical subject, the absolute subject is merely that which can only be predicated, and not itself used as a predicate as a determination of something else. Considered as a transcendental subject, the absolute subject is the above form of thought which must accompany all my representations insofar as I am conscious of them as determinate. Transcendental illusion consists in regarding the logical subject as if it were a metaphysical object to which the categories could attach (because indeed in certain propositions the logical subject can stand in for a real object, as in the proposition “The book is red,” where the book is a real object to which red is predicated), and therefore concluding that one can likewise attach categories to the transcendental subject, which however completely abstracts from any sensible manifold.

In the B edition of the Paralogisms, the equivocated term is “what cannot be thought otherwise than as subject” (B410). Kant explains that this term refers to objects in general in the major premise (since logical objects in general, whether they are given in intuition or not, may not be

predicated of other things but rather only themselves predicated). In the minor premise, however, “what cannot be thought otherwise than as subject” refers to the mere form of thinking, which we can by no means predicate things to by means of the categories, since this very form of thinking is itself one of the application conditions of the categories, as we saw in Section 1. It is just for this reason that in the paralogisms, “we therefore turn in a constant circle [about the representation “I”], since we must always already avail ourselves of the representation of it at all times in order to judge anything about it” (A346/B404). The proposition “I think” “is not a merely logical function, but rather determines the subject (which is then at the same time an object) in regard to existence,” (B429) and is thus in this respect an empirical proposition, since we must always have the synthesis of the manifold of sense for this determination, as we saw in Section 2. Nonetheless, this empirical proposition contains a purely intellectual representation, the empty “I”. The form of the empirical proposition (since it is also a proposition *simpliciter* in virtue of its being an empirical proposition) tempts us to attempt to attach predicates to this intellectual representation through the categories, despite the fact that “the empirical is only the condition of the application, or use, of the pure intellectual faculty” (B423).

The result of all this is that rational psychology understood as the doctrine of the simple soul is rendered incoherent as soon as we attempt to apply only-empirically-valid categories to this merely intellectual representation. The doctrine of the “I think” and its subjectivity, simplicity, and identity is only coherent as a logical doctrine of logical propositions in general, without regard to any sensible manifolds or determinations through them. For the purposes of objectively valid cognition, the “I think” cannot in the least provide us with a further domain of synthetic *a priori* cognitions since the only cognitions that are enabled through the “I think” are either analytic *a priori* (e.g. that logical subjects are distinguished from logical predicates) or else synthetic *a posteriori* (e.g. the specific determination of the manifold of my inner sense in appearance). We must understand by “I think”

not an appearance (as if it had a specifically sensible content/intuition and did not permit of intellectual intuition, which in reality it does) but as an empirical proposition which contains an existence, i.e. a being, i.e. the possibility of thinking, which is the form of thinking or transcendental apperception.

### Section 3.2: The Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Ideas

Against the view that Kant's critical method applied to reason as the faculty of principles culminates merely in the wholesale demolition of Rationalist metaphysics (through the erroneous doctrines of rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology), recent interpreters, drawing heavily from 20<sup>th</sup> century neo-Kantian philosophy of science, have emphasized the so-called "positive role" of the Transcendental Dialectic.<sup>49</sup> On this view, the Transcendental Dialectic does not merely curb the pretensions of metaphysics but at the same time establishes a projective role for the pure ideas of reason with respect to two human essential human endeavors: ethics and natural science.<sup>50</sup> That is to say, the ideas are meant to somehow guide our pursuit of both a metaphysics of

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<sup>49</sup> Principally Buchdahl 1969, 1992, Grier 2001, and Allison 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Thus, Buchdahl 1992 claims that the positive function of the pure ideas, encapsulated in the unity of reason

"is something that is pragmatically projected upon nature [...] for the purposes of fruitful scientific research. Unlike the case of General Ontology, where one might argue that – taking again the instance of causality – without the requisite transcendental condition life, i.e. our experience of change, would not be possible [...], by contrast the employment of causality for the furtherance of scientific research is something we might be able to live without" (35).

For Buchdahl, whatever role the ideas are meant to play in legitimation is fundamentally inessential in a wholly different way than the essentiality of the role played by the categories in structuring our experience. Both Grier 1998, 2001 and Allison 2004 largely appropriate this account of the role of the pure ideas, seeing the "transcendental chaos" entertained by the Humean skepticism of the Analytic as fundamentally more central to the critical project than the "empirical chaos" that would result in the absence of the ideas' positive role. By contrast, I am suggesting that these two forms of chaos are much more strongly linked than is commonly supposed, and that the latter form is merely the re-appearance of the former form at the level of

morals and a metaphysics of nature. And indeed, at many points throughout the text, Kant emphasizes the possibility of some positive function for the ideas and their system, claiming in the introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic that “even if no object can be determined through [the pure ideas], they can still, in a fundamental and unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon for its extended [*ausgebreiteten*] and self-consistent [*einbelligen*] use, through which it cognizes no more objects than it would cognize through its concepts, yet in this cognition it will be guided *better and further*” (A329/B385, my emphasis). Kant clarifies in the Transcendental Doctrine of Method that a canon is “the sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties in general” (A796/B824). But how exactly are the pure ideas, which reach beyond the domain of the possibly actual, meant to guide “better and further” the faculty who we have just seen is cognitively limited to just that domain? *Prima facie*, it may seem as though this better furtherance of our cognitions made possible through some use of the pure ideas is a mere addendum, an after-thought or “added bonus” to the critical project that can be divorced from the philosophical apparatus of the Transcendental Analytic. The placement of the most sustained treatment of this positive role for the ideas in the appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, and Kant’s reference in the *Prolegomena* to the argument contained therein as merely a “scholium” (4:364) to the *Critique* seem to support this reading. However, we have previously seen how essential the role of transcendental reflection was—*itself* first discussed in the appendix to the Analytic—to the critical project.

Kant’s most explicit formulation of the ideas’ positive use comes in this second appendix to the Dialectic, and so it is to here we must turn to gain a fuller understanding of how the psychological idea performs its regulative function, whose connection to transcendental reflection we have seen Kant implicitly suggest in section 76 of the third *Critique*. In the appendix, Kant

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reason, such that failure to dispel the latter forces us to skeptically revisit the argument of the deduction of the categories designed to dispel the former.

returns to the features in common to both empirical and transcendental illusion (namely, their simultaneous unavoidability and potential to inform rather than deceive us<sup>51</sup>) by describing the regulative use of the pure ideas of reason as what he terms a “*focus imaginarius*,” which is “a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience” and yet “nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts [of the understanding] the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension” (A644/B672). The *focus imaginarius* is then compared with an optical mirror. Mirrors are an example of an optical illusion, insofar as our being deceived by them depends on our possession (or lack of possession) of relevant empirical concepts. If we do not know that light travels in straight lines and that certain types of surfaces reflect light according to regular empirical rules (e.g. according to the Fresnel equations of the propagation of waves through materials with differing refractive indices), we might think that objects “in the mirror” have certain spatial relations to other objects not in the mirror different from the relations they actually have. But if we attend to the aforementioned empirical facts, we can use the mirror in order to see objects behind us that might otherwise be foreclosed to our awareness. Indeed, and crucially for our purposes, we can even use the mirror to notice physical features of ourselves that would otherwise be invisible to our eyes.

Analogously, each unconditioned idea of pure reason (psychological, cosmological, theological) arrived at in the natural course of reason’s syllogistic operation in the relating of

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<sup>51</sup> Even though the moon illusion is unavoidable in the sense that our human sensibility is such that we will always subjectively perceive the moon as larger on the horizon, nonetheless our possession of certain empirical concepts can turn the illusion into a boon for us: the very fact of the empirical illusion’s hold on us can impel us to seek these empirical concepts requisite for the dispelling of the illusion’s deception, in the process providing further empirical unity to our cognitions of nature. Likewise, we can expect an analogous upshot in the process through which we dispel the transcendental deception. But is it, as Buchdahl 1992 and Allison 2004 maintain, also merely an empirical unity which we advance? At the very least, it is clear that it is not empirical concepts which will clarify this transcendental illusion.

cognition to understanding<sup>52</sup> (in which possibly actual objects are treated as mere logical subjects, to which merely logical possibility pertains, and hence illusorily allowed to participate in chains of inference which surpass all conditions of the possibility of experience) will serve as a *focus imaginarius*, and so a kind of transcendental mirror. Kant characterizes the “excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use” (ibid.) (compare to the “unavoidable necessity” (A88/B121) of the transcendental deduction) of the unconditioned ideas of pure reason as one that “direct[s] the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge” (A644/B672) at the *focus imaginarius*. In an empirical mirror, my knowledge of the physical laws governing light in space licenses me to make inferential claims about empirical objects which I recognize in the mirror with respect to the determining functions of judgment, the categories (I can judge of the object as in experience). In a transcendental mirror, my acknowledgement of the regulative function of reason’s ideas governing the systematic structure of cognition (i.e. a mereological order in which the whole is explanatorily prior to any particular part) licenses me to make inferential claims about the relation of representations to the object on the one hand, and the subject on the other, but never to the constitution of this intellectual representation (I can judge of the object *as if* it were in experience, only by all the while acknowledging its lack). By acknowledging their merely regulative function (which can never be constitutive of objects of experience given the real impossibility of the unconditioned), we can distinguish between cognitions (qua objects) given absolutely and cognitions given in the *focus imaginarius*, where this givenness in the idea signifies only the tracing out of a method through which these disparate cognitions are systematically ordered and

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<sup>52</sup> “Thus the relation [*Verhältnis*] between a cognition and its condition, which the major premise represents as the rule [of the understanding], constitutes the different kinds of syllogisms. They are therefore threefold – just as are all judgments in general – insofar as they are distinguished by the way they express the relation of cognition to the understanding: namely, *categorical* or *hypothetical* or *disjunctive* syllogisms” (A304/B361).

thereby given a relation to every other cognition. Kant justifies the ideas in their capacity as *foci imaginarii* in what he calls the transcendental deduction of the ideas of pure reason.

But why should we even need such a *focus imaginarius*? Why is it not sufficient to merely reject the doctrines of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology? Kant's discussion of the deduction of these ideas in their regulative capacity is notoriously obscure and not only has the success of this deduction been called into question, but also indeed even its coherent possibility, let alone its necessity in the first place.<sup>53,54</sup> As we have seen, it is true that any sort of deduction of the pure ideas will not be able to achieve the same objective license as the deduction of the pure concepts, due to the former's disconnection from the conditions of the possibility of experience. And indeed, in the second half of the appendix, titled "On the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason," Kant first acknowledges that "the ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories," only to immediately offer the prospect for a deduction nonetheless: "if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, [...] then a deduction of them must definitely be possible [...] and it is what we will now undertake" (A669-70/B697-8).

In the first half of the appendix, titled "On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason," Kant sets up the skeptical problematic underlying the transcendental deduction of the pure ideas. In the first place, Kant makes a distinction between logical and transcendental principles of reason. Logical principles of reason regard the organization of our cognitions (in the understanding) as systematically ordered but in a merely "subjectively and logically necessary" way, "as method" (A648/B676). Kant had earlier characterized this logical principle of reason in general in the

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<sup>53</sup> See especially Strawson 1966, Guyer 1987, and Horstmann 1989.

<sup>54</sup> Kant himself might seem to cast doubt on the availability of a transcendental deduction of the ideas at A336/B393 and A669/B697, but he is quick to qualify that the impossibility of deduction only refers to a transcendental deduction along the same lines as the deduction of the categories (that is to say, a deduction which yields constitutive objective principles). His considered position is that there is nonetheless a *regulative* deduction which can provide *regulative* objective principles.

introduction to the Dialectic as the principle “to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed” (A307/B364). This logical principle is in turn divided into three sub-principles: the principle (or law) of homogeneity (sometimes called *genera*), the law of specification, and the law of continuity of forms. The first law seeks out the unconditioned logically in the ascending series of prosyllogisms which condition any given inference, the second law seeks out the unconditioned logically in the descending series of syllogisms derivable from any given inference, and the third law guarantees the continuity of movement between the ascending and descending chains of inference, so that every ascendant prosyllogism applies to every derived syllogism, and conversely for every derived syllogism a suitably more generic prosyllogism can be found. But principles understood in this merely heuristic way, as method, are insufficient as *Prinzipien* of reason. As we saw in the development of the dialectical inferences of reason, “we assume that when the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned also given (i.e. contained in the object and its connection)” (A307-8/B364). And, later in the appendix: “in fact it cannot even be seen how there could be a logical principle of rational unity among rules unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the object itself, is assumed *a priori* as necessary” (A650-1/B678-9).

The reason why this further transcendental principle must be postulated is that, without it, there remains a skeptical worry analogous to the Humean worry of subjective imposition motivating the deduction of the categories. Kant thus goes on to articulate this very worry, which we must examine in its entirety:

“If among the appearances offering themselves to us there were such a great variety – I will not say of form (for they might be similar to one another in that) but of content, i.e., regarding the manifoldness of existing beings – that even the most acute human understanding,

through comparison of one with another, could not detect the least similarity (a case which can at least be thought), then the logical law of genera would not obtain at all, no concept of a genus, nor any other universal concept, indeed no understanding at all would obtain, since it is the understanding that has to do with such concepts. [...] According to that principle sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree *a priori*), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible” (A653-4/B681-2).<sup>55</sup>

From the outset, Kant distinguishes this worry from the earlier skeptical worry of the *Analytic*, noting that even once we have been satisfied through a deduction of the categories that all appearances must exist together according to transcendental laws, still these laws (the categories) only concern the formal constitution of appearances; that is to say, they say nothing about any particular appearances themselves. We are thus confronted with a parallel worry of subjective imposition: if we were merely so-constituted such that we must seek the unconditioned methodologically (as a logical principle) but if nevertheless nature provided no such unconditioned in its products, then “we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth” (A651/B679).<sup>56</sup> Even granting the transcendental regularity imposed upon the form of appearances (namely, their determination through the categories *a priori*), we can still think that these appearances constitute

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<sup>55</sup> Although here Kant refers specifically to the logical law of genera (equivalently, homogeneity), he goes on to connect the worry here with the transcendentalism of the other laws too, noting with respect to the law of specificity that “if there were no lower [specific] concepts, then there would also be no higher ones” (A656/B684) and with respect to the law of continuity that it “unites the first two [laws], [...] prescribing a sameness of kind through the graduated transition from one species to others” (A660/B688).

<sup>56</sup> “For by what warrant can reason in its logical use claim to treat the manifoldness of the powers which nature gives to our cognition as merely a concealed unity, and to derive them as far as it is able from some fundamental power, when reason is free to admit that it is just as possible that all powers are different in kind, and that its derivation of them from a systematic unity is not in conformity with nature?” (A651/B679).

mere aggregates, such that any two given appearances could not be compared with one another logically (on account of the failure of a transcendental comparison). It would be as if we had two (or more) different faculties of sensibility, such that appearances of type A were received through our A-sensibility and appearances of type B were received through our B-sensibility, each to the exclusion of the other faculty. And indeed, *prima facie* it appears that this is the position we are in at the conclusion of the Dialectic: for we have seen through the unfolding of the dialectical inferences (those of the antinomy even going so far as to provide an indirect or apagogic proof of transcendental idealism and hence our cognitive restriction from things-in-themselves) that we cannot be given nor suppose that we are given the requisite systematic material interconnection of appearances so as to guarantee the provision of the unconditioned in experience. The ideas of pure reason simply could not be referred to possibly actual objects determined thereby given the sensible conditions such possibly actual objects are necessarily bound up with.

The solution, presented in the second half of the appendix, is that “although the three kinds of transcendental ideas (*psychological, cosmological and theological*) cannot be referred directly to any object corresponding to them and to its *determination*,” the necessity of these ideas can be secured through their regulative deduction, in which we do not presuppose that the objects corresponding to these ideas can be given absolutely, but only through “the presupposition of such an *object in the idea*” (A671/B699). And this is precisely to regard these transcendental ideas as *foci imaginarii* whose “object in the idea” “hold only as that of a schema of the regulative principle for the systematic unity of all cognitions of nature; hence they should be grounded only as analogues of real things, but not as things in themselves” (A674/B702). In the deduction, we were able to bridge the skeptical gap of subjective imposition through an appeal to the action of the figurative synthesis (through the transcendental imagination) applied to the form of the manifold of sensible intuition. Here we can make no such direct appeal, but can only approach the form of the manifold of cognition mediately,

regarding it as a “concealed unity” expressed not in the givenness of a hypostatized soul, world-whole, or most real being but in the inferential articulation and development of our cognitions *as if* they were grounded in the immediate availability of such objects. If this tracing or schematization of a method for bringing some form of indeterminate synthetic unity to our cognitions is to hold as a logical principle, i.e. a subjective prescription for our finite reason in order to satisfy its search for *Prinzipien*, it must be the case that this principle at the same time holds objectively for possibly actual objects but merely regulatively without determining these objects. If the principle did not reach all the way out into the domain of the possibly actual, even if only through the organizational idea/mirror of the unified subject which stands in relation to all objects as appearances, it would not attain necessity (even if the qualified necessity of regulation as opposed to constitution). In this way the regulative employment of these transcendental ideas enforce a transcendental (though not thereby constitutive) unity on our cognitions reaching all the way out to the possibly actual objects of experience, such that these possibly actual objects are organized materially according to the three principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity. Given any two objects qua appearances, we must be able to regard them as related to each other not merely formally through the subjection of both to the categories but also materially through their mediate relation to every other appearance (possibly actual object) encounterable in experience.

In particular, the psychological idea licenses us to “connect all appearances, actions, and receptivity of our mind to the guiding thread of inner experience *as if* the mind were a simple substance that [...] persists [...] while its states [...] are continuously changing” (A672/B700). Kant’s language here might *prima facie* suggest that the virtue of the idea of the rational soul is a kind

explanatory closure with respect to inner sense, such that we are not tempted to explain mental activity in terms of physical principles.<sup>57</sup> As Kant goes on to elaborate,

“with this [psychological idea], however, reason has nothing before its eyes except principles [*Principien*] of the systematic unity in explaining the appearances of the soul, namely by considering all determinations in one subject, all powers, as far as possible, as derived from one unique fundamental power, all change as belonging to the states of one and the same persisting being, and by representing all *appearances* in space as entirely distinct from the actions of *thinking*” (A682-3/B710-1).

The psychological idea is not merely an anti-Cartesian heuristic designed to separate mind from world but rather the transcendental presupposition that we are licensed in separating sensible representations from intellectual representations on the basis of their relation to either sensibility (whose products must be demonstrable in space, as shown in the “Refutation of Idealism”<sup>58</sup>) or to the understanding (whose products must be logically possible, i.e. thinkable in inner experience). Although our inner appearances must have the form of sensible representations, insofar as they are to be demonstrable, their content is nonetheless the content of thought, and hence can consist in merely logically possible predicates. The regulative employment of the psychological idea, then, is precisely the ground of transcendental reflection: it is the psychological idea, transfigured through the mirror of the *focus imaginarius* that makes available the originary action of transcendental

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<sup>57</sup> Allison 2004 supports such a reading, suggesting that the entire regulative role of the psychological idea is designed to “block the intrusion of physicalistic explanations into the psychological domain, and this might, in turn, be claimed to be a necessary condition for a systematic description of psychological phenomena” (442). Allison’s entire emphasis is on the positive benefits to empirical psychology that might result from such a role.

<sup>58</sup> Kant moved the outlines of this argument from the Paralogisms of the Dialectic to the Postulates of the Analytic in the B edition of the *Critique*, suggesting that while its argument is relevant to the idea of a rational soul, its conclusion (the refutation of phenomenal idealism) is a consequence by the circumscription of the possibly actual via transcendental reflection, as opposed to itself being the *ground* of transcendental reflection.

reflection. Kant reiterates this role of the psychological idea in the Doctrine of Method, claiming that “it is entirely permissible to *think* the soul as simple in order, in accordance with this *idea*, to make a complete and necessary unity of all powers of the mind, even though one cannot have insight into it *in concreto*, in the principle of our judgment of its inner appearances” (A771-2/B799-800). The act of transcendental reflection is the positing of the mirror (the *focus imaginarius*) and hence our attention to objects in the mirror, a positing that is transcendently licensed by the deduction of the regulative employment of the psychological idea (namely, in its schematization through the principles of homogeneity, specificity, and continuity). Without this thought of the soul as simple licensed by the psychological idea, transcendental reflection would be merely one-sided; that is to say, we would be able to hold apart our independent faculties of sensibility and the understanding, but not in order to deduce their unison within the domain of the possibly actual, as Kant suggested in the chemistry analogy of the preface, but only destructively in order to express a skepticism (in fact, the very same skepticism articulated by Hume in his devastating attacks against the methods of Locke and Leibniz) about the possibility of achieving objective, empirical cognition.

Thus, the regulative schematization of the psychological idea prepares the ground, as it were, for the transcendental relation between subject and object, and hence closes off a skeptical worry that remained even after the completion of the transcendental deduction: how do we know that we (as finite cognizing subjects) are not merely subjectively forced to reason about reason (i.e. about ourselves, taken as the object of our investigation) such that we must avail ourselves to transcendental reflection? And, given the above reliance of the deduction of the categories on this originary act of reflection, such a possibility seems to call into question the justification of even the categories’ objectivity, in turn calling into question all marks of empirical truth. Seen in its psychological guise, this worry presents itself to us in the diversity of the subject: “such diversity [requires] that one must assume almost as many powers as there are effects, as in the human mind

there are sensation, consciousness, imagination, memory, wit, the power to distinguish, pleasure, desire, etc.” (A648-9/B676-7). We must therefore regard these subjective powers as “nothing but various expressions of one and the same power, which can be called (comparatively) their *fundamental power*” (ibid.). But what exactly is this fundamental power?

### Transition: The Root of Human Cognition

There are two moments in the *Critique* where Kant alludes to the existence of such a power, provocatively placing them at both the very beginning and very end of the book, as if providing a frame for the investigation. At the very end of both the A and B edition introductions to the *Critique*, Kant writes that “all that seems necessary for an introduction or preliminary [to the *Critique*] is that there are two stems of human cognition, which may perhaps arise from a *common but to us unknown root*, namely sensibility and understanding, through the first of which objects are given to us, but through the second of which they are thought” (A15/B29, my emphasis). On the one hand, this root is unknown to us, i.e. it is not cognizable by us and we cannot be licensed in applying the categories to it (if we were presented with this root empirically, it would be sufficient simply to adduce our experience of it for its justification). On the other hand, we seem to be licensed in asserting its commonality, i.e. its unitary nature emphasized by the arboreal imagery of a root. Kant only returns to an explicit discussion of this common but to us unknown root within the final 10 pages of the *Critique* in “The architectonic of pure reason” of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, where he claims, in elaborating the necessity of understanding the *Critique* architectonically as a whole and not as a mere aggregate, that this understanding is to “begin only at the point where the general root of our cognitive power divides and branches out into two stems, one of which is *reason*. By ‘reason’ I here understand, however, the entire higher faculty of cognition, and I therefore

contrast the rational with the empirical” (A835/B863). Significantly, in this second discussion there is no mention of the root’s unknowability-to-us. Could it be that the path of *Critique* is meant to be itself the expression of the root’s commonality, an expression which (due to our finitude) cannot be expressed propositionally without tempting us to hypostatize such a fundamental power but which can nonetheless be expressed in the form of a system of transcendental philosophy?

While Kant does not explicitly address the grounding of the critical project, nor the role played by the psychological idea in such a grounding, he does discuss the prospects for a positive role to be played by the transcendental ideas through their transcendental deduction. As we have seen, he claims that these ideas, although not fit for the cognition of objects, “can still, in a fundamental and unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon for its extended [*ausgebreiteten*] and self-consistent [*einbelligen*] use” (A329/B385). In the introduction to the *Transcendental Logic*, Kant explains that its first part, the *Transcendental Analytic*, serves as a “canon” for the empirical use of the understanding through the limitation of the categories to appearances. If we apply the categories to things-in-themselves and so “synthetically judge, assert, and decide about objects in general with the pure understanding alone” (A63/B88), we illegitimately make this canon into an organon, i.e. an organized body of knowledge which makes claims about objects in general irrespective of our discursivity. It is true that Kant exposes this illegitimacy in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, but in the introduction to this section (itself the second part of the *Transcendental Logic*), Kant claims that the ideas of reason can themselves, in an unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon. This canonical use of the ideas will not offer to the understanding objects to cognize beyond the domain of the possibly actual, but it will nonetheless guide the use of the understanding “better and further.” How do the ideas of reason offer a canon for the understanding that guide its use? By investigating the critique of rational psychology in the *Paralogisms* chapter and its connection with transcendental reflection through the transcendental deduction of the ideas

presented in the former investigation, we have seen that this improvement consists in regarding the regulative employment of the psychological idea (the licensing of transcendental reflection through the psychological idea's three-fold differentiation, generalization, and systematic unification of the root of cognition) as directing the analysis of the understanding in the Transcendental Analytic, culminating in the deduction of the categories. It is this metaphysical function that directs our finite faculties to the "unity of thought" in the idea of a rational subject, thereby directing the improvement of the use of the understanding. The critical investigation of rational psychology offers a way to justify our entry into the project of the *Critique of Pure Reason* through its examination of the subject of the mental faculties which are united in a common root.

In other words, the metaphysical interest we have in investigating rational psychology, when suitably transformed by critique, offers our finite, sensible intellect the requisite "unity of thought" which precisely guides the understanding "better and further." Rational psychology modulated through critique (and specifically through the anti-skeptical deduction of its regulative psychological idea of the absolute unity of thought) is thus able to justify the entry into the critical project by licensing us to talk about the subject of the unified faculties to which all appearances relate, even if we do not thereby claim cognition of this subject. In this way, the psychological idea of pure reason in its regulative schematization licenses the act of transcendental reflection, which in turn establishes us as finite (i.e. discursive) cognizers, providing a justification for the Allisonian discursivity thesis<sup>59</sup> that is not merely a "meta-philosophical presupposition" or standpoint which we must antecedently accept prior to all critique but is rather a perspective which we must constructively (albeit regulatively) approach through pure philosophy, i.e. metaphysics in its scientific guise.

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<sup>59</sup> The discursivity thesis is Allison's gloss on Kant's claim at A51/B76 that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." Allison writes that "to claim that human cognition is discursive is to claim that it requires both concepts and *sensible* intuition" (2004, 13).

For an intuitive intellect (which had access to intellectual intuition), perception would be the very same thing as cognition since concepts and intuitions would be logically comparable and transcendently the same in kind. In this case all objects would be actual. For our sensible intellect (in virtue of our boundedness by sensible intuition), transcendental comparison of (reflection on) representations qua sensibility (intuitions) and representations qua understanding (concepts) reveals the skeptical possibility of merely possible objects which cannot be actual (and in the case of concepts of objects in general, hence also not necessary) or indeed even actual objects whose possibility we cannot conceive. At the same time, this reflection on our own finite, sensible, human capacities in addition to articulating a skepticism of the incongruity between concepts and intuitions also articulates the schema of a transcendental deduction of the necessity (apodicticity) of the categories: that is to say, a method (in two steps, each corresponding to a different condition of the possibility of experience, i.e. a condition reflected from the conditions of our finite sensible intellect onto whatever can stand in the relation of object to the intellect's subject, i.e. the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience) of demonstrating their objective validity with respect to all and only objects of the senses. The key to establishing this objective validity lay in the figurative synthesis of the transcendental imagination, which Kant claims is "a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious" (B103). In fact, to some degree we might even think that we are only conscious of this function of the soul (imagination) during meditations on transcendental philosophy. Through the figurative synthesis, the transcendental imagination represents the pure forms of sensibility, space and time, as themselves objects (i.e. not merely as forms of representation but as representations themselves) and hence providing material for (synthetic *a priori*) objective judgments made on their account in relation to the understanding. In other words, the transcendental imagination discloses the horizon of objectivity, but in so doing draws our attention to this act of

disclosing and to that which discloses – it is for this reason that we are tempted to hypostatize this transcendental subject, in order to thereby integrate it systematically into the horizon itself, an integration which is nonetheless circular and hence cannot be accomplished directly through the possible actuality of this transcendental subject but merely through the undertaking of a critique of this transcendental subject (now understood as none other than reason) as the source of the horizon’s disclosure, i.e. as the source of synthetic *a priori* judgments.

#### Section 4: The Method of Critique

“Therefore a critique, and that alone, contains within itself the whole well-tested and verified plan by which metaphysics as science can be achieved, and even all the means for carrying it out; by any other ways or means it is impossible” [4:365].

This quote, taken from the beginning of the chapter of the *Prolegomena* titled “Solution to the General Question of the Prolegomena: *How is metaphysics as science possible?*,” expresses Kant’s optimism that the problem of metaphysics can be resolved.<sup>60</sup> In this section I will conclude by connecting the various moments discussed above in relation to the possibly actual with the solution Kant offers to the problem of metaphysics in the method and procedure of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e. the way it itself justifies its approach to philosophy. Recall from Section 0 that the problem of metaphysics consisted in, on the one hand, the insatiable interest of reason in striving for the unconditioned objects of metaphysics, traditionally conceived (the soul, the world-whole, the

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<sup>60</sup> Towards the end of this section Kant similarly alludes to a richness of content for the metaphysics thereby achieved: “It would be too much to show here what sort of metaphysics could be expected to follow if one were first right about the principles of a critique, and how it would by no means have to appear paltry and cut down to just a small figure because its false feathers had been plucked, but could in other respects appear richly and respectably outfitted” (4:382)

most real being = God), and on the other the abject failure of all philosophers or anyone else to satisfactorily justify such knowledge by reason's own lights. As we shall see, the solution offered by the *Critique*—effected through its critical method—will consist in a transfiguration of these ideas **from** illusory objects qua appearances **to** things-in-themselves, or equivalently a slide **from** considering the soul, the world-whole, and God as entities to which the categories can be objectively justifiably applied **to** considering them as already regulative products of reason (*as if* they were presentable = possibly actual in experience), such that reason turns the dogmatic impulse of systematicity to the very presuppositions of the most ardent skepticism (which presuppositions are themselves still reason), in order thereby not to erect some sort of “skeptical system” but rather to be able to articulate the conditions of objectivity which reason demands (i.e. to be able to disclose the domain of the possibly actual). In particular, the transfigured psychological idea of the rational soul will itself license this way of proceeding through its grounding of the act of transcendental reflection which calls attention to the objective criteria which must be transcendently deduced within the *Critique*.

Such a reading of Kant's project may be contrasted with a significantly more modest characterization, in which the promised elevation of metaphysics to the secure course of a science is accomplished by separating away illusory speculation from metaphysics proper. On this modest characterization, metaphysics proper plays an essentially practical role in justifying natural science.<sup>61</sup> On the contrary, I suggest that it is not the actuality of natural science that calls us to philosophize

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<sup>61</sup> This modest characterization is ubiquitous in contemporary literature on Kant's metaphysics. The division between two different types of metaphysics (one which is paradigmatically “good” and one which is “bad”) has been variously characterized, but all essentially track what are taken to be the two different approaches and aims of the Transcendental Analytic and the Transcendental Dialectic: general metaphysics vs. special metaphysics (Allison 2004; Grier 2001), transcendental ontology vs. metaphysical ontology (Buchdahl 1969, 1992), or even metaphysics vs. meta-metaphysics (Allison 2004, 2015). Of course, Kant himself refers to such a division within metaphysics (between general and special), and my goal is not to claim that there is no distinction between these two terms but rather to emphasize an important element of their continuity and hence the continuity of Kant's philosophical approach to the problem of justification as it relates to both.

(in the sense that in the absence of natural science, we would not need philosophy), but rather that natural science is a particular instantiation of reason in the world (what Kant refers to as a *factum* of reason), and hence allows us to perspicuously delineate what reason must accomplish through philosophizing if it is to justify any objectivity whatsoever (including but not limited to mathematics, natural science, morals, aesthetics, and ultimately philosophy itself).<sup>62</sup>

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant explains the method through which he resolved the question of how metaphysics is possible (thereby resolving the problem of metaphysics). In the *Prolegomena*, the method “must therefore rely on something already known to be dependable [i.e. the *factum* of reason], from which we can go forward with confidence and ascend to the sources” so that “the methodological procedure [...] will therefore be *analytic*” (4:275). By contrast, the method of the *Critique* proceeds

“*synthetically*, namely by inquiring within pure reason itself, and seeking to determine within this source both the elements and the laws of its pure use, according to principles. This work is difficult and requires a resolute reader to think himself little by little into a system that takes no foundation as given except reason itself, and that therefore tries to develop cognition out of its original seeds without relying on any fact whatever” (4:274).

How will reason attain this self-knowledge?

In the brief A edition preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant characterizes the interest of reason as that which “demands that reason should take on anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely that of self-knowledge, and to institute a court of justice,” (Axi) going on to claim that this

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<sup>62</sup> These two different ways to think about the relation between the *facta* of reason and the interest of reason are relevant to what Kant says about the difference between the analytic and the synthetic methods (of which he claims that the *Prolegomena* follows the former and the *Critique* the latter): the analytic method assumes the *facta* and attempts to show that the interest of reason must be fulfilled for the *facta* to be actual, whereas the synthetic method develops objectivity solely on the basis of reason and its interests itself (4:263; 4:272-3).

court of justice is the critique of pure reason itself. Critique seeks to answer the question: how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible? And yet this is merely the analytic description of the investment of the court's jurisdiction (the justification of critique): only insofar as we are interested in answering such a question, an interest aroused by the spectacular success of natural science and mathematics. The synthetic description of the court's jurisdiction must come from within the court itself, as if deriving its license to act as a judicial body through the self-positing of its own rulings.

Kant defines philosophical cognition in the first chapter of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method as "rational cognition from concepts," (A713/B741) and philosophy as the system of this rational cognition.<sup>63,64</sup> Kant contrasts philosophy so understood with mathematics, which is also a system of rational cognition, but specifically rational cognition "from the *construction* of concepts," in which pure intuition immediately exhibits the object which cognition is directed towards.<sup>65</sup> For our purposes, what is significant in this division of reason is that mathematics and philosophy are not two different systems of rational cognition with disparate objects (mathematical objects versus empirical objects), but rather two different approaches to the justification of rational cognition of the very same objects. Mathematics constructs objects directly and so their objective validity (their capacity to justify representations made on the basis of these objects) is directly assured. In contrast, philosophy has no means of immediate, intuitive construction, and hence insofar as these common

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<sup>63</sup> CPR A838/B866

<sup>64</sup> Significantly, Kant contrasts philosophy, as the system of rational cognition from concepts, with mathematics, as the system of rational cognition from the *construction* of concepts. In Kant's view, mathematics and philosophy both have objects of reason in view (namely, synthetic *a priori* cognition of them), but whereas mathematics can construct these objects synthetically and *a priori* in pure intuition, philosophy is incapable of this construction and must therefore deal with pure concepts.

<sup>65</sup> This division of the domain of human reason into mathematics and philosophy had been a constant feature of Kant's pre-Critical writings. However, at several points he also claims that the two systems of cognition also differ with respect to their objects. For example, in the "Inquiry concerning the distinctness of the principles of natural theology and morality," published in 1763, Kant writes that "the object of mathematics is magnitude," whereas "there are infinitely many qualities which constitute the real object of philosophy" (2:282). In the *Critique*, Kant rebukes this commitment, allowing that both mathematics and philosophy take up concepts of quantity, differing only in the way in which they *justify* cognitions of them (CPR A715-6/B743-4).

objects of reason cannot be exhibited in intuition (as in the traditional objects of reason taken up by philosophy, e.g. god, the soul, the world-whole), they must be justified on the basis of concepts alone.

Kant goes on to distinguish two senses of philosophy: “philosophy of pure reason is either *propaedeutic* (preparatory), which investigates the faculty of reason in regard to all pure *a priori* cognition, and is called *critique*, or, second, the system of pure reason (science), the whole (true as well as apparent) philosophical cognition from pure reason in systematic interconnection, and is called *metaphysics*” (A841/B869). On the traditional way of understanding Kant’s project in the *Critique*, these two senses are mutually exclusive, with the first surveying the land on which the second is to be erected as a doctrinal edifice; critique provides the canon for the later elaboration of organon. And indeed, at many points throughout the text Kant characterizes the critique of reason (embodied in the *Critique*) as the necessary preparation for a more extensive philosophical science proper.<sup>66,67</sup> However, taking the work of the *Critique* to be preparatory with respect to metaphysics (as opposed to merely preparatory with respect to transcendental philosophy, understood as a kind of analytic amplification of the critique) unduly diminishes the dependency of the critical method on the recognition of the problem of metaphysics.

Immediately after distinguishing the two senses of philosophy, Kant claims of metaphysics that

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<sup>66</sup> One notable instance occurs in the B-edition Introduction, where Kant introduces the idea of a critique of reason: “we can regard a science of the mere estimation of pure reason, of its sources and boundaries, as the *propaedeutic* to the system of pure reason. Such a thing would not be a *doctrine*, but must be called only a *critique* of reason [...]. A *system* of [transcendental] concepts would be called *transcendental philosophy*. But this is again too much for the beginning. For since such a science would have to contain completely both the analytic as well as the synthetic *a priori* cognition, it is, so far as our aim is concerned, too broad in scope” (A11-12/B25). Thus, “transcendental philosophy is here the idea of a science, for which the critique of pure reason is to outline the entire plan architectonically, i.e. from principles, with a full guarantee for the completeness and certainty of all the components that comprise this edifice” (A13/B27).

<sup>67</sup> Interpreters disagree about which (if any) of Kant’s works might be understood as executing this second, doctrinal project. Förster 2012 suggests that the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* is at least the beginning of such a project.

“this name can also be given to all of pure philosophy including the critique, in order to comprehend the investigation of everything that can ever be cognized *a priori* as well as the presentation of that which constitutes a system of pure philosophical cognitions of this kind, but in distinction from all empirical as well as mathematical use of reason” (A841/B869).

In the former sense, metaphysics is aspirational: metaphysics is a kind of investigatory drive to justify all that can be justified on the basis of necessity. In the latter sense, metaphysics is the concrete method or path (a “presentation”) through which this aspiration is to be approached and instantiated. Similarly, in the draft of the prize essay, *What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany?*, posthumously published in the year of his death, Kant marks a similar distinction. On the one hand metaphysics “is the science of progressing by reason from knowledge of the sensible to that of the super-sensible,” (20:260) or in other words the purpose or “what is *wanted of* metaphysics” (20:261). On the other hand metaphysics is “the system of all principles of purely theoretical rational knowledge through concepts”, or in other words “what there needs to be done *in it*” (20:261).

It is precisely in distinguishing these two ways of understanding metaphysics that Kant articulates the problem at its core: the problem looms insofar as our current method is insufficient for what we had hoped to accomplish. We might think of this way of understanding the problem of metaphysics as “objective,” in the sense that whether or not metaphysics attains objectivity (i.e. attains the secure course of a science) will govern our satisfaction with such a solution to the problem of metaphysics.

In the spirit of Kant’s Copernican revolution, we can equivalently consider the problem of metaphysics from its “subjective” side. In this guise, the problem of metaphysics becomes the problem of reason, and instead of investigating how reason can attain knowledge of the super-sensible metaphysical objects, we instead ask under what conditions metaphysical knowledge can

satisfy reason's ultimate interest. The "interest of reason," a technical term used by Kant at various moments throughout the *Critique* and especially in his later writings,<sup>68</sup> is the human interest in completing the project of metaphysics. In the 1793 *Metaphysik Vigilantius*, the most complete transcription of Kant's metaphysics lectures, Kant notes that "it is striking: nature calls us to investigate cognitions of reason; for human beings there is an especially important interest in becoming more precisely acquainted with the objects of the supernatural" (29:956). Crucially, this is not a technical or arbitrary interest one might have as a means to an end (for example, the interest we take in eating healthy foods or accumulating wealth) but instead an end in and of itself: to be endowed with reason is to feel the pull of the interest of reason.

More concretely, this interest of reason "is united in the following three questions: 1. *What can I know?* 2. *What should I do?* 3. *What may I hope?*" (A804-5/B832-3) as determining grounds for the ultimate end of reason. In this way Kant establishes himself as the intellectual heir to a tradition of Western philosophy going back to Plato, claiming that even though the individual presentation and method has differed, everyone in between has still been beholden to a certain normative conception of philosophy, what Kant calls "a *cosmopolitan concept*," i.e. "one that concerns that which necessarily interests everyone" (A839/B867). As Kant emphasizes repeatedly in his lectures on metaphysics, even the ancient Greeks understood philosophy (i.e. metaphysics) as centrally concerned with these universally-interesting objects of reason: the origin of the world, the world-cause as highest being, the constitution of the soul, existence after death, prospects for future life, etc.; all objects whose interface with human life and culture is captured precisely by the three questions concerning knowledge, obligation, and hope. Crucially, these objects of reason are *a priori*, or in other words

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<sup>68</sup> According to the *Kant-Index*, the word "Interesse" occurs more than 700 times in Kant's corpus, many of them specifically in connection with the idea of the "Interesse der Vernunft" ("interest of reason") (Yovel 1980, 16). Nonetheless, many interpreters have relegated this expression to obscurity, taking its presence in the *Critique* as either incoherent or else as a half-baked formulation that Kant would completely revise for the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

necessary objects. Hence, implicit in our interest in them, is the presupposition that there exist some stipulated criteria that will allow us to adjudicate and answer the three questions connected with them. Of course, as we have seen, the “problem” comes into play when we survey the field of philosophy and find that no one has yet been able to identify where or what these criteria consist in. In fact, the equally consistent dogmatic theses and antitheses of pure reason tempt us to abandon our efforts at satisfying our reason’s interest altogether: if there is no criterion of objectivity here (since we can, e.g. both affirm and deny that the world has a beginning), then perhaps there is no criterion of objectivity full stop, in which case all we can do is abandon the thousands-year old project of philosophy and resign ourselves to impotence.

Despite this seemingly aporetic situation, Kant thinks that we have grounds (albeit as-yet unjustified ones) for recognizing the possibility of reason’s self-satisfaction in the *facta* of reason.<sup>69</sup> Whereas the interest of reason ultimately concerns our (or rather reason’s) desire to “get to the bottom of” objects of reason in the sense of grounding them in something universal and necessary, the *facta* of reason are simply the evidence that we do in fact operate as if we grounded our judgments on objective criteria, as evidenced by the successes of mathematics and natural science. However, it is not enough to be satisfied with any *factum* of reason, as even if we observe that humans seem to conduct themselves in accordance with principles of reason, still those precise principles remain undiscovered, and there remains a skeptical possibility that all it all amounts to is a mere unjustified seeming.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the fundamental difference between the way justification

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<sup>69</sup> CPR XX

<sup>70</sup> As we have noted, in the *Prolegomena* Kant adopts an analytic method that does license him to assume that the *facta* of reason are justified, and then reason backwards from that supposition to show what must be true of metaphysics. This method is insufficient to resolve the problem of metaphysics as expressed in the *Critique*, which calls for a synthetic method.

proceeds in mathematics vs. philosophy already suggests that we cannot in particular rely on the security of objective justification in mathematics in order to supply the same in philosophy.<sup>71</sup>

It is at this moment that the critique of pure reason enters the stage: “Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition [...] like the first thoughts of Copernicus” (B xvi). Instead of fruitlessly bandying dogmatic theses about the constitution of objects of reason in the arena of metaphysics, let us see whether we do not get farther by examining the possibility of our attaining metaphysical knowledge, or, in other words, the possibility of reason’s self-satisfaction. Kant elaborates in the introduction to the *Metaphysik Vigilantius*:

“It was necessary, and one should have begun it before one had undertaken investigations into supersensible objects themselves, to treat reason, as the investigating subject, as an object that would have to be studied more closely, to investigate its faculty for cognizing a priori, and determine its boundary and extent.” (29:958)

The critical method is the salvation of metaphysics through its re-conception of the metaphysical gaze away from a view to objects of metaphysics with regard to their mere logical possibility (the soul, the world-whole, the most real being [God]) and towards the finite rational subject itself as that which discloses the domain of the possibly actual (real possibility). The skeptical moments of the critique serve as points of articulation of what objective criteria must be transcendently deduced over the domain of possible actuality (experience).

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<sup>71</sup> The fundamental issue here was expressed by Kant already in the division of human cognition into sensibility and the understanding in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, although the way in which this division prefigures the problem of metaphysics doesn’t emerge until the *Critique* and the distinction between analytic and synthetic *a priori* cognition. As finite cognizers, we depend on sensibility to supply us with the material or matter for objects, and hence insofar as philosophy attempts to justify objectivity not on the basis of sensible matter but rather rational form, the constructive procedure of mathematics is inapplicable.

Armed with the ideas of pure reason as a canon for the understanding, we will always attend to the fact that the structure of cognitions (which themselves are always legislated by the mere understanding in their inner determinations) (the “unity of reason”) is never presented to us and posited immediately but is rather seen through the mirror of the *focus imaginarius*. To see the structure of cognitions in this way is to see its components (the cognitions) as related to one another and to us as the subject in a systematic way, i.e. to acknowledge the affinity between reason and the empirical, which constitutes the unification of our stems of human cognition (knowledge).

Kant’s reconfiguration of the “problem of metaphysics” to the “problem of reason” succeeds just because the latter is capable of securing reason’s self-knowledge, just because it contains its own criteria. This is elaborated as reason (qua finite cognizing subject) taking itself as its own object, not as in rational psychology, nor as in empirical psychology, but rather regulatively through the method of critique, which posits the transcendental structure of (transcendental) subject and (transcendental) object. We do not pretend to cognition of this transcendental structure but rather let it trace out the pathway to the systematicity of a science within which we can demarcate the boundaries of cognition, thereby answering the question of how synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible. That is to say, the psychological idea in regulative employment impels us to seek unity in our own cognizing subject **as if** it were a pure rational subject (soul), and hence to create a system of pure reason. Likewise the regulative schematization of the cosmological idea impels forward our mechanistic investigation of nature and also our entitlement to transcendental freedom. Likewise the regulative schematization of the theological idea licenses our teleological investigation of the system of empirical laws of nature.

This is then how the transcendental ideas **complete** the system of the critical method, ultimately securing a path for metaphysics’ elevation to the secure course of a science, epitomized in

the scientific systems of the three *Critiques*, each grounding the relation between faculties according to each of the ideas of pure reason.

By “completion” I mean something more general than a temporal or successive completion but rather completion understood as the capacity of something to never be found to have justificatory gaps. It is in this sense that the real numbers are complete, which is often formulated as the fact that every (non-empty) set of numbers which has an upper bound (limit) necessarily has a specific, determinate least upper bound (limit). In more general contexts (of abstract sets), there is no reason why such a determinate bounding of all (non-empty) sets must obtain. In abstracting from a length of real numbers which does not contain the singular endpoints of that length (this is an “open” interval) to an “open” set in general, we lose a fundamental property of numbers which was used in constructing their completeness (“completing them”): totality, namely a property of numbers which says that for every relation which holds between numbers, and given any two numbers, the new element formed by combining these two numbers in any order through this relation is also itself a number (i.e. it is a type of closure). The completeness is a fact about our ability to constructively interact with the (totally-)ordered field (sometimes called a “chain”) of real numbers.

In this sense, the *Critique* is brought to completion through its own self-positing, which systematically applies the skeptical method of critique to its own pretensions to metaphysical knowledge. Kant is careful to distinguish between a harmful skepticism run amok and a beneficial, domesticated skepticism which plays a positive role in uncovering criteria of truth, writing in the *Jäsche Logic* that even “as harmful as this [thoroughgoing] skepticism is, though, the skeptical method is just as useful and purposeful, provided one understands nothing more by this than the way of treating something as uncertain and of bringing it to the highest uncertainty, in the hope of getting on the trail of truth in this way” (84).

Hume's critique of the inadequacy of Lockean/Leibnizian logical reflection in this way allowed us to get onto the trail of truth, since his critique presupposed the marks of transcendental reflection but without pursuing such an idea systematically in critique, since Hume did not have clearly in mind the distinction between mathematics and philosophy that allows us to see the difference in grounds of their respective methods and hence the need for philosophy to distinguish between those representations which can be made present to us either immediately or else mediately through discursive thought (appearances = the possibly actual) and those representations which can never be made present to us (things-in-themselves).<sup>72</sup> Skepticism thus exposes the criteria of truth with respect to metaphysics as science, which turns out to be systematicity.<sup>73</sup>

Once in possession of this criteria, reason excises the thoroughgoing doubt through the procedure of a critique, which by taking up reason itself as its object ensures the availability of the just adduced criteria in dispelling skepticism:

“all the concepts, indeed all the questions that pure reason lays before us, lie not in experience but themselves in turn only in reason, and they must therefore be able to be solved and their validity or nullity must be able to be comprehended. We are, also, not justified in repudiating these problems under the excuse of our incapacity, as if their solution really lay in the nature of things, and in rejecting further investigation, since reason has given birth to these ideas from its own womb alone, and is therefore liable to give account of either their validity or their dialectical illusion” (A763/B791).

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<sup>72</sup> Since Hume did not distinguish between analytic and synthetic representations, he had no antidote for the failure of Lockean/Leibnizian logical reflection. From the perspective of critique, having distinguished mathematics and philosophy, we can use this skeptical impulse positively in order to delineate the conditions of objectivity. As Kant goes on to clarify in the *Jäsche Logic*: “In mathematics and physics skepticism does not occur. The only cognition that can occasion it is that which is neither mathematical nor empirical, purely philosophical cognition. Absolute skepticism pronounces everything to be illusion. Hence it distinguishes illusion from truth and must therefore have a mark of the distinction after all, and consequently must presuppose a cognition of truth, whereby it contradicts itself” (84).

<sup>73</sup> A system, for Kant, is simply “the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea” (A832/B860).

The problem of the relation of subject and object (the pursuit of cognition of metaphysical objects [God, world-whole, soul]) is transfigured through the transcendental mirror (*focus imaginarius*) of the transcendental ideas. This problem becomes that of the relation between subjective faculties which branch at the common root of human cognition, which respectively facilitate sensible and intellectual representations.<sup>74</sup> In the problem's new domain, the criteria of the unity of this relationship, effected through the transcendental deduction of the categories—an effect licensed by the act of transcendental reflection through the transcendental imagination (that blind but mere effect of the understanding on sensibility) in response to the conditions articulated by the skeptical possibility of subjective imposition with respect to justification (*quid juris?*)—is supplied internally by recognition/acknowledgement of these two branches of the common root (of which the difference in method between mathematics and philosophy offers a resplendent example). We cannot locate this common root within the domain in which the problem is soluble, and this accounts for our denial of knowledge of these standardly-conceived metaphysical objects. That is to say, this root is not possibly actual. We cannot in the least apply any real predicate which would pretend to put this root, this transcendental object which is at the same time transcendental subject, this subject-object = x into the domain of the possibly actual. And this implies that we cannot have knowledge of this common root, neither of its division into branches, nor of the real possibility of their unification in it. Yet we can nonetheless acknowledge this root as a kind of schematic, mirror-image (not in the sense of specifically reversed, but in the sense of being not possibly actual) which regulatively guides better and further<sup>75</sup> the philosophical concepts of the critique of pure reason in order to ground them in the idea of a system.

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<sup>74</sup> Deleuze offers a similar reading of the method of critique in relation to reason's faculties: "In Kant, the problem of the relation of subject and object tends to be internalized; it becomes the problem of a relation between subjective faculties which differ in nature (receptive sensibility and active understanding)" (1963, 14)

<sup>75</sup> As a legitimate part of the understanding, the *a priori* concepts of the understanding (the categories) must fall subject to the furthering and bettering action of the regulative transcendental ideas just as much as the

The problem of metaphysics is thus resolved by a critique of pure reason, whose critical method completes metaphysics through its relation to the idea of system, whose contours are first only skeptically articulated:

“For this is an advantage upon which metaphysics alone, among all the possible sciences, can rely with confidence, namely, that it can be **completed** and brought into a permanent state, since it cannot be further changed and is not susceptible to any augmentation through new discoveries – because here reason has the sources of its cognition not in objects and their intuition (through which reason cannot be taught one thing more), but in itself, and, if reason has presented the fundamental laws of its faculty fully and determinately (against all misinterpretation), nothing else remains that pure reason could cognize a priori, or even about which it could have cause to ask. The sure prospects of a knowledge so determinate and final has a certain attraction to it, even if all usefulness (of which I will say more hereafter) is set aside” (4:366, my emphasis).

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empirical concepts of the understanding. The Transcendental Dialectic is thus not concerned with the mere empirical furtherance of our particular laws, as maintained by Buchdahl 1992 and Allison 2004 but rather much more significantly uses skepticism through the critical method in order to further our reason in its metaphysical interest (taken as our entire higher cognitive faculty).

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