

OUTLINE OF KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

(This outline follows, in its hierarchical structure, the "Table of Contents" that Kant provides in the B-edition.)

TRANSCENDENTAL DOCTRINE OF ELEMENTS

Two elements?

"Our knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind; the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impressions), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity in the production of concepts). Through the first an object is *given* to us, through the second the object is *thought* in relation to that given representation (which is a mere determination of the mind). *Intuition* and *concepts* constitute, therefore, the elements of our knowledge." [B74; *MP Mrongovius*: "Tr. aesthetic contains the elements of our cognition that lie in sensibility. Tr. logic the elements of our cognition that lie in understanding" (Ak. 29:804)] [Also: A15/B29]

Three elements?

"All human knowledge begins with *intuitions*, proceeds from thence to *concepts*, and ends with *ideas*. Although in respect of all three elements it possesses *a priori* sources of knowledge..." [B730]

[I] TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETIC

This is the science of the *a priori* principles of sensibility in general, of which there are two... [A52/B76]

- (1) **Space**: as the *a priori* knowable "form of intuition" of all outer appearances.
- (2) **Time**: as the *a priori* knowable "form of intuition" of all appearances (both outer and inner).

[II] TRANSCENDENTAL LOGIC

This is the science of the *a priori* principles of the understanding in general [A52/B76].

(A) TRANSCENDENTAL ANALYTIC

This "consists in the dissection of all our *a priori* knowledge into the elements that pure understanding by itself yields" [A64/B89]. It shows that "the most the understanding can achieve *a priori* is to anticipate the form of a possible experience in general" [B303].

(1) *Analytic of Concepts*

This concerns the correct employment of the faculty of the *understanding*; it involves an analysis not of concepts, but of the faculty of understanding itself.

- (a) *The Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding*. This is the "metaphysical" deduction of the pure concepts ("categories"), whereby a list of pure concepts is derived from the logic of Kant's day. This suggests the *source* of the categories (viz., the understanding, which makes them *a priori* knowable).
- (b) *The Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding*. This is the argument that the categories are necessary conditions of objective experience (and thus constitute synthetic principles which are *a priori* knowable). This argues for the *extent* of the categories (viz., that they apply to all possible experience).

(2) *Analytic of Principles*

This concerns the correct employment of the faculty of *judgment*, viz., on applying the above concepts to appearance.

- (a) *The Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding*. This chapter deals with the sensible condition [viz. time] under which alone the categories can be applied to appearances as such (since there's nothing in common between the categories and the sensible manifold). Kant has to show that the categories are relevant and applicable to sense experience. Categories apply to experience only insofar as they determine the necessary-structure of our consciousness of time [B175].
- (b) *System of all Principles of Pure Understanding*. This chapter deals with the synthetic judgments which follow *a priori* from the employment of these categories under this temporal condition [B175].
 - (i) *The Highest Principle of all Analytic Judgments*. Analytic judgments concern general logic. This repeats material from the "Introduction" to Transcendental Logic, sect. 3 [B79-82]. The highest principle here is the Law of Contradiction ("no predicate contradictory of a thing can belong to it").
 - (ii) *The Highest Principle of all Synthetic Judgments*. Synthetic judgments concern transcendental logic. "All synthetic judgments of theoretical knowledge are only possible through the relation of a given concept to an intuition" [Kant

to Reinhold, 5/12/1789]. The highest principle here is that “every object stands under the necessary conditions of synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience” [B197].

(iii) *Systematic Representation of all the Synthetic Principles of Pure Understanding.*

- (1) *Axioms of Intuition.* “Their principle is: All intuitions are extensive magnitudes” [B202]. This focuses on the spatio-temporal (formal) aspect of appearance.
- (2) *Anticipations of Perception.* “In all appearances, the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, that is, a degree” [B207]. This focuses on the sensitive (material) aspect of appearance.
- (3) *Analogies of Experience.* “The principle of the analogies is: Experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions” [B218].
 - (a) *First Analogy:* Principle of Permanence of Substance.
 - (b) *Second Analogy:* Principle of Succession in Time, in accordance with the Law of Causality.
 - (c) *Third Analogy:* Principle of Coexistence, in accordance with the Law of Reciprocity of Community.
- (4) *The Postulates of Empirical Thought in general.*

(c) *Refutation of Idealism.* This addition to the B-edition defeats Descartes’ “problematic idealism” by arguing for the necessity of external objects for self-consciousness.

(3) The Ground of the Distinction of all Objects in general into Phenomena and Noumena.

“Appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories, are called *phaenomena*. But if I postulate things which are mere objects of understanding, and which, nevertheless, can be given as such to an intuition, although not to one that is sensible ... such things would be entitled *noumena*” (A248-49). “The concept of noumenon is thus a merely *limiting concept*, the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility” (B310-11).

“When we say that the senses represent objects *as they appear*, and the understanding objects *as they are*, the latter statement is to be taken, not in the transcendental, but in the merely empirical meaning of the terms, namely as meaning that the objects must be represented as objects of experience, that is, as appearances in thoroughgoing inter-connection with one another, and not as they may be apart from their relation to possible experience (and consequently to any senses), as objects of the pure understanding. Such objects of pure understanding will always remain unknown to us” (B313-14).

(4) Appendix on the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection

Here Kant contrasts his view with Leibniz’, charging Leibniz with “intellectualizing appearances.” An “amphiboly” is where one confuses the intelligible (noumenal) object for the sensible (phenomenal) object.

(B) TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC

This is “a critique of understanding and reason in respect of their hyperphysical employment” [B88]; an examination of the “logic of illusion” (cf. *MP Mrongovius*, Ak. 29:805). Its purpose is to explain just how the failure to distinguish appearances from things-in-themselves leads to error, and particularly the errors of speculative metaphysics.

Transcendental vs Transcendent Principles: “We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, *immanent*; and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, *transcendent*. In the case of these latter, I am not referring to the *transcendental* employment or misemployment of the categories, which is merely an error of the faculty of judgment when it is not duly curbed by criticism, and therefore does not pay sufficient attention to the bounds of the territory within which alone free play is allowed to pure understanding. I mean actual principles which incite us to tear down all those boundary-fences and to seize possession of an entirely new domain which recognises no limits of demarcation. Thus *transcendental* and *transcendent* are not interchangeable terms.

The principles of pure understanding, which we have set out above, allow only of empirical and not of transcendental employment, that is, employment extending beyond the limits of experience. A principle, on the other hand, which takes away these limits, or even commands us actually to transgress them, is called *transcendent*.” [B352-3; cf. *Prolegomena*, “Appendix”]

“We shall divide the Dialectic into two books, the first on the *transcendent concepts* of pure reason, the second on its transcendent and *dialectical inferences*” [B366].

(1) The Concepts of Pure Reason

The “concepts of *reason* enable us to conceive, concepts of *understanding* to understand” [B307]. “Ideas of reason” (“archetypes”) sometimes lead us to 1st terms, and sometimes they refer to things-in-themselves.

(2) The Dialectical Inferences of Pure Reason

The transcendental ideas of reason cover three fields: rational psychology, cosmology, and theology.

(a) *The Paralogisms of Pure Reason.*

The domain of rational psychology seeks to discover “the subject which can never be a predicate” in the “I think” (Descartes’ *cogito*), and in doing so commits certain “paralogisms”.

Paralogism = a syllogism which contains a formal fallacy. The particular fallacy here is moving from a premise about an intuition to a conclusion about a mere thought, i.e., these paralogisms are syllogisms using four terms: the concept of the soul in one premise is schematized (as something intuited) and in another premise is understood in its unschematized sense (namely, as something supersensible).

- (i) soul as substance:
- (ii) soul as simple:
- (iii) soul as a person:
- (iv) existence of things outside one's own perception is dubious:

(b) *The Antinomy of Pure Reason.*

The domain of rational cosmology seeks to discover a presupposition which itself presupposes nothing, i.e., reason searching for the unconditioned condition, resulting in two equally valid arguments which have contradictory conclusions.

Antinomy = arguments of apparently equal validity which prove two contradictory conclusions. (These result from a failure to distinguish between appearances and things-in-themselves, i.e. from a failure to adopt transcendental idealism.)

Theses = the unconditioned is a *part* of the series of conditions.

Antitheses = the unconditioned is the series itself.

- (i) *Thesis*: space and time are finite.

Antithesis: space and time are infinite.

When considered from the position of transcendental idealism, both are false (in that they treat the phenomenal world as though it were noumenal).

- (ii) *Thesis*: there are simples.

Antithesis: there are no simples; infinite divisibility.

When considered from the position of transcendental idealism, both are false (in that they try to move from phenomena to noumena).

- (iii) *Thesis*: freedom (uncaused cause).

Antithesis: no freedom.

Antithesis is true (cf. 2nd analogy), but thesis may be true (*vis-à-vis* noumenal "causality"). There is no contradiction between these two kinds of causality (phenomenal and noumenal).

- (iv) *Thesis*: there is a necessary being (with all possible attributes).

Antithesis: there is no necessary being.

Antithesis is true with respect to the phenomenal world, but thesis *may be true* with respect to the noumenal world. So both may be true. (Kant's position is one of philosophical agnosticism, as is clearly seen at B769-70.)

(c) *The Ideal of Pure Reason.*

The domain of rational theology seeks to discover "such an aggregate of the members of the division of a concept as requires nothing further to complete the division" [B380] (i.e., a Being which contains every attribute or its contradictory).

Ideal of reason = an individual being thought of as possessing all the qualities essential to beings of that type (*viz.* possessing all possible attributes).

(3) *Appendices*

(a) The Regulative Employment of the Ideas of Pure Reason.

(b) The Final Purpose of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason.

TRANSCENDENTAL DOCTRINE OF METHOD

This involves "the determination of the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason" [B735-36], that is, a plan for carrying out the system of metaphysics.

(1) *The Discipline of Pure Reason (in its speculative employment).*

This resembles an introduction to the critical program, and probably written later than the "Introduction". The "discipline" has the negative role of limiting pure reason [B823]. It contrasts with the "canon" [B824-5].

Discipline = "the compulsion by which the constant tendency to disobey certain rules is restrained and finally extirpated" [B737].

- (a) *...in its dogmatic employment.* Kant's conclusion is that all dogmatic employment of pure reason is to be rejected; the Cartesian project of patterning metaphysics and natural sciences after Euclidian geometry (as a demonstrative system based on definitions and axioms) is flawed on methodological grounds, *viz.* the methods appropriate to philosophy and

mathematics are radically different (see Kant's "Prize Essay" (1762) for an early presentation of these views, which have essentially remained unchanged).

philosophical method: a discursive employment of reason [B747] whereby an *a priori* concept is applied to empirical intuitions in order to acquire knowledge.

mathematical method: an intuitive employment of reason whereby concepts are constructed from pure (*a priori*) intuitions (viz. space and time).

- (b) *...in its polemical employment.* The dogmatic employment of pure reason tends to make positive metaphysical claims that are unwarranted; the polemical employment shows not that they are *true*, but that they also cannot be shown false.
- (c) *...in respect of hypotheses.*
- (d) *...in respect of proofs.* Kant offers certain rules peculiar to transcendental proofs.

(2) *The Canon of Pure Reason (in its practical employment).*

Canon = "the sum-total of the *a priori* principles of the correct employment of certain faculties of knowledge" [B824].

- (a) *The ultimate end of the pure employment of our reason.* The ultimate aim concerns three objects: freedom of the will, immortality of the soul, and the existence of God [B826-27]. But the "supreme end" is happiness [B828, 879].
- (b) *The ideal of the highest good* (as determining the ultimate end).

The highest good (*summum bonum*) = happiness apportioned to one's worthiness to be happy (viz., to one's moral worth) [B841-42]. The attainment of this highest good is conceivable only if we postulate a future life and a being, such as God, who will bring about the correct balance of happiness and worthiness to be happy.

- (c) Opinion, knowledge, and belief.

Persuasion = a judgment is affirmed due to peculiarities of the subject (mere illusion)

Conviction = a judgment is affirmed because of certain objective features (and thus for "reasons" acceptable to others). Three degrees of conviction:

- (i) **opinion** (*Meinen*): conviction subjectively incomplete, no objective justification.
- (ii) **belief** (*Glauben*): conviction subjectively complete, no objective justification.
- (iii) **knowledge** (*Wissen*): conviction subjectively complete, objective justification.

(3) *The Architectonic of Pure Reason.*

"By an architectonic I understand *the art of constructing systems*. As systematic unity is what first raises ordinary knowledge to the rank of *science*, that is, makes a system out of a mere aggregate of knowledge, architectonic is the doctrine of the scientific in our knowledge..." [B860] (see separate handout)

(4) *The History of Pure Reason.*

Three perennial divisions in the history of metaphysics regarding:

- (a) the *object* of knowledge (refers to the location of reality: are sensations or concepts real?).
 - (i) intellectualists: Plato.
 - (ii) sensualists: Epicurus.
- (b) the *origin* of knowledge.
 - (i) empiricists: Aristotle, Locke
 - (ii) noologists (rationalists): Plato, Leibniz
- (c) the *methods* of knowledge.
 - (i) naturalists: "common-sense" is their guide to the answers.
 - (ii) scientists: either dogmatists (Wolff) or skeptics (Hume).