

KANT AND SKEPTICISM

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I. In this paper I want to sketch an account of the role of skepticism in Kant's critical philosophy.¹ The critical philosophy set forth in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth: the *Critique*) grew from and responds to a complex set of philosophical concerns. Among these two of special importance are concerns to address *skepticism* and to develop a reformed *metaphysics*. This much is widely recognized. However, it is a fundamental thesis of this paper that those projects belong tightly together, in the following sense: The types of skepticism which really originated and motivate the critical philosophy are ones *which target metaphysics*; and what originated and motivates the critical philosophy's reform of metaphysics is above all the goal of enabling it *to withstand skepticism*.

To amplify on the first point: When interpreting Kant, it is important to distinguish between the following three sorts of skepticism. First, there is "*veil of perception*" *skepticism*, or skepticism concerning the legitimacy of inferring from one's mental representations to the existence or character of a mind-external world (this is the very paradigm of skepticism for most Anglophone philosophers). "Veil of perception" skepticism does not specially target the claims of metaphysics (though these are *among* its targets). Second, there is *Humean skepticism* about concepts not derivable from sensible impressions and knowledge of propositions neither true in virtue of logical law nor known from experience (both of these forms of skepticism are exemplified in his treatment of causation). This sort of skepticism does have a special bearing on metaphysics due to the centrality of such putative concepts and knowledge to metaphysics. Third, there is *Pyrrhonian skepticism*, a skepticism which in the manner of the ancient Pyrrhonists motivates suspension of judgment by establishing a balance of

¹This is a short version of the expository part of a longer essay which I hope to publish in the future.

opposing arguments, or "equipollence." As Kant interprets it, this sort of skepticism too has a special bearing on metaphysics.

It turns out, I shall argue, that of these three types of skepticism, the first, "veil of perception" skepticism, played no significant role at all in the origination of the critical philosophy and only a secondary role in its mature motivation (despite a belated and misleading rise to prominence in the second edition of the *Critique*); the second, Humean skepticism, in virtue of its bearing on metaphysics, played a crucial role in originating the critical philosophy, some time in or shortly after 1772, and remains central to the critical philosophy's mature motivation (as witnessed by Kant's famous remarks near the beginning of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* [henceforth: *Prolegomena*]); but it was the third, Pyrrhonian skepticism, which, again in virtue of a special bearing on metaphysics, first shook Kant's faith in the precritical discipline of metaphysics, in the mid-1760s, producing the despair about it in the 1766 essay *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, and eventually leading to its reform by the critical philosophy, and moreover (like Humean skepticism) remains at the heart of the critical philosophy's mature motivation.²

To amplify a little on the second point: I shall argue that key features which define the distinctive character of the critical philosophy's reformed metaphysics - including its specific conceptual and propositional contents, its status as a priori but not supersensuous, its status as transcendentally ideal, and its systematicity - are built into it largely in order to enable it to withstand skepticism. And I shall argue that the critical philosophy has an elaborate set of strategies dependent on these features for actually defending its reformed metaphysics against skepticism.

II. Anglophone philosophers are in the habit of assuming that the very paradigm of a skeptical problem is what Berkeley conceived as the problem of a "veil of perception."

²In its first and third parts this interpretation will strike many Anglophone scholars of Kant as heresy or worse. This is one reason why it seemed to me worth articulating.

Many, indeed most, Anglophone Kant-interpreters write as though this problem were central to the critical philosophy.³ Such a picture of Kant is mistaken, however. "Veil of perception" skepticism played no significant role in the origination of the critical philosophy, and no more than a secondary role in its mature motivation.⁴

There is, to be sure, some prima facie evidence to the contrary. In the *Critique* Kant famously makes two efforts to answer "veil of perception" skepticism, one in the first edition's Fourth Paralogism, the other in the second edition's Refutation of Idealism; and in the second edition he describes the absence hitherto of a proper answer to it as "a scandal to philosophy and to human reason."⁵ Less famously, he already responded to this sort of skepticism very early in his career. In the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755, an essay in precritical metaphysics, he derived from the principle of sufficient reason a "principle of succession,"⁶ and then near the end of the essay made a special application of this principle in order to defeat skepticism about the mind-external world.⁷ Nonetheless, to infer from such facts that "veil of perception" skepticism played a central role in either the origination or the mature motivation of the critical philosophy would be a mistake.

Concerning, to begin with, its *origination*: A first and fundamental point to note is that, after Kant's brief concern with this sort of skepticism in the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755, it plays no significant role at all in the voluminous body of writings, letters, and private notes which led up to the *Critique* of 1781. During this period Kant's view of skepticism about the external world was that empirical judgments were on the whole so certain that

³Two recent examples are Paul Guyer and Barry Stroud.

⁴Cf. H. Heimsoeth, "Metaphysische Motive in der Ausbildung des kritischen Idealismus," *Kant Studien*, 1924, pp. 121-2.

⁵*Critique*, Bxxxix.

⁶*Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 410, Proposition XII.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 411.

it was not a position worth taking seriously.⁸ Accordingly, even in the first edition *Critique* of 1781 his concern with this sort of skepticism is confined to an obscure corner, the Fourth Paralogism (only achieving any prominence in the *second* edition of 1787).

Nor should one be misled by Kant's famous report in the preface of the *Prolegomena* that the goal of answering Hume's skepticism about causation was crucial in the origination of the critical philosophy.⁹ Commentators in the Anglophone tradition have often assumed that this shows that answering "veil of perception" skepticism was one of the original and fundamental motives behind the critical philosophy.¹⁰ However, the Humean skeptical problems about causation to which Kant is referring are quite distinct from "veil of perception" skepticism, and are understood by Kant as such. Moreover, he *nowhere* associates Hume with "veil of perception" skepticism.¹¹

Concerning, next, the critical philosophy's *mature motivation*: Aside from the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism, where else in the main body of the *Critique* does a concern to address "veil of perception" skepticism play a significant role? The correct answer is "Nowhere." In particular, features of the texts which have seduced Anglophone interpreters into supposing otherwise - e.g. the role in the Analogies of a distinction between the temporal order of one's *subjective representations* and that of objective events, and the role in the Transcendental Deduction of the "transcendental unity of apperception," or the necessary *self-ascribability of all one's representations* - once properly interpreted constitute no evidence at all of such a concern. Demonstrating this would take time, but here are some hints: In the Second Analogy Kant's strategy is to

⁸See e.g. *Logik Blomberg*, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 24, p. 214.

⁹*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 4, pp. 260-2.

¹⁰For example, A.C. Ewing, *Kant's Treatment of Causality* (London: Kegan Paul, 1924), esp. pp. 6-15, 47; P.F. Strawson, *The Bound of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1976), pp. 18-19, 88.

¹¹On the contrary, he usually thinks of Hume as a commonsense realist about the mind-external world. For example, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he writes: "I granted that *when Hume took the objects of experience as things in themselves (as is almost always done)*, he was entirely correct in declaring the concept of cause to be deceptive and an illusion" (*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 5, p. 53, emphasis added).

prove the causal principle by showing its application to be a necessary condition of knowing that a temporal sequence is not merely subjective but objective. But this strategy simply assumes that we *do* sometimes have such knowledge. In the Transcendental Deduction Kant's approach is to show that the application of the categories is a necessary condition of the "transcendental unity of apperception" - a principle which *could in fact* withstand "veil of perception" skepticism. But this does not prove that he chose it *because* it could withstand such skepticism; he might instead have done so for the entirely different reason that it is a necessary condition of any knowledge of mind-external objects. And in fact the text makes it clear that he *is* allowing himself an assumption that we have knowledge of this robust sort.¹²

What, then, should we make of Kant's early concern with "veil of perception" skepticism in the *Nova Dilucidatio*, and the *Critique*'s concern with it in the first edition's Fourth Paralogism and the second edition's Refutation of Idealism and "scandal" remarks? In the case of the *Nova Dilucidatio* it is clear that the essay's main motives concerned metaphysical questions which had nothing to do with "veil of perception" skepticism, that Kant found, however, that those motives led to a metaphysical principle, the "principle of succession," which yielded the possibility of refuting "veil of perception" skepticism as a happy by-product, and that he therefore exploited this possibility towards the end of the essay as an addendum to its central business. The points made above encourage a similar picture of the role of "veil of perception" skepticism in the *Critique*: Having originally developed the work in response to concerns which had nothing to do with this sort of skepticism (as in the *Nova Dilucidatio*, concerns about metaphysics), Kant found that these had led him to a position which offered the

¹²See esp. *Critique*, A92-4 / B125-6; cf. A96, A109-10, A115, A119-20, B130, B137, B145-7.

possibility of refuting it as a happy by-product.¹³ He therefore exploited this opportunity as an addendum to his central project.¹⁴

III. The types of skepticism which *were* crucial to the origination and mature motivation of the critical philosophy are instead ones which threaten metaphysics.

For Kant's predecessors in the Rationalist tradition and for Kant himself until 1765, metaphysics comprised two parts. First, there was "general metaphysics" or "general ontology." This gave an account of our most general concepts and principles, those which applied to everything (e.g. the concepts of substance and accident, and cause and effect, and the principle of sufficient reason). Second, there was "special metaphysics." This dealt with three supersensible items: God, the world as a whole, and the human soul.¹⁵

We can approach the question of the types of skepticism which were crucial for originating and motivating the critical philosophy via an exegetical puzzle. In two different places Kant gives two different and seemingly incompatible accounts of what originally woke him from the "slumber" of "dogmatic" metaphysics and set him on the path towards the critical philosophy. In the *Prolegomena* of 1783 he writes, famously: "David Hume's reminder was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my

¹³Specifically, in the first edition, a qualified form of phenomenalism arrived at in the Transcendental Deduction as part of its solution to the problem of how a priori concepts can refer to objects, which he then reinvokes in the Fourth Paralogism in order to refute "veil of perception" skepticism; and in the second edition, the First Analogy's principle that time-determination requires knowledge of substances, which he then reinvokes in the Refutation of Idealism in application to the time-determination of subjective states in order to refute "veil of perception" skepticism.

¹⁴This interpretation is supported by two obvious features of the parts of the *Critique* which address "veil of perception" skepticism. First, they appear "tacked on" to the main body of the work. Thus, after the first three Paralogisms have all been concerned with exposing rational psychology's fallacious inferences to doctrines about the soul, the Fourth Paralogism's concern with answering "veil of perception" skepticism looks a very odd man out; and in the case of the Refutation of Idealism, not only does its sandwiching into the Postulates of Empirical Thought give it the same appearance, but of course this time we *know* that this is due to its having been tacked on. Second, these parts of the *Critique* show extraordinary instability. Having in the first edition pursued one line of argument against "veil of perception" skepticism in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant then scraps it and substitutes an entirely different one in the second edition's Refutation of Idealism, and then tries a number of variants of the latter in subsequent *Reflexionen*. This again strongly suggests that the material has the character of afterthoughts added to the main body of the work.

¹⁵Cf. H.J. de Vleeschauwer, "Wie ich jetzt die Kritik der reinen Vernunft entwicklungsgeschichtlich lese," in *Kant Studien*, 1962-3.

dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."¹⁶ On the other hand, in a letter to Garve from 1798 he says that it was the Antinomies that played this role.¹⁷ Faced with the apparent inconsistency between these two passages, one commentator resorts to the hypothesis that Kant is simply senile in the latter!¹⁸ However, this explanation is implausible. For one thing, Kant repeats the same claim in the more formal context of the 1794 *Prize Essay*.¹⁹

The proper explanation is more complicated and interesting. Both passages contain a large measure of truth. They refer to two different, but equally important, historical steps which Kant took in his protracted escape from the clutches of dogmatic metaphysics towards the (supposed) safe haven of the critical philosophy. Each step consisted in his recognition of and reaction to a kind of skepticism confronting dogmatic metaphysics, though the kinds of skepticism involved were very different in the two cases. The letter to Garve refers to an encounter with Pyrrhonian skepticism in the mid-1760s, whereas the *Prolegomena* refers to an encounter with Humean skepticism in or shortly after 1772. Let me explain, beginning with the letter to Garve.

IV. The letter to Garve alludes to a *crise pyrrhonnienne* which came to dominate Kant's attitude to metaphysics in the mid-1760s. The allusion is slightly misleading, in that it suggests that Kant's original escape from dogmatic metaphysics was due to the impact of just the four Antinomies of the *Critique*. A careful formulation would have said (1) that it was due to the impact of a family of problems which had the same general structure and

¹⁶*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 4, p. 260.

¹⁷"The antinomy of pure reason - 'The world has a beginning; it has no beginning, and so on,' right up to the fourth [sic]: 'There is freedom in man, versus there is no freedom, only the necessity of nature' - that is what first aroused me from my dogmatic slumber and drove me to the critique of reason itself, in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction of reason with itself" (*Emmanuel Kant: Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, tr. A. Zweig [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986], p. 252).

¹⁸L. W. Beck, *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 119.

¹⁹*Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 20, p. 320.

subject matter as the *Critique's* Antinomies, and (2) that these included, but were not restricted to, versions of the *Critique's* Antinomies. But modestly refined in this way, the letter's testimony can be confirmed, and the impact moreover dated to about 1765.

Thus, concerning (1): The *general structure* of the *Critique's* Antinomies is one of setting pairs of (apparently) contrary propositions into opposition to each other and furnishing them with supporting arguments of equal strength. Their *general subject matter* is the set of supersensible items treated by traditional "special metaphysics": God, the world as a whole, and the human soul. Now the letter to Garve's implication that problems of this general sort motivated Kant's original disaffection with traditional metaphysics and moved him towards the critical philosophy is confirmed, and the date of this process fixed to about 1765, by a letter Kant wrote to Bernouilli in 1781 in which he identifies problems with this general structure and subject matter as the original source of his ambition to reform metaphysics, and indicates that this stimulus was already at work on him in 1765.²⁰

And concerning point (2): On the one hand, early versions of the *Critique's* Antinomies were indeed already of concern to Kant by 1765.²¹ On the other hand, he had not yet brought them together into the *Critique's* canonical system of four,²² and was also concerned with further "antinomies" over and above those four.²³ So the stimulus at work in 1765 included but was not restricted to the Antinomies of the *Critique*.

This crisis in the mid-1760s was *Pyrrhonian* in two senses. First, it was Pyrrhonian in *character*. Specifically, it was so both in virtue of the *general structure* of the problems raised against metaphysical claims, namely a setting of each claim against a contrary

²⁰Emmanuel Kant: *Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, p. 97, cf. pp. 46-7.

²¹See N. Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970).

²²As Hinske notes - *ibid.*, pp. 95-6 - this only happened later, beginning in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770.

²³See esp. the *Monadologia Physica* of 1756, in *Kant's Latin Writings* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 116-17; also *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of 1766 (where the examples concern the philosophy of mind). Cf. Hinske, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-6.

claim and demonstration that equally strong arguments could be given on both sides,²⁴ and in virtue of their *result*, namely a suspension of judgment about the issues involved.²⁵ For this is precisely ancient Pyrrhonism's procedure of establishing *isostheneia* or "equipollence" (lit. "equal force on both sides"), with the result of producing *epochê* or "suspension of judgment" - a procedure which Sextus Empiricus, the main spokesman of ancient Pyrrhonism, aptly describes as "the main basic principle of the skeptic system."²⁶

Second, this crisis was also largely Pyrrhonian in *inspiration*. Evidence for this can be found in Kant's *Information Concerning the Structure of Lectures in the Winter Semester 1765-1766*. There he expresses skepticism about existing metaphysics (in sharp contrast to mathematics, history, natural science, etc.), arguing that it constitutes merely "an illusion of science . . . which is regarded as the real thing only at a particular place and among particular people but which is everywhere else despised." And he adds that "the special method of instruction in [metaphysical] philosophy is *zetetic*, as some ancients called it (from *zêtein*), that is to say *investigative*."²⁷ By a "zetetic" method Kant can here mean only one thing: *the Pyrrhonists' procedure of balancing opposed arguments in order to induce a suspension of judgment*.²⁸

The *Information* text does not yet represent Kant's metaphysical *crise pyrrhonienne* in full bloom, though.²⁹ That came shortly afterwards in his 1766 essay *Dreams of a Spirit*

²⁴As Kant puts it in the letter to Bernouilli, "different but equally persuasive metaphysical propositions lead inescapably to contrary conclusions."

²⁵As Kant puts it in the letter to Bernouilli, "one proposition inevitably casts doubt on the other."

²⁶Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1.12.

²⁷*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 2, pp. 306-7.

²⁸The adjective "zetetic" is one distinctively used by the Pyrrhonists to characterize themselves and this procedure of theirs. See e.g. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.7: "The skeptic school, then, is also called zetetic [*zêtetikê*] from its activity in investigation [*to zêtein*] and inquiry." Cf. Tonelli, "Kant und die antiken Skeptiker," in *Studien zu Kants philosophischer Entwicklung*, ed. H. Heimsoeth et al. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), pp. 94-6.

²⁹The text still only envisages using the zetetic method as a means to *discerning the truth* in metaphysics, not destroying it.

Seer, Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics. Following his decision to apply the zetetic or equipollence method to metaphysics had by now led him to the conclusion that the promise of knowledge about the supersensible which had hitherto been the discipline's main claim to fame was hollow. He therefore now advocated abandonment of supersensuous metaphysics as a spurious discipline, bidding his readers resist its temptations and instead confine themselves to "the lowly ground of experience and the common understanding"³⁰ - by which, he makes clear, he means empirical, mathematical, moral, and logical cognition.³¹ He did salvage for "metaphysics" the task of serving as a "science of the bounds of human reason" ensuring that our judgments are based on "empirical concepts . . . upon which all our judgments must at all times rest."³² However, this essentially just amounted to putting a new discipline under the old name.

Indeed, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* embraces what Kant must himself have considered a strict form of Pyrrhonism.³³ Not only is the zetetic method which underlies the work's rejection of supersensuous metaphysics Pyrrhonian in both character and inspiration (as we saw). But in addition, the work's estimation of which types of cognition fall victim to this method and which do not is precisely that of Pyrrhonism as Kant interprets it. This can be seen from his extensive and enthusiastic treatment of Pyrrhonism in his early logic lectures, especially the *Blomberg Logic* of 1771, where he interprets Pyrrho's position as one which - just like his own in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* - does not in general attack empirical, mathematical, moral, or logical judgments, but instead just the judgments of

³⁰*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 2, p. 368.

³¹See *ibid.*, pp. 306-8, 342, 368-72 (empirical disciplines and mathematics); pp. 311, 334-5, 372 (first order moral judgments); p. 310 (common logic).

³²*Ibid.*, p. 367.

³³Pace Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 110. Tonelli mistakenly takes a contrary view because he underestimates both (1) the distinctiveness of *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* in comparison with earlier works and (2) the moderateness of orthodox Pyrrhonism as Kant interprets it.

supersensuous metaphysics.³⁴ Moreover, the prominence in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of the ideals of the *useful*, *happiness*, and *everyday life*³⁵ points to a *normative* agreement with Pyrrhonism, for which each of these concepts functioned as a normative ideal.

In sum, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of 1766 represents a Kantian *crise pyrrhonienne* in full flower, and is indeed to all intents and purposes a self-consciously Pyrrhonian work.

Kant's position from the mid-1760s that, unlike other disciplines, traditional metaphysics, in transcending experience, succumbs to the Pyrrhonian equipollence problem, and therefore requires radical reform, survives to hold a prominent place in the critical philosophy's explanations of the motives behind its own reform of metaphysics.³⁶

In these later explanations Kant is largely thinking of the canonical four Antinomies of the *Critique*. However, they also suggests a broader concern with equipollence problems afflicting metaphysics. And this impression is reinforced by the fact that Kant not only *preceded* the critical philosophy with such broader concerns (as we saw), but also *explicitly returned* to them after the *Critique*, adding in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the *Critique of Judgment*, and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* further "antinomies" over and above the canonical four. The critical philosophy is still concerned with Pyrrhonian equipollence problems afflicting metaphysics in a way which not only includes but also extends beyond the canonical four Antinomies.

V. Let us now consider the other skeptical impulse which, according to Kant, this time in the *Prolegomena*, awoke him from his dogmatic metaphysical slumber and gave his

³⁴See in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 24: *Logik Blomberg*, pp. 213-14; *Logik Herder*, p. 4; *Logik Philippi*, p. 330.

³⁵*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 2, pp. 318, 368 (the useful); 368, 373 (happiness); 338-9, 351, 362-3 (life).

³⁶For example, the first edition *Critique* opens with a lament that in resorting to principles which "overstep all possible empirical employment . . . human reason precipitates itself into darkness and contradictions; and while it may indeed conjecture that these must be in some way due to concealed errors, it is not in a position to be able to detect them. For since the principles of which it is making use transcend the limits of experience, they are no longer subject to any empirical test. The battlefield of these endless controversies is called metaphysics" (Aviii; cf. B22-3; *Prolegomena*, pp. 255, 271).

philosophy a new direction: "David Hume's reminder." The general nature of this reminder is clear enough from the *Prolegomena*: Hume's skeptical reflections concerning causation. Much less obvious, though, is exactly what in Hume's rather various skeptical reflections on causation awoke Kant, how, and when.

Close examination of the *Prolegomena* shows that, although Kant does not distinguish them clearly, he has three distinct Humean views about causation in mind: (1) Hume's argument that particular causal connections and laws cannot be known a priori by reason alone but only from experience, since their denial is never self-contradictory or inconceivable in the way required for a priori knowledge to be possible.³⁷ (2) Hume's position that the component idea of necessity contained in the idea of a cause must be traceable, like all other ideas, to an antecedent impression, and that the search for this impression shows causal necessity to consist, not in a property of the causally related items, but in what Hume calls the "customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant" in the subject's thought.³⁸ (3) Hume's view that the principle that every event has a cause (henceforth: the causal principle) can only be known "from observation and experience," since (once again) its denial is not self-contradictory or inconceivable in the way required for a priori knowledge to be possible.³⁹

Now the first of these Humean views is clearly not what Kant is mainly thinking of as the influence which awoke him from his dogmatic slumber in metaphysics.⁴⁰ It is therefore on the other two Humean views that we need to focus.

³⁷See *Prolegomena*, p. 257.

³⁸See *ibid.*, pp. 257-8.

³⁹The *Prolegomena*'s opening discussion of Hume's influence refers to this third view only obliquely, but its central importance for Kant is clear from later parts of the *Prolegomena* (sections 27-30), and from passages in the *Critique*.

⁴⁰This can be seen from two related facts. First, Kant says that the Humean views which roused him were ones which only presented him with a problem to solve but that he "was far from following [Hume] in the conclusions to which he arrived" (*Prolegomena*, p. 260). This does not characterize his attitude to the first Humean view, whose moral he simply accepted in the 1760s, and continued to accept in the critical philosophy (see e.g. *Critique*, A127, B165). It does, though, characterize his attitude to the other two Humean views. Second, the answers to Humean problems which Kant goes on to sketch in the *Prolegomena* are answers, not to the first view, but to these other two views.

In order to see how and when these impinged on Kant's development, we must return to the writings of the precritical Kant. Four years after *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of 1766 Kant published the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770. In many respects this work marked a huge advance beyond *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* towards the critical philosophy. But in one respect it was a major slide backwards. For Kant was again indulging in the slumber of supersensuous metaphysics. Thus according to the *Inaugural Dissertation* the intellect furnishes us with knowledge of noumena or "things which cannot by their own nature come before the senses of the subject," including in particular God.⁴¹ If the letter to Garve refers to Kant's awakening by Pyrrhonism from the long metaphysical sleep that ended in the mid-1760s, the *Prolegomena's* remarks on Hume refer to Kant's awakening by Humean skepticism from the metaphysical snooze of the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

The initial impulse behind this second awakening came from Kant himself rather than from Hume, however. In a famous letter to Herz from 1772 Kant has two second thoughts about the sort of supersensuous metaphysics he had adopted in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. First, he has a worry concerning the ability of concepts to refer to supersensible objects: It is clear enough, he argues, that a concept can refer to an object if the object is the cause of the concept, as in the case of concepts belonging to sensibility (sensibility being *defined* in the *Inaugural Dissertation* as the capacity of the subject to be affected by the presence of an object). It is also clear enough that a concept can refer to an object if the concept is the cause of the object, as would be the case for the concepts which belonged to a divine archetypal intellect. But since the intellect's concepts of supersensible noumena as envisaged by the *Inaugural Dissertation* refer in *neither* of these two ways, it is unclear how they can refer at all. Second, he has a worry concerning the possibility of knowing about supersensible noumena in the manner envisaged by the *Inaugural Dissertation*. This time his concern is the simple one that (problems about

⁴¹*Kant Selections* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 54, 57.

reference aside) it is unclear how one could have a knowledge of things not attained through experience of them.⁴²

The two remaining Humean views about causation correspond closely to these two worries, and seem to have contributed to Kant's development away from the metaphysics of the *Inaugural Dissertation* shortly after Kant wrote to Herz in 1772. As is well known, the publication in 1772 of a German translation of Beattie's *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* probably played a role here, because this for the first time gave Kant access to Hume's view about the causal principle (only stated in the *Treatise*).

The role played by the two Humean views in the development of Kant's thought had in each case two sides in tension with each other: On the one hand, the *general principles* which lay behind these Humean views suggested to Kant more refined ways of reformulating his own two worries. On the other hand, and in tension with that, the *specific subject matters* of Hume's views - the concept of causal necessity and the causal principle - furnished Kant with especially instructive test-cases for the (now refined) worries, suggesting that there had, in fact, to be something wrong with them, and thus pointing the way towards a metaphysics which might survive their attack.

Consider first Hume's analysis of the concept of causal necessity. The general principle which drove him to this analysis was that every idea requires an antecedent impression as its source. Kant had long been familiar with such a position.⁴³ Moreover, he had himself found it tempting.⁴⁴ Hume's principle evidently reminded Kant of this position, and thereby alerted him to the possibility of a more radical version of his own worry concerning the concepts of supersensuous metaphysics. Setting aside the theological

⁴²See *ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

⁴³For example, already in the *Metaphysik Herder* from the early 1760s he associates such a position with Aristotle and Locke (*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 28, pt. 1, p. 60; pt. 2,1, pp. 851-2, 952 ff.).

⁴⁴See e.g. *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* of 1755, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 1, p. 355; *Metaphysik Herder*, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 28, pt. 1, p. 60 and pt. 2,1, p. 953; and *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 2, pp. 322, 367-8.

possibility of concepts which cause their objects, that worry had basically been that concepts not derived from sensibility and thereby causally dependent on their objects could not refer. Now Hume with his "No impression, no idea" principle had gone one step further than that: concepts not derived from sensible antecedents could certainly not refer because they could not even *exist*. Kant evidently found Hume's principle sufficiently plausible to take this more radical worry seriously in addition to his own. Accordingly, these two worries later *together* constitute the fundamental problematic of the Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions in the *Critique*.⁴⁵

To say that Kant found Hume's "No impression, no idea" principle and the radical worry which flowed from it plausible is not, however, to say that he ultimately accepted them. On the contrary, one reason why he found Hume's application of the principle to the particular concept of causal necessity so enlightening was precisely that this application provided a sort of *prima facie* reduction to absurdity of the principle: Thanks largely to the perspicuity of this concept's existence and character, the application of the principle to it could be clearly seen to lead unavoidably to an erroneous conclusion - namely, Hume's conclusion that the concept, if it existed at all, expressed, not a relation between causally related items themselves, but instead merely the mind's reaction to constant conjunction. In Kant's view, the concept clearly did exist, but it just as clearly did not express *that*. Therefore the Humean principle had to be false.⁴⁶ An additional reason why Kant found Hume's example enlightening, I suggest, is that he saw in it similar instruction concerning his own original, less radical worry about reference. Hume's examination of the concept of cause, once corrected by Kant so as to excise its mistaken derivation of the essential component concept of necessity from a subjective

⁴⁵For example, both are in Kant's mind at the very start of the *Critique's* Transcendental Deduction, where he first says that the problem is whether a priori concepts have "a meaning, an imagined significance" (A84 / B116-17), i.e. the more radical Humean worry, and then that it is how they can "relate to objects which they yet do not obtain from any experience" (A85 / B117), i.e. Kant's own original worry.

⁴⁶See e.g. *ibid.*, B5.

impression, had shown it to be a concept containing an essential component concept not derivable from sensible antecedents.⁴⁷ Yet it must have seemed clear to Kant on reflection that the concepts of cause in general and causal necessity in particular nevertheless do succeed in referring to things, since, despite their non-derivability from sensation, they are instantiated in experience in a broader, everyday sense of "experience" (we do in *some* sense see thrown rocks causing windows to break, etc.), and are moreover indispensable to the outlooks of common sense and natural science alike.⁴⁸ In consequence, Kant's own original worry now looked as though it had to be mistaken. To put these two points in another way: As long as the focus had been on such hazy, lofty, and dispensable metaphysical terms as, for example, "God," Hume's radical worry and Kant's own original worry had looked plausible; perhaps such terms really *did* fail of meaning or at least reference. But once it was realized that the same two worries would apply, if at all, just as much to such perspicuous, experiential, and indispensable concepts as "cause" as well, it was the *worries* that came to look misconceived.

Consider next the other Humean view about causation referred to by the *Prolegomena*, the view that knowledge of the causal principle must be based on experience, since its denial is not self-contradictory or inconceivable in the way required for a priori knowledge to be possible. Once again, this view played two roles in Kant's development in tension with each other, this time in connection with his own worry that it is unclear how the intellect could have knowledge about things of which it has no experience.

On the one hand: The general doctrine which lay behind Hume's view about the causal principle was his notorious "fork," long familiar to Kant from the *Enquiry*. As formulated in the *Enquiry*, the "fork" consisted of the following claims. First, all known truths are

⁴⁷Thus in the *Critique* Kant writes that "the concept of a cause involves the character of necessity, which no experience can yield" (A112; cf. A91 / B123-4).

⁴⁸Thus in a passage of the *Metaphysik von Schön* from the critical period Kant characterizes such a priori concepts as, unlike a priori concepts like the concept of God, those "to which an object in our experience corresponds," those which "have . . . objective reality, they can be measured off from the object of experience," those "which we really need in order to understand the objects which present themselves" (*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 28, pt. 1, p. 470).

divisible into two kinds: "relations of ideas," defined by Hume as propositions "intuitively or demonstratively certain," by which he seems to mean such that their denials either are or imply contradictions; and "matters of fact," defined as all the rest. Second, while relations of ideas "are discoverable by the mere operation of thought," or a priori, matters of fact are only knowable by means of experience, or a posteriori.⁴⁹ Third and consequently, if it is found that a proposition - Hume adds with pretended casualness, "of divinity or school metaphysics for instance" - is neither certain by virtue of its denial being or implying a contradiction nor known by means of experience, then we may "commit it . . . to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."⁵⁰ Since it seemed clear to Hume that the causal principle was not known by virtue of its denial being or implying a contradiction, his only option, short of rejecting it as "sophistry and illusion," was to say that it was known by means of experience. How did Hume's "fork" enable Kant to reformulate his own worry more cogently? The "fork" shared with his worry an assumption that a posteriori knowledge of things is, generally speaking, unproblematic. But the "fork" alerted him to something his own worry had overlooked, namely that there is also a substantial class of *a priori* cognitions which are unproblematic: those true simply in virtue of the law of contradiction (in Hume's terminology, relations of ideas; in Kant's, analytic judgments). Kant readily took this qualification to heart.⁵¹ In this way the "fork" enabled him to formulate a more refined version of his own original worry. His worry was now no longer that it was unclear how there could be a priori knowledge *generally*, but how there could be a priori knowledge not belonging to the unproblematic class based on the law of contradiction (in Kant's terminology: a priori judgments which are not "analytic" but "synthetic"). This worry,

⁴⁹Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sec. 4, pt. 1.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, sec. 12, pt. 3.

⁵¹See e.g. *Prolegomena*, p. 267: "all analytic judgments depend wholly on the principle of contradiction, and are in their nature a priori cognitions."

already in effect raised by Hume as the point of his "fork," now becomes the central puzzle of the *Critique*, on the settlement of which, according to the work itself, the fate of metaphysics depends: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?⁵²

On the other hand: Hume's view about the causal principle was also important for Kant because the causal principle specifically constituted an illuminating test-case for the now-refined worry about supersensuous metaphysics (in effect, the objection that there is no such thing as synthetic a priori knowledge). Kant agreed with Hume that the causal principle was a clear case of genuine knowledge - for (though not derived from) it is supported by confirming instances in experience, and fundamental to the outlooks of common sense and natural science alike.⁵³ He also agreed with Hume that the principle was synthetic. However, the conclusion to which Hume had been driven when he had applied his denial of synthetic a priori knowledge to this principle, namely that it was not known a priori but only a posteriori, seemed to Kant clearly false, in particular because of the strict universality belonging to the principle.⁵⁴ Consequently, scrutiny of the causal principle afforded, in Kant's view, a strong prima facie disproof, or reduction to absurdity, of the denial that there could be synthetic a priori knowledge.⁵⁵ To put the point another way: As long as the focus had been on such lofty and questionable synthetic a priori claims as that God had such and such characteristics or performed such and such acts, the worry that one could not have any synthetic a priori knowledge had looked plausible; perhaps one *could not* know anything of that sort. But once it was realized that this worry

⁵²That Hume's "fork," as illustrated in his treatment of the causal principle, did in this way lead Kant to the central puzzle of the critical philosophy is reflected in remarks at *Critique*, B19-20.

⁵³In a passage from his 1794-5 lectures on metaphysics, Kant writes: "Experience confirms e.g. the rational propositions: in all changes substance never vanishes but only the form of things, or: each change has its cause; so much so that one simply accepts them without investigating their basis, and one already becomes certain through experience of their truth under all circumstances" (*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 29, pt. 1,2, pp. 947-8).

⁵⁴See *Critique*, B4-5.

⁵⁵For Kant, scrutiny of mathematics afforded a further disproof of this denial with at least equal force.

equally challenged such empirically confirmed and fundamental beliefs as the causal principle, it was the *worry* that came to look misconceived.

In short, the two Humean skeptical views about causation enabled Kant both to refine his own worries about supersensuous metaphysics and to show that, even so refined, there had in fact to be something wrong with them, so that the prospects for metaphysics were after all brighter than they had implied.

The latter step is reminiscent of a strategy characteristic of the Scottish common sense school: when a philosopher like Hume advances a philosophical principle which entails a deeply counterintuitive consequence, one holds fast to the intuitive position under attack and converts his *modus ponendo ponens* argument into a *modus tollendo tollens* argument denying his principle. Beattie in particular uses this strategy, and I suspect that Kant was influenced by him here. Kant's line of thought thus includes what one might call a *common sense moment*. However, unlike the common sense school, Kant considered this only a *prima facie* response, still in need of fuller defense and elaboration.

In sum, Kant's reflections in or shortly after 1772 on Hume's treatments of the concept of causal necessity and the causal principle in these ways brought him to a deeper (though not yet final) understanding than he had achieved alone in his letter to Herz of two major puzzles bearing on the possibility of metaphysics: a double puzzle about the existence and reference of a priori concepts, and a puzzle about the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. It is mainly this process that he has in mind in the *Prolegomena* when he credits Hume with having roused him from the slumber of dogmatic metaphysics and given his thought a quite new direction.

VI. Having identified the skeptical problems concerning metaphysics to which Kant in his letter to Garve and in the *Prolegomena* attributes his escape from dogmatic slumber in the discipline, and seen when and how they roused him, let us now consider his attempt in the critical philosophy to generate a reformed metaphysics which could be defended

against them, and his attempt there so to defend it. I begin with the question of what the critical philosophy's reformed metaphysics is like, and how in general it has been reformed in order to enable it to cope with the skeptical problems.

Kant is concerned with metaphysics *as a science*. As he puts it in the *Prolegomena*, "Metaphysics must be a science . . . ; otherwise it is nothing at all."⁵⁶ We may therefore confine our focus to metaphysics in this strict sense (neglecting various other senses of the word which he uses).

His reflections on skepticism as charted so far suggest that he will want to impose the following two requirements on any acceptable science of metaphysics:

(1) It should exclude traditional metaphysics' claims about supersensible items, which run into Pyrrhonian equipollence problems, and instead include all and only those (non-mathematical) a priori concepts and synthetic a priori principles which seem *obviously* legitimate in light of their perspicuity, confirmation by experience, and fundamentality to common sense and science (such as the concept of cause and the causal principle).

(2) It should advance these in such a way that they can be more fully defended than by this appearance of obvious legitimacy alone against both the Pyrrhonian and the Hume-influenced skeptical problems.

These, I suggest, were indeed the main requirements which guided Kant in his reform of metaphysics. Accordingly, in partial response to requirement (1), a fundamental step of Kant's in reforming metaphysics is to exclude putative information about *supersensible* items, such as God, the world as a whole, and the soul (the subjects dealt with by traditional special metaphysics).⁵⁷

⁵⁶*Prolegomena*, p. 371.

⁵⁷He recognizes that such knowledge has traditionally been the primary goal of metaphysics, but he now believes that our knowledge is limited to objects of possible experience in a way that makes it impossible (see *Critique*, Bxix). All that can be done for convictions about supersensible items, and even then only in very limited cases, is to provide a defense of them, not as science or knowledge, but as morally based faith (see *ibid.*, Bxix-xxii, Bxxx-xxxi).

Accordingly again, the core of metaphysics now becomes what Kant calls "metaphysics of nature" or "immanent physiology," by which he means a set of very general non-mathematical a priori concepts and synthetic a priori principles governing empirical nature. This set contains and has its foundation in the concepts and principles treated in the Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique*.⁵⁸ "Metaphysics of nature" thus includes in a fundamental role such a priori concepts as cause and substance, and such synthetic a priori principles as the causal principle and the principle of the permanence of substance. It bears a strong resemblance, both formally and materially, to traditional general metaphysics or general ontology: like that traditional discipline, it deals with our most general concepts and principles; and it also identifies as such specific concepts and principles which are in many cases the same as those identified by traditional general metaphysics (or at least very similar), for example the concepts of cause and substance and the causal principle.

This "metaphysics of nature" further addresses requirement (1). For example, it includes the concept of cause and the causal principle, but excludes the concept of and principles concerning God. Moreover, it addresses requirement (2), namely in virtue of three special features which more closely define its character:

First, Kant conceives this "metaphysics of nature" as a priori *but not supersensuous*, a priori *but concerned with objects of possible experience*. This might sound self-contradictory. However, the notion of a priority which constitutes a distinctive mark of metaphysics for the critical philosophy⁵⁹ is *broader* than the notion of supersensuousness which had constituted a distinctive mark of traditional (special) metaphysics.⁶⁰ The fact that the critical philosophy conceives its "metaphysics of nature" in this way enables it to

⁵⁸See *ibid.*, Axx-xxi, A841 / B869, A846 / B874, Bliii.

⁵⁹See *Prolegomena*, pp. 265-6.

⁶⁰Concerning supersensuousness as a distinctive mark of traditional metaphysics, and the distinction between a priority and supersensuousness, see *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, pp. 316-19.

deploy two key strategies for more fully defending this metaphysics against the threat of Pyrrhonian and Hume-influenced skepticism: a strategy of proving that the concepts and principles of the discipline apply to reality by means of arguments which show this to be a condition of the possibility of *experience*, i.e. by means of what have come to be known in the secondary literature as "transcendental arguments"; and a strategy of explaining how we can refer with such concepts and know such principles in terms of their being cognitive components by means of which we ourselves constitute *experience*, i.e. in terms of what Kant calls "transcendental idealism."

Second, a further special feature of Kant's "metaphysics of nature" which makes possible its full defense against the threat posed by Pyrrhonian and Hume-influenced skepticism is that it is conceived by Kant to be, not about the world as it is in itself, but merely about the world *as (in essential part) constituted by our own minds*.⁶¹ This feature of the discipline is again essential for enabling it to receive the second of the two strategies of defense just mentioned, that in terms of "transcendental idealism."

Third, a further special feature of Kant's "metaphysics of nature" which makes possible its full defense against the threat posed by Pyrrhonian and Hume-influenced skepticism is its *systematicity*.⁶² The aspiration to systematicity in metaphysics was not new with Kant. However, from an early period he rejected his predecessors' *mathematical* model for generating it (a deductive system of axioms, definitions, and theorems) as unsuitable for the discipline. So he needed a new way of producing it. He found this in the system of logical forms of judgment and their one-to-one correlation with, first, the fundamental a priori concepts of his new "metaphysics of nature," and thence, its fundamental synthetic a priori principles. As we shall see, this systematicity is essential to his strategy for defending it against Pyrrhonian skepticism.

⁶¹See esp. *Critique*, A247 / B303.

⁶²See esp. *ibid.*, A832-51.

This describes what metaphysics *as a science* does and does not include for the critical philosophy. As I have emphasized, this is a metaphysics remodeled above all in order to enable it to withstand Pyrrhonian and Hume-influenced skepticism. We should now consider how its built-in defenses are meant to work.

VII. Let us begin with Kant's defense against the Hume-influenced problems (for, as we shall see, his defense against the Pyrrhonian problem builds on this).

As already mentioned, Kant's first line of defense here is to point to apparently clear examples of a priori concepts which *do* exist and refer, and of synthetic a priori principles which *are* known. This is the *common sense moment* in his defense.

But he also develops much more elaborate and systematic solutions to the Hume-influenced problems. These solutions pursue a dual strategy, one side of which undertakes to *prove that* specific metaphysical a priori concepts refer and specific metaphysical synthetic a priori principles are true, and the other side of which undertakes to *explain the possibility* of their referring and being known. This dual strategy is reflected in many of Kant's methodological remarks (e.g. his famous distinction between an "objective" and a "subjective" side of the Transcendental Deduction).⁶³ He adheres to it consistently in the part of the *Critique* where the concepts and principles in question are treated: the Transcendental Analytic. Let us consider each of its sides in turn.

Kant's *proof that* a metaphysical a priori concept refers or a metaphysical synthetic a priori principle is true always takes the form of a transcendental argument, i.e. an argument which turns on demonstrating that the reference or truth in question is *a condition of the possibility of experience*. In other words, such a proof turns on demonstrating the truth of a conditional proposition of the form "Necessarily if there is experience, then a priori concept C refers / synthetic a priori principle p is true." Most of the work in such a proof goes into demonstrating just such a conditional proposition. That

⁶³See esp. *ibid.*, Axvi-xvii; Bxix.

done, the completion of the proof - which Kant generally treats as too obvious to require statement - is an inference by *modus ponendo ponens* from the truth of this conditional proposition plus the seemingly unquestionable truth of its antecedent ("There is experience") to the truth of its consequent ("A priori concept C refers / synthetic a priori principle p is true"). Examples of such proofs are the Transcendental Deduction and the Analogies. A main attraction of this style of argument lay, for Kant, in the prospect which it seemed to offer of refuting a Hume-influenced skeptic's skepticism about metaphysics on behalf of particular metaphysical concepts and principles on the basis of premises which not only Kant but also the Hume-influenced skeptic himself would have to concede, such as that he had experience.⁶⁴

Kant's *explanations of the possibility* of metaphysical a priori concepts existing and referring, and of metaphysical synthetic a priori principles constituting knowledge, are in terms of *transcendental idealism*. Famously, this thesis holds that the essential form of the objective world of experience is contributed by our own minds (in contrast to its matter, which is given to us in sensation), this essential form comprising, on the one hand, the pure intuitions of space and time and the synthetic a priori principles of mathematics associated with them, and, on the other hand, *the a priori concepts of the understanding and the metaphysical synthetic a priori principles associated with them*.⁶⁵ Kant's explanation of the possibility of metaphysical a priori concepts existing and referring is as follows. That they can *exist* at all has a fairly straightforward explanation: instead of being derived passively from sensation, they have their source in *the active understanding*.⁶⁶ That they are able, moreover, to *refer* is explained by the transcendental

⁶⁴See esp. *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1783), in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 29, pt. 1.2, pp. 794, 799, 805.

⁶⁵Transcendental idealism was originally motivated by reflection on, and applied to, the former (space, time, and mathematics), namely in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770. It was only later extended to cover the latter as well.

⁶⁶See *Prolegomena*, p. 260; *Critique*, A66 / B90-1. The Metaphysical Deduction's tracing of the a priori concepts of the understanding back to the logical forms of judgment is meant to establish their origin in the understanding.

idealist thesis that they contribute essential form to objective things.⁶⁷ For it will be recalled that in his letter to Herz Kant had argued that there were *two* circumstances in which the reference of a concept to an object was intelligible: either when the object caused the concept through sensation *or when the concept caused the object* (as in the case of a divine archetypal intellect). Kant's transcendental idealism makes the reference of metaphysical a priori concepts intelligible in the latter way: they in a sense cause their objects.⁶⁸ As for metaphysical synthetic a priori knowledge, transcendental idealism enables Kant to explain this too: On the one hand, the fact that certain synthetic a priori principles express aspects of the essential form of objective nature accounts for their truth. On the other hand, the idealist fact that *we* are responsible for the presence of those features accounts for our ability to know that they are there without first investigating nature, hence for the *a priority* of the knowledge in question. How can I know a priori, despite the non-analyticity of the claim, that, for example, every event has a cause? Because *I constitute* nature to conform with this principle.⁶⁹

VIII. What about the Pyrrhonian problem of a balance of opposing arguments in metaphysics? How does the critical philosophy undertake to defend its reformed metaphysics against *this* skeptical problem?

The first point to note here is that Kant saw his solution to the Hume-influenced problems as the key to solving this Pyrrhonian problem as well. This is clear from the following passage in the *Critique*: "The proper problem of pure reason is contained in the question: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible? [i.e. one of the Hume-influenced problems] That metaphysics has hitherto remained in so vacillating a state of uncertainty

⁶⁷*Critique*, A93 / B126: "through them alone does experience become possible" - reading this now in a causal or quasi-causal sense, and keeping in mind Kant's position that "the a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience" (A111).

⁶⁸See *ibid.*, A92-3 / B124-6; cf. A95-7, 128-30, B166-7.

⁶⁹See *ibid.*, A113-14, 125-6, Bxvi-xviii.

and contradiction [i.e. the Pyrrhonian problem], is entirely due to the fact that this problem . . . has never previously been considered. Upon the solution of this problem . . . depends the success . . . of metaphysics."⁷⁰ Indeed, I would suggest that for Kant the importance of the Hume-influenced problems lay at least as much in the fact that their solution promised to make possible that of the Pyrrhonian problem as in their own force.

How does Kant envisage his solution to the Hume-influenced problems enabling him to save metaphysics from the Pyrrhonian problem as well? *Part* of what he has in mind here is that his solution to the Hume-influenced problems makes possible a solution to *the canonical four Antinomies*.⁷¹ To this extent, his thought is that the Hume-influenced problems demand transcendental idealism as part of their solution, and that transcendental idealism then serves as the means for resolving the Antinomies as well.

It does so, according to the *Critique*, as follows: In the case of the "Mathematical" Antinomies, we have (Kant alleges) compelling arguments both for denying the thesis and for denying the antithesis - e.g. in the First Antinomy, both for denying that the world has a beginning in time and for denying that it lacks a beginning in time and hence is eternal.⁷² Since these two possibilities appear to be, not only logically exclusive of each other, but also logically exhaustive, this seems to lead to an unresolvable contradiction, for it seems that we can infer from the disproof of each to the truth of the other. However, if, and only if, we embrace transcendental idealism's claim that the whole spatio-temporal world is merely an appearance, not a thing in itself, we can escape this contradiction. For in that case, and only in that case, the two possibilities are *not* logically exhaustive after all, since Kant holds that whenever a subject concept is empty opposite predications concerning it are both false. Consequently, if, and only if, the whole spatio-temporal

⁷⁰Ibid., B19.

⁷¹Thus soon after the passage just quoted he cites as an example of a question that has "always met with unavoidable contradictions" the First Antinomy's question "whether the world has a beginning or is from eternity" (ibid., B22).

⁷²Ibid., A506 / B534.

world is merely apparent (as transcendental idealism says), the two equally compelling arguments of a "Mathematical" Antinomy do not contradict each other after all; both thesis and antithesis can be false, as the arguments (allegedly) prove they are.⁷³ In the case of the "Dynamical" Antinomies, we have (Kant alleges) compelling proofs both for the thesis and for the antithesis - e.g. in the Third Antinomy, both for there being freedom, or uncaused causation by the will, and for there being no freedom but instead only thoroughgoing causation. This again seems to yield a contradiction. However, if, and only if, transcendental idealism's claim that the realm of nature is mere appearance and distinct from the realm of things as they are in themselves is correct, then the thesis and the antithesis can be consistent and both true (namely, of different realms). So, once again, if, and only if, transcendental idealism is true, these Antinomies can be resolved.⁷⁴

However, as I suggested earlier, Kant's concern in the *Critique* about metaphysics' "vacillating . . . state of uncertainty and contradiction" also extends beyond the canonical four Antinomies (as in the precritical period). So one may reasonably ask whether his idea of solving this problem via his solutions to the Hume-influenced problems does not include more than just these well-known strategies for addressing the four Antinomies. I believe that it does, that it also includes a much less well-known strategy designed to liberate metaphysics from Pyrrhonian equipollence skepticism more broadly.

Shortly after the passage recently quoted Kant returns to the problem of "unavoidable contradictions" in metaphysics, describing it as a threat of "dogmatic assertions to which other assertions, equally specious, can always be opposed - that is . . . skepticism."⁷⁵ And he indicates the following strategy for solving it: "It must be possible for reason to attain to certainty whether we know or do not know the objects of metaphysics, that is, to come to a decision either in regard to the objects of its enquiries or in regard to the capacity or

⁷³Ibid., A502-7 / B530-5.

⁷⁴Ibid., A529-32 / B557-60, A536-7 / B564-5, A559-64 / B587-92.

⁷⁵Ibid., B22-3.

incapacity of reason to pass any judgment upon them, so that we may either with confidence extend our pure reason or set to it sure and determinate limits."⁷⁶ This implies a twofold strategy for addressing Pyrrhonian equipollence skepticism: on the one hand, produce certain knowledge of some pieces of metaphysics by establishing both the facts in question ("the objects of its enquiries") and our ability to know them ("the capacity . . . of reason to pass any judgment upon them"); on the other hand, produce certain knowledge that we do not and cannot have knowledge of other metaphysical matters.

This twofold strategy is, I suggest, more specifically as follows. First, Kant believes - reasonably *given his understanding of Pyrrhonism as a restrained form of skepticism* - that his solutions to the Hume-influenced problems on behalf of particular metaphysical concepts and principles are such that the Pyrrhonist is bound to accept these solutions too. Consider, in particular, Kant's transcendental argument *proves that*. Kant evidently understands the conditional propositions of the form "Necessarily if there is experience then a priori concept C refers / synthetic a priori principle p is true" which form the core of these proofs to be just as irresistible for a Pyrrhonist, once demonstrated to him, as they are for the Hume-influenced skeptic. For Kant believes the *Critique's* essential contents generally, and one must therefore suppose these in particular, to be "the measure, and therefore . . . the paradigm, of all apodeictic . . . certainty."⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Pyrrhonist, as Kant conceives him, does not in general question experiential judgments. He is therefore also bound to accept the proposition "There is experience." Finally, there is no question of Kant's Pyrrhonist questioning logical principles, such as *modus ponendo ponens*. So he is bound to infer from those two premises the consequents of the conditional propositions in question: propositions of the form "A priori concept C refers / synthetic a priori principle p is true." Similar points apply to Kant's transcendental idealist *explanations of the possibility* of our referring with / knowing particular

⁷⁶Ibid., B22.

⁷⁷Ibid., Axv.

metaphysical a priori concepts and synthetic a priori principles. Since these explanations are among the essential contents of the *Critique*, they too are evidently understood by him to possess "apodeictic . . . certainty." In short, Kant thinks that the Pyrrhonist cannot but accept the proofs and explanations which he has already provided vindicating particular metaphysical concepts and principles. These parts of metaphysics at least can therefore be saved from the threat of Pyrrhonian equipollence.

The second side of Kant's strategy is as follows. Providing, in the way just described, a defense compelling for the Pyrrhonist of a small number of metaphysical concepts and principles would settle only a modest subset of the myriad "intestine wars" between metaphysical claims to which the *Critique* attributes skepticism about metaphysics.⁷⁸ However, Kant envisages a way of proceeding from this modicum of metaphysical peace to the end of *all* disputes in metaphysics, and hence the complete liberation of the discipline from the Pyrrhonian problem. His strategy is not to *settle* the remaining disputes, but to show that they do not belong within the discipline of *metaphysics*.

One pillar supporting his case here is his fundamental assumption that metaphysics properly so called is of its very essence a science (a *Wissenschaft*). This implies, at a minimum, that its principles must not only be true but also constitute knowledge (*Wissen*). Another pillar is a conviction that his solutions to the Hume-influenced problems, his proofs and explanations for particular metaphysical a priori concepts and synthetic a priori principles, not only establish that these *do* constitute knowledge in the domain of metaphysics, but also provide a basis for demonstrating that other principles currently counted by people as belonging within that domain *cannot* constitute knowledge.⁷⁹ He believes that this demonstration in fact shows that *none* of the principles currently counted by people as falling within that domain *except* for those which he has

⁷⁸Ibid., Aix.

⁷⁹This is what he has in mind when he writes that the critical philosophy furnishes in connection with metaphysics "a standard . . . to our judgment whereby knowledge may be with certainty distinguished from pseudo-knowledge" (*Prolegomena*, p. 383; cf. *Critique*, A12 / B26).

vindicated in the course of solving the Hume-influenced problems can constitute knowledge. If this can indeed be shown, then, given the requirement that metaphysics must of its very essence be knowledge, all these other principles can properly be expelled from metaphysics and left to conduct their "intestine wars" elsewhere.

How, though, does he hope to demonstrate that all principles currently counted as belonging within metaphysics except for those which he has vindicated can constitute nothing better than pseudo-knowledge? The answer lies in his conviction that, as he puts it, "metaphysics . . . is the only science which promises . . . *completion*," and the critical philosophy can achieve a demonstrably "*complete* knowledge" of "reason itself and its pure thinking."⁸⁰ By this, he means that the critical philosophy can demonstrate the *completeness* of the conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge which it vindicates, their *exhaustion* of metaphysical knowledge.

This demonstration depends on the critical philosophy's claim to show that these conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge constitute together an *entire system*.⁸¹ For it is a recurrent and central theme in Kant that the way to demonstrate that an aggregate of items of some particular kind constitutes a *complete* collection of items of that kind is to show that they constitute together, not only all items of that kind which one can discover, but also an *entire system*.⁸²

Accordingly, a passage from the *Von Schön Metaphysics* implies that the full solution to the problem of equipollence skepticism in metaphysics lies, not only in validating specific conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge by proving that and explaining how they constitute such, but also in establishing that the

⁸⁰*Critique*, Axx, xiv, emphasis added; cf. Bxxiii-xxiv, B89-92.

⁸¹See *Prolegomena*, p. 365; *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, p. 321.

⁸²See *Critique*, A64-5 / B89; cf. A66-7 / B91-2, A80-1 / B106-7; *Prolegomena*, p. 322. Note that the inference here from *entire system* to *complete* collection is not, as it might appear, a trivial one.

sphere of the conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge is thereby exhausted by showing that they constitute together an entire system.⁸³

The critical philosophy's demonstration in response to equipollence skepticism that its collection of the conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge is complete therefore ultimately rests on the notorious systematic or "architectonic" aspects of the *Critique*, which aim to exhibit their entire systematicity.

More specifically, Kant's idea is as follows: Given that the twelve logical forms of judgment constitute an entire system, we can demonstrate that our collection of metaphysical a priori concepts of the understanding does so as well by showing that they correspond one-to-one with those logical forms of judgment.⁸⁴ And given now that our collection of metaphysical a priori concepts of the understanding constitutes an entire system, we can see that our collection of metaphysical synthetic a priori principles does so as well by showing that they in turn correspond one-to-one with the metaphysical a priori concepts of the understanding.⁸⁵ To give an example of how these correspondences are supposed to work: the hypothetical form of judgment, "If A then B," corresponds to the a priori concept of causation, since it yields the idea of the consequence of one thing upon another that is the core of the concept of causation;⁸⁶ and the pure concept of causation then in turn corresponds to the synthetic a priori principle that every event has a cause (for obvious reasons).

Since, in Kant's view, the *Critique*'s demonstration that its collection of the conceptual sources and fundamental principles of metaphysical knowledge is complete possesses, like the rest of the work's contents, "apodeictic . . . certainty," it will again, in his view, be

⁸³*Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 463-5.

⁸⁴*Critique*, A64-81 / B89-107; *Prolegomena*, pp. 322-6; *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, pp. 271-2.

⁸⁵*Critique*, A148 / B187, A161 / B200. Kant gives a helpful tabular summary of all the above correspondences at *Prolegomena*, pp. 302-3.

⁸⁶*Critique*, A243 / B301. Cf. *Metaphysik Volckmann*, in *Kants ges. Schr.*, vol. 28, pt. 1, p. 404.

such that the Pyrrhonist cannot but accept it once it is laid out for him. Consequently, the Pyrrhonist can be compelled to admit, not only that these sources and principles provide metaphysical knowledge, but also that all the remaining principles whose battles have hitherto sullied and might continue to sully the name of the discipline belong outside it.

IX. This, then, is Kant's grand strategy in the critical philosophy for defending a reformed metaphysics against the skeptical problems which arose to threaten the discipline of metaphysics in the mid 1760s to early 1770s, causing him to reshape the discipline in order to enable it to withstand them. Reformed and defended against those skeptical problems in the ways sketched above, metaphysics at last in the critical philosophy emerges "on the secure path of science."⁸⁷ Such, at least, is Kant's belief.

⁸⁷*Critique*, Bxiv.