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Immanuel Kant's Transition from Pure to Practical Reason

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Immanuel Kant's Transition from Pure to Practical Reason



Philosophy 499, Robert Hahn

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Introduction

When Immanuel Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason* he significantly changed the business of metaphysics. Metaphysics had traditionally tried to determine what the true nature of an object was, independent of ourselves as the observers. Kant, however, proposed a system in which our cognitive apparatus imposed certain conditions upon objects in order for us to understand them. We could not ever hope to know the object in itself, but by discovering the nature of our cognitive system, we could come to know certain truths, and we could know these truths with absolute certainty. "Objectivity" thus becomes identified with the structure of subjectivity.

In his second *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant concerns himself with the issue of morality. In particular, he wishes to establish the reality of freedom, the existence of an immortal soul, and the existence of God. Kant desperately wants to defend the possibility of morality, but without freedom, we appear simply to live in an amoral, phenomenally determined, world. Kant wishes to ascribe to us both moral culpability and moral obligation, but he must attempt to do this within the context of the epistemology set forth in the first *Critique*.

This essay contains four major divisions. The first is a review of Kant's system of theoretical knowledge set out in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Next I will discuss the *Critique of Pure Reason* paying specific attention to those areas of the book where he makes room for the possibility of Practical Knowledge. Third I move on to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. In this section I intend to discuss what possibility he presents for Practical knowledge and compare and contrast that treatment with the one given in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Finally I discuss what conclusions we may reach regarding two primary questions: "Are these two systems consistent?" and "Are the grounds for practical knowledge adequate to the conclusions Kant wishes to derive from them?"

I. The Limits of Theoretical Knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*

A. The Difference Between the A and B Preface

“Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.”¹ The opening lines of the Preface to the First Edition rank among the most crisp, clear and concise opening paragraphs ever written. Kant gives his take on what the problem is and the rest of the *Critique* is his attempt at finding some solution.

Both the A and B Prefaces are riddled with political metaphor. In the A Preface Kant refers to metaphysics as the Queen of all the sciences. He claims this noble monarchy to have been mishandled under the administration of the dogmatists, and he scorns skeptics as “a species of nomads, despising all settled modes of life.”² The impression given is one strongly in favor of the monarchy of Queen Metaphysics, and Kant wishes to restore her to her rightful throne and repair whatever damage has been done to her position.

In the B Preface, however, the tone is different. No longer does Kant speak of restoration and repair. Now Kant is the proponent of a *revolution*, and what’s more, he wishes to be the leader of it. “A *revolution* brought about by the happy thought of a single man, the experiment which he devised marking out the path upon which the science must enter, and by following which, secure progress throughout all time and in endless expansion is infallibly secured.”³ Here he wishes to follow suite with the sciences of mathematics (divided into geometry and arithmetic) and mostly physics. His primary model for this revolution to set metaphysics along the path of a secure science is the revolution he believes that Newton effected in physics.

¹Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1965) p.7

²Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.8

³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.19

B. The Problem as Stated in the Introduction

“The proper problem of pure reason is contained in the question: How are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible? Upon the solution of this problem, or upon a sufficient proof that the possibility which it desires to have explained does in fact not exist at all, depends the success or failure of metaphysics.”⁴ This is the general problem of pure reason in Kant’s estimation, but why is this so?

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant undertakes to answer two questions: 1.) What can we know? and 2.) How do we know it? As indicated in the A and B Prefaces, Kant wants to establish metaphysics as a science, and the business of metaphysics, as properly understood in the first *Critique*, is to determine the limits of theoretical knowledge.

Before plunging directly into that pursuit, however, he defines the necessary requirements for any science. There are two such qualifying factors for a science. The first is that it must establish certainty. Without certainty, science cannot ever progress because it has no solid foundation upon which to build. At any moment, a future discovery may render all previous theories obsolete. There is no set point of departure and no rational basis for one set of theories to be preferred over any other. The other criteria is that it be ampliative in nature. It must in some way extend our knowledge base. If a science provides us with no possibility for the extension of our knowledge than it is equally unable to make progress in any conventional sense, and is therefore of little use to us.

Kant speaks of judgments as having an *a priori* or *a posteriori* quality. *A posteriori* judgments are made through the aid of experience and thus tell us only what is, and not that it necessarily must be that way. They provide us with the *quid facti* information, but offer no demonstration *quid juris*. Further, these judgments do not allow any strict universality, for we can only assert that in all cases that we have observed thus far there is no exception to this rule. *A priori* judgments, however, are judgments which, in being thought, must be thought of as necessary. All apples are apples. This is an example of an analytic *a priori* judgment. It is not necessary to wake up early and scan the orchards to verify the truth of this statement; it is inexorably true. These judgments must be universal allowing no exception to the rule. Since an *a priori* judgment does not rely on any

⁴Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.55

experience for its legitimacy, no appeal to possible future experience can ever show a judgment of this kind to be false.

Judgments are further categorized as being of analytic or synthetic character. Kant distinguishes between these two types by defining an analytic judgment as one in which the predicate 'B' belongs to the subject 'A' as being something which is entirely within the concept of 'A' from the beginning. Synthetic judgments have a predicate 'B' which stands outside the concept 'A', although it is connected with it. In making analytic judgments we do not in any way expand our knowledge of the subject 'A', but rather something that we already knew about 'A' has been made more intelligible. Analytic judgments are logical truths and hence must be true. Synthetic judgments may or may not be true. In making synthetic judgments we must have some factor X which allows us to know that a predicate not contained within the concept of the subject nevertheless belongs to it. This factor X is the given, or the power of an object to create a representation in my mind. The actual "synthesis" in synthetic judgments lies in the predicate of the proposition being combined with and subsumed under the subject.

Analytic *a priori* judgments, preferred by the Rationalists, provide certainty, but are inadequate for the foundation of a science because they offer no means by which to expand our knowledge. Synthetic *a posteriori* judgments, preferred by the Empiricists, are ampliative in nature and may provide probability, but are lacking the certainty necessary to support the growth of a science. Only synthetic *a priori* judgments could provide the essential basis for any truly scientific progress.

To make any synthetic *a priori* judgments then, we must combine in thought a certain predicate concept with a certain subject concept, and this synthesis must be inherently necessary within the concepts themselves. If we accept the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments we allow ourselves a means to extend our *a priori* knowledge. If we reject the possibility of such judgments then we cannot undertake to expand our knowledge of things universally and can only hope to clarify concepts of which we are already aware. For without the ability to make synthetic *a priori* judgments we are simply "the unqualified historian or critic passing judgments upon the groundless assertions of others by means of [our] own, which are equally groundless."⁵

⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.60

If there is to be a science of metaphysics, at its foundation must be judgments which are absolutely certain and yet able to extend our knowledge. How is this possible? Through judgments which are both synthetic and *a priori*.

C. Transcendental Aesthetic

“The science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility I call *transcendental aesthetic*.”⁶

The Transcendental Aesthetic is designed to investigate four notions. The first of these notions is the passive or receptive faculty called *sensibility*. This is followed by the conditions of space and time, and finally the possibility of mathematics as a science.

Kant speaks of intuition as that through which a mode of knowledge is in immediate relation with an object and towards which all thought as a means is directed. Intuition can only take place insofar as an object is *given* to us. The capacity for receiving a representation of an object, or for the mind to be affected in a certain way through a particular mode of knowledge is defined by Kant as this passive, receptive faculty called *sensibility*. The givenness of an object is only possible insofar as we are able to receive and process sensory information. As the information is thus processed and understood we develop empirical *concepts*.

It is that actual thing in the appearance which corresponds to sensation that Kant calls *matter*. We are unable as sensible intuitors to understand or perceive this external matter for its true and objective nature because we are unable to escape the dimensions of our own perception. We can only perceive things in the way that we actually do perceive things, namely as appearances and not as things-in-themselves. Since Kant insists that sensibility is purely passive and receptive, he commits himself to a position that matter cannot be purely passive. His notion of the given requires matter to impinge upon our faculty of sensibility.

This creates some degree of difficulty for Kant. He will later argue that “causality” is an *a priori* category. These categories however, by Kant’s own decree, may only properly be applied to objects of possible sense experience and not to things-in-themselves, or noumena. Yet he also holds that all knowledge begins with the givenness of sensations. These sensations are consequences of matter completely outside of my control acting

⁶Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.66

upon my faculty of sensibility, and yet he cannot accurately state that this matter causes me to have these impressions. This is impermissible because it extends the use of a category beyond possible sense impressions to noumena. This difficulty, if it is to be resolved at all, persists until Kant attempts to explain the Third and Fourth Antinomies. This attempt at resolution and its importance will be discussed in the section on the Third and Fourth Antinomies.

While it is impossible, in Kant's view, to have any *a priori* knowledge of matter, it is necessary that we have *a priori* knowledge of the *forms* of sensibility. These forms are the variety in appearance that allows us to classify information according to certain types. Since forms are that through which sensations may be posited and ordered in a certain model, they cannot in themselves be sense impressions. Therefore, while the matter behind all appearances is given to us *a posteriori* only, its form lies ready for these sensations *a priori* in the mind. For this reason it must be kept separate from all sensation. This whole notion fits nicely in an analogy of the movies. We see appearances of actors and actresses on the screen, but only appearances and not the people themselves. These people are matter and the appearances we see of them are our sensations. The form however is the screen. For while we only see the appearances of actors on the screen and not the screen itself, we must posit the existence of the screen because otherwise we would not be able to see the representations projected upon it.

Kant describes as *pure intuitions* that which remains from an empirical intuition if we strip it of everything received by sensibility *a posteriori* (impenetrability, hardness, color, etc.) and everything which the understanding thinks about it (substance, force, divisibility, etc.). What remains of the intuition is extension and figure. These belong to pure intuition as forms of sensibility even when there is no actual object perceived by the senses. "There are two pure forms of sensible intuition, serving as principles of *a priori* knowledge, namely space and time."⁷

Space and time, to Kant, are both real and ideal. Insofar as I experience objects as side by side, in empirical intuition, space is empirically real. It is the condition by which I experience anything external as real. Insofar as I experience anything in sequence, in empirical intuition, time is real. It is the condition by which I experience anything external or internal as real. But inasmuch as space and time are not conditions of

⁷Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.67

things-in-themselves, but rather only forms of my sensibility, space and time are both transcendently ideal.

We are sensible intuitors and our sensibility is spacio-temporal. One can easily understand the argument for space and time being empirically real, for no one may conceive of an object not existing in space or an occurrence not existing in some sequential relation to any other occurrence. The argument is more complicated for why time and space cannot be extended to things-in-themselves.

First we must recall that we are not able to have any sense experience of noumena. All that we perceive through sensibility are representations given by a particular object. While some people shared the view with Kant that we could not crawl outside of our heads to see if the real world actually corresponds to the contents of our consciousness, many believed in a correspondence theory of truth.

The “similitude theory of reference” is a way of expressing the view that external objects must be in some way similar to the representations they create in our minds, even if not exactly alike. For instance, if I perceive the appearance of an object six feet by four feet with a flat, rectangular surface and four protrusions reaching to the floor, one from each corner, then it seems that there must be something “out there” that is very similar to the table I just described; it corresponds with the contents of my consciousness. Otherwise, why would I have these particular representations? While there was no way to check and make sure if this was so, it seemed to make sense, and for that reason was a widely held belief. After all, even in Kant’s system where one cannot have any experience of things-in-themselves, isn’t it possible that things just happen to actually be spacio-temporal? Granting that we have no way to prove it, doesn’t that possibility exist?

Kant’s answer to this is no, and the reason why is that if space and time could be extended to apply as conditions of things-in-themselves then subjects would have to admit of impossible predicates. Probably the most famous example of such an impossibility comes from Zeno of Elea. This is the paradox of bisection, or dichotomy. Suppose there is a given distance between you and a door. Zeno holds that you could never actually exit through that door because before you are able to reach it you must arrive at the point halfway between the door and your starting position. But before you can reach the halfway point you must travel half of the way there. But first you must get halfway to that point! In the end you are required to traverse an infinite number of points before you could reach the door and exit. Since it is impossible to cross an infinite number of points, because an infinite series is one which, by definition, cannot be

completed, you cannot ever actually get there. Analogously, if things themselves were spacio-temporal then, like Zeno's paradox, they too would be self-contradictory. This is why Kant states that space and time are transcendently only ideal, and asserts instead a coherence theory of truth.

For mathematics to be a science, by Kant's definition, there must be some way to show how synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible in mathematics. He does not, however, attempt to complete his grounding of mathematics as a science until the Transcendental Analytic. This is because a science can be grounded only when it is shown to be objectively valid, and objective validity requires that a judgment can be applied to real possible objects, or objects of experience. "Even space and time, however free their concepts are from everything empirical, and however certain it is that they are represented in the mind completely *a priori*, would yet be without objective validity, senseless and meaningless, if their necessary application to the objects of experience were not established...Apart from these objects of experience, they would be devoid of meaning. And so it is with concepts of every kind."⁸

Kant does believe he has shown how synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible in mathematics. These judgments are supposed to be like universal rules, and so applicable to particular instances. However, their *a priori* character necessitates that they cannot themselves be derived from such particulars. The synthetic *a priori* judgments of mathematics describe the organization of space and time, particulars which are not objects of sensibility but are found in experience.

Kant demonstrates that space is a particular by the fact that there is only one space. This one space is infinite in magnitude and has infinitely many divisions within it, instead of infinitely many instances subsumed under it. These divisions, or all other spaces, can be seen as homogenous parts of the one all-embracing space.

Kant is not using the science of mathematics as his model for metaphysics, but instead will get that design from natural science. This is because, although the judgments made in science must be synthetic *a priori*, the fact that these judgments are not a schematized category or a principle keeps them outside the realm of metaphysics.

⁸Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.193

D. Transcendental Analytic

The Transcendental Analytic is an immensely important division of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and its significance requires that a proportional amount of energy be spent in explaining its purposes. It is in this section that Kant discusses *The Table of Judgments* and *The Table of Categories*, the *a priori* grounds of the possibility of experience (namely *The Unity of Experience* through *The Synthesis of Apprehension in Intuition*, *The Synthesis of Reproduction in Imagination*, and *The Synthesis of Recognition in a Concept*), *The Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding* (Categories), and the *Analogies of Experience*. These topics will be considered and review in the preceding order.

1. Kant's Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories begins with the Table of Judgments. All meaningful judgments conform to a certain structure. "Judgment[s] can be brought under four heads, each of which contains three moments."⁹ These "heads" are *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Relation* and *Modality*, and the "moments" can easily be seen along with them as follows:

Table of Judgments			
I. Quantity	II. Quality	III. Relation	IV. Modality
Universal	Affirmative	Categorical	Problematic
Particular	Negative	Hypothetical	Assertoric
Singular	Infinite	Disjunctive	Apodeictic

Kant bases this table on his observation of judgments and believes this to be an exhaustive list of the forms which they may take. Every judgment has one moment from each of the heads represented.

The *Understanding* is the active, non-sensuous faculty of knowledge. Judgments are products of our understanding. As such, their structure reflects how the Understanding functions. Kant's Copernican hypothesis states that the Understanding prescribes to Nature the structure it must possess if it is to be an object of experience for us. It does this by employing *concepts* in judgments. The *categories* are just these *a priori* concepts. "To discover the basic logical functions of judgments is to discover the legislative structure of

⁹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.106

the Understanding.”¹⁰ This is why the Table of Categories corresponds almost exactly to the Table of Judgments.

Table of Categories			
I. Quantity	II. Quality	III. Relation	IV. Modality
Unity	Reality	Substance	Possibility/Impossibility
Plurality	Negation	Causality	Existence/Non-existence
Totality	Limitation	Community	Necessary/Contingency

The Understandings principle operation is *synthesis*. All judgments are concerned with somehow synthesizing some subject S with some predicate P. The “heads” of these tables represent four distinct aspects of synthesis. A judgment therefore displays that which has already been synthesized by the Understanding. The object of this synthesis is whatever it is that was given through the senses and conditioned by space and time, the *a priori* forms of intuition. The Table of Categories are therefore the organizing principles of the understanding. Kant sees twelve kinds of cookies and these are the judgments. He then reasons that there must be twelve kinds of cookie cutters, and they must correspond with the cookies they produce. This is how he arrives at the Categories.

2. The *a priori* grounds for the possibility of all experience is the synthesis of the manifold of intuition into the unity of experience. Kant has followed Newton’s model for analysis or inductive method in his “Metaphysical Deduction” of the categories proceeding from the effects (judgments) to the causes inferred by them (the categories). In the “Transcendental Deduction” he will follow Newton’s model for synthesis or deductive method which assumes the categories as principles and proceeds to use those principles to explain the phenomena which ensues and to prove that explanation. This “method is intended to show that the categories are necessary - not absolutely, but only for the sensible-experience they are intended to make intelligible.”¹¹

For the unity of experience Kant turns to the *Synthesis of Apprehension in Intuition*, *Synthesis of Reproduction in Imagination*, and the *Synthesis of Recognition in an Object*. These are the three divisions of a single synthesis of the manifold of intuition. The

¹⁰Hahn, Robert, “The Metaphysical Deduction” (Philosophy 468A handout) Southern Illinois University, 1998

¹¹Hahn, Robert, *Kant’s Newtonian Revolution in Philosophy* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1988) p.111

Understanding's role is to actively bind our sensations into a unity. Kant's goal is to demonstrate that this synthesis is necessary and therefore an *a priori* assertion. In accomplishing this he is then able to affirm the necessity of the categories.

The synthesis of apprehension is the act of running through and holding together or ordering and connecting specific impressions by means of a certain temporal sequencing, time being that most fundamental and formal condition of all inner sense. Each representation existing in one moment in time can be considered nothing less than a complete unity. The synthesis of apprehension is the manner in which these otherwise separate unities are linked together. "In order that unity may arise out of this manifold (as is required in the representation of space) it must first be run through, and held together."¹²

The synthesis of reproduction in imagination allows us to be aware of the fact that we are experiencing a succession of sensations. This synthesis enables us to recall or reproduce representations in our minds even after the object for which the intuition was given is no longer present. It also allows us to intuit an object of sense impression while at the same time reproducing earlier representations of that same object. "Experience necessarily presupposes the reproducibility of appearances."¹³

The synthesis of recognition in an object is that activity through which we become aware that the object of our sensible intuitions is in fact the same object that we can reproduce in our imaginations. It allows us to identify an object based on previous representations and is therefore necessary for any knowledge of objects. "Without it [synthesis of recognition in an object], concepts, and therewith knowledge of objects, are altogether impossible."¹⁴

The reader of this essay may take the paper being read as an example. First, the representations must be bound together in some order. This allows the intuitor to have the experience of things happening in succession. Next, even while looking at the essay, the continuity of experience requires that you must be reproducing these earlier representations in your mind while reading on. The reader must also be able to recognize that the paper being read is one and the same paper as is being reproduced in the imagination.

¹²Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.131

¹³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.133

¹⁴Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.134

These syntheses take place simultaneously and spontaneously to produce the unity without which experience, as we have it, would be impossible. If experience were not bound up in such a unity then we would experience great shock from moment to moment, not being able to connect one to another, and knowledge of objects would be impossible.

It is relevant to note that when Kant speaks of “an object of representations” he is speaking of some undetermined, unknowable object = x , outside of and yet also corresponding to our knowledge. Appearances are nothing more than representations and as such are not objects capable of existing outside our powers of representation. Our modes of knowledge, in order that they not be arbitrary or haphazard must necessarily relate to these objects. This relation is ensured by the unity which constitutes the concept of an object. However, since we deal only with representations and not with the object itself (being distinct from all our representations of it), the unity necessitated by the object must be the formal unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of representations. “It is only when we have thus produced synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition that we are in a position to say that we know the object.”¹⁵

Once Kant believes himself to have established the necessity of the categories, he faces a new problem: how is it that the categories of understanding, while not derived from experience, may find application in experience? The categories, being pure concepts of understanding, can never be met within any intuition which is sensible and empirical in nature. However, concepts have no meaning if there is no object given for them. From this we see that the categories, as conditions of all possible experience, cannot be extended to objects in themselves, only our understanding of them. In fact, they cannot be applied to objects at all without questioning the manner in which those objects may be given to us.

3. As they were given in the Transcendental Deduction, the categories provide the conditions which must be presupposed for the knowledge of objects in general. *Schematizing* the categories, however, allows us to refer to and identify the specific contents of intuition. We already know that the categories must find some application in experience, because if they could not find such application, they could not make my experience comprehensible. Yet it must be possible that my experience is understandable because I actually understand it. The difficulty is to explain “how?” Now we must show

¹⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.135

how this application of the *a priori* structures of thought to the *a posteriori* contents of intuition is possible.

Kant determines that the only way to allow for the possibility of the categories to find referential application to intuitions is if there exists some third thing which acts as a liaison between the categorical world of *a priori* categories and the empirical world of *a posteriori* intuitions. This third thing is the *transcendental determination of time* or the transcendental schema. Time is the formal *a priori* condition of all intuitions, both inner and outer. It is this *a priori* determination as the form of all intuitions that it shares with the categories. These *a priori* determinations of time relate to the categories as time-series, time-content, time-order and the scope of time. It is by schematizing the categories in determination with time that they are made relevant to the world of sensible intuitions.

Schematas underlie pure sensible intuitions. They exist only in thought as the rules governing synthesis of imagination. Each specific image, after all, is limited in such a way that it can only be a special case of the concept and cannot possibly engender everything held within that concept. My concept of a dog, for instance, includes the possibility of many different figures of four-footed animals that range in color, personality, size, fur and a number of other respects. An image of a Yellow Labrador Retriever, however, limits me only to one particular dog, yellow in color, about sixty pounds in size and in possession of other specific characteristics. In fact, that image cannot even be adequate to my concept of a Yellow Lab, since one can imagine a good deal of variation even within that one breed, which is not contained in that particular specimen.

While there are twelve categories as pure concepts of the understanding, this number is reduced to eight when we schematize the categories. The categories of Quantity (Unity, Plurality, Totality) all center on the idea of magnitude. Since the categories are schematized in determination with time this is understood as *magnitude in time*. Magnitude in time is focused on the idea of successiveness. It is something that becomes magnitude and ceases to be magnitude. Since the succession of time is arrived at by one moment following another, Kant reaches *number* as the schema of Quantity.

The categories of Quality (Reality, Negation, Limitation) all deal with the idea of existence. In order for anything to exist to us, it must exist in intuition and it must be an object of sense impression. Insofar as something exists as a sensation, it necessarily carries along with it a certain degree of *intensity* in addition to a magnitude. The heat

which we perceive coming from a stove is more intense when that stove is turned on to 400 degrees than when it is only turned to 150 degrees. That which does not exist is therefore necessarily without intensity (or magnitude). Moreover, the stove of the previous example must necessarily pass through every degree of intensity between 400 degrees and 150 degrees when it is turned down to the lower temperature. This must be true to ensure the continuity of experience.

The first category under Relation is that of Substance. Substance is not a mere collection of properties, but is that underlying element to which those properties adhere. It is that which is constant in a process of change. If there were nothing which remained unchanged within a substance, we would be dealing with separate and distinct objects and could no longer characterize what takes place as change. "If a piece of wax is warmed, it goes through a series of changes, but continues to be the same piece of wax. Even if all its properties are changed, the piece of wax, of which these different properties are the properties, nonetheless remains one and the same piece of wax. What continues to be the same are not the properties themselves but that of which they are the properties, namely the *substratum*."¹⁶

The category of Causality, second under Relation, is schematized by a succession of events such that each occurring state is conditioned by some previous state according to a rule and in turn it itself conditions the state which follows upon it, also according to a rule.

Finally under Relation we find Community. The important element in the schematized category of Community is *interaction*. That in a disjunctive judgment like, "Either 'A' has some property 'B' or 'C' has some property 'D'," any changes in 'A' have their cause in 'C' and likewise any changes in 'C' have their cause in 'A'.

For Modality we start with Possibility-Impossibility. As a schematized category we are dealing with the question of empirical possibility. We are looking for that which satisfies the conditions of experience, i.e. conforms to our cognitive apparatus. We are not here concerned with logical possibility and the law of non-contradiction. Zeno for instance presents those paradoxes which are logically impossible and yet empirically possible.

In the schematized category of Existence we are dealing only with that which is actually found to exist as an object of experience. An object ceases to be mere possibility

¹⁶Hahn, Robert, "The Schematism" (Philosophy 468A handout) Southern Illinois University, 1998

and becomes actual only when it at some point is established experientially as an object of one's intuition.

The final schematized category is Necessity. That which belongs to this category is any thing which actually exists as an object of experience at all times, rather than at this or that particular time.

4. In the Analogies of Experience Kant wishes to demonstrate that "experience is only possible through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions."¹⁷ The goal of the first analogy is the *Principle of Permanence of Substance*. Every appearance is conditioned by time, and therefore only in time may succession or coexistence be represented. Time itself being an *a priori* condition cannot be perceived, so the substratum representing time in general must be found in the objects of perception. The object itself is, then, that which is permanent in appearances and that which changes is only a determination of that object. "All existence and all change in time have thus to be viewed as simply a mode of the existence of that which remains and persists."¹⁸ A "mere" succession of perceptions does not therefore qualify as an *event*. An event must be interpreted as a change in the object. This is necessary to give the determination of time-relations an objective order. It is important that we realize the distinction between changes in an object and mere succession of perceptions. This distinction is necessary to draw upon in the Second Analogy and is the only way to differentiate between subjective and objective temporal relations on which the unity of experience depends.

In the Second Analogy Kant asserts that "All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect."¹⁹ He observes that appearances follow one another sequentially in such a manner that at one point in time there may be a certain predicate attached to a subject and at some other point the opposite predicate may be attached to that same subject. Since he has stated in the First Analogy that time cannot in itself be perceived, it follows that the ordering of events in time, one state of things occurring at an earlier or later point in time than another state, cannot be empirically determined by relation to it. Nor is the objective relation of appearances following upon one another to be determined through the mere order of our perceptions. Again, there must be some criteria which is both objective and empirical in order that we can

¹⁷Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.208

¹⁸Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.214

¹⁹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.218

distinguish between objective and subjective temporal relations. Kant gives as an illustration the example of a house. We might just as easily look at the house from left first and then to right as the opposite. Just because I perceive one side of the house before I perceive the other does not mean the left side is caused by the right. That is an example of mere order of perceptions and does not imply causality. However, his example of a boat moving downstream is an example of an objective succession. We must first see the boat up stream and following that we see the boat downstream. In this way he arrives at a necessary order of our perceptions as an adequate basis for time-order. It is empirical because it finds expression in our perceptual experience and it is objective because it allows us to distinguish between a “perception of succession” and a “succession of perceptions.” We cannot ascribe this succession to an object except when there is some underlying rule that forces us to observe the order of perceptions in the particular way that we do, and not any other order. Hence if the order of perceptions is necessary, then the order of change in the object perceived is causally determined, and the very experience in which we observe these concepts is itself only possible through their existence; causal determination is a necessary condition of experience. “Our experience must be conceptualized in accordance with the category of causality if our experience is to be of objects ordered in time.”²⁰

E. Transcendental Dialectic

So far, Kant has written nearly three hundred pages of his *Critique of Pure Reason* and has yet to even mention the faculty of Reason outside of the Preface! What he has done up to this point is present the new project of metaphysics as he sees it and lay out the foundation for its critical structure.

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant proposes that empirical intuitions must conform to the formal conditions of our understanding, namely space and time. In the Analytic he focuses on how it is that we may have theoretical knowledge under these conditions and what the limits of such knowledge are. These two sections, taken together, are Kant’s critical system of epistemology. The understanding synthesizes pure intuitions and concepts with empirical intuitions, in accordance with the categories to arrive at

²⁰Hahn, Robert, “Second Analogy” (Philosophy 468a handout) Southern Illinois University, 1998

theoretical knowledge. However, when reason places demands upon the understanding by asking questions for which no sensible intuition is given, the categories are extended beyond their possible application and only illusion can follow. This is the problem that Kant takes up in the Transcendental Dialectic.

Reason is the faculty of inference, or that faculty which draws conclusions from premises. Since there are three kinds of conclusions in a syllogism, categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive, there are three types of illusions of reason or pseudo-rational inferences, Paralogisms (categorical), Antinomies (hypothetical) and the Ideal of Pure Reason (disjunctive).

1. The Paralogisms attack rational psychology in the form of Descartes' famous *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am). Descartes' theory of perception holds that things do actually exist that are external to us, though his method of doubting initially dismisses external objects. These external things cause us to have certain perceptions and these perceptions in turn imply their existence. This is a causal theory of perception.

A "person" here is considered to be a substance, the thinking thing (*res cogitans*). This existence as a thinking thing is ensured for Descartes through his process of doubting. Thinking things, however, are non-spacial entities and therefore different from extended things (*res extensa*). There is ample justification in Descartes' mind to separate the soul from the body and release it from the bounds of death and mortality.

A paralogism is an invalid or fallacious syllogism. Kant believes the fallacy in Descartes work to be in his use of the concept of "substance." Descartes held himself to have come to the conclusions that the soul is a simple unitary substance which is in relation to possible objects in space, and that this showed the soul to be the immaterial, incorruptible principle of life in animals.

The syllogistic fallacy committed here is of the fourth term (*quaternio terminorem*), since the same word "self" or "substance" has two different meanings, but only the critical philosophy reveals it. Kant calls this type of fallacy a *sophisma figurae dictionis*, which is a fallacy where what appears to be the middle term is used differently in the major and minor premise. This difference in use, Kant claims, creates a new, fourth, term which can only be identified by his transcendental philosophy.

The mistake lies in thinking that I can be conscious of my existence separate from the empirical conditions of experience and even from experience itself. This confuses the possible abstraction from an empirically determined existence with some sort of knowledge of a possible existence of a thinking self, separate from such empirical

determinations. This leads one to the erroneous conclusion that we may have knowledge of what is substantial in us as a transcendental subject, that is as a thing-in-itself.

Instead, Kant maintains that the self is not a substance at all, as an object of theoretical knowledge, but rather an activity of synthesis. This subject of 'I think' is nothing more than the unity of consciousness. Beyond this we can have no theoretical knowledge of a soul because to attempt to have such knowledge requires that we extend the categories of intuition to something which is not an object of any possible sense experience, and is thus the improper employment of the Understanding.

2. The Antinomies are designed to illustrate the two primary theses of Transcendental Idealism, in contrast to the principles of the rationalists (represented by the theses) and the empiricists (represented by the antitheses). These are noumenalism and phenomenalism. These theses deal with things in themselves as opposed to things as they appear. Things in themselves are not spacio-temporally determined and are not objects of our experience as sensible intuitors. Things as they appear are the spacio-temporal objects of experience, but are only collections of representations.

The first two antinomies, or mathematical antinomies, demonstrate Kant's transcendental idealism in terms of phenomenalism.

In the first antinomy the thesis states that, "The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space," and the antithesis states, "The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space."²¹ Each side argues by first assuming the truth of its opposition, and then showing the resulting state of events to be absurd; that is, each argues indirectly by a *reductio* proof.

The thesis argues that if there was no beginning in time then each moment would have to be the culmination of an infinite series of temporal units, since each moment in time follows upon another and is in turn followed upon by the next moment. However, an infinite series by definition cannot ever be completed. Therefore, the world must have had some beginning in time.

The antithesis argues that if the world were to have a beginning in time it would mean that preceding that beginning, there was a time in which there was nothing- an empty time. However, nothing can arise from an empty time because this time has no characteristic in it which would provide sufficient cause for a thing to come into being at

²¹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.396

that particular time as opposed to any other- *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Therefore, the world has no beginning in time.

As regards space, the thesis argues that if the world were not limited in space, it would require the completion of a successive synthesis of points, which would require an infinite amount of time to complete. Again, since an infinite series, by definition, can never be complete, the notion of the world as infinite in space is absurd. Therefore, the world must be within a finite degree of space.

The antithesis argues that if the world were finite in space it would then exist in an infinite amount of empty space. If this were true then the world would not only relate to objects in space but also to space itself. Yet such a relation is impossible in empty space because you relate the world, an absolute whole beyond which there is no intuition, to nothing; no object. Therefore the world is infinite and unlimited as regards extension in space.

The second antinomy asserts in the thesis that, "Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing anywhere exists save the simple or what is composed of the simple," while the antithesis contends that, "No composite thing in the world is made up of simple parts, and there nowhere exists in the world anything simple."

The thesis argues by assuming that there are not any simple indivisible parts of which composites were made. Substances would then be infinitely divisible until there exists nothing, like sand through one's fingers. Out of nothing, nothing may come, therefore there must exist simple parts of which all composites are made.

The antithesis holds that if there were simple parts of which composites were made, these parts must either be divisible or indivisible. If they are divisible, then they cannot, by definition, be simple. If they are not divisible, they must further be classified as extended or unextended. If they are not extended, then they are nothing, yet this is not possible since out of nothing, nothing comes. If they are extended, then they are by definition not indivisible and hence not simple. Therefore, there is no simple indivisible substance of which all composites are made.

Kant holds that these apparently contradictory statements (statements which always have the opposite truth value) are actually only contraries (statements which cannot both be true, but can both be false). He believes that there is a legitimate discrepancy which must be resolved and contends that the resolution lies not in the logic (as with the paralogisms), but in a false premise upon which both sides rest. This premise is that the world exists as a whole, in itself, completely independent of any sense perceptions.

What follows upon this recognition is that, if the world exists as a totality, independent of our perceptions, then it is both finite and infinite as regards space and time, and it is both finitely and infinitely divisible. These are self-contradictory statements and are, consequently, both false. It is in this way that the first two antinomies provide an indirect proof of Transcendental Idealism's phenomenalistic assertions.

The dynamical third and fourth antinomies are to provide Transcendental Idealism's noumenalistic assertions. The third antinomy states in the thesis that, "Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom." The antithesis states, "There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature."²²

Kant believes he has established the antithesis in the Second Analogy of the Transcendental Analytic, where he proves that "All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect."²³ The antithesis proceeds by arguing that transcendental freedom stands in direct conflict with the law of causality. If freedom exists, as the thesis maintains, then causality itself will have an absolute beginning, and that absolute beginning is the spontaneous act which set the causal series into effect. This beginning has no antecedent through which this act is determined according to fixed laws. Any beginning assumes this state of a not yet acting cause, and any dynamical beginning presupposes a state that does not follow from its preceding state and therefore has no causal connection to it. This is clearly in violation with the law of cause and effect. Moreover, if there is no law of the connection between cause and effect, the unity of experience is no longer possible. There can be no law of freedom to take its place either, because freedom, by its nature, cannot be determined in accordance with laws.

The thesis proceeds by arguing that if there is no law other than causality, as is maintained in the antithesis, each state of appearances is an effect of a previous state. That causal state, in turn, is then necessarily itself an effect of an even earlier state. For this to be the true state of events the series would go on *ad infinitum* and there would never be any first cause or absolute beginning by which the series could be complete. But for anything to take place within the law of causality, there must be a previous state that

²²Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.409

²³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.218

can be determined a priori to be sufficient to bring about some other state.²⁴ Therefore, the law of cause and effect, when taken universally, is self-contradictory, and this necessitates the idea of causality through freedom, the absolute spontaneity of a cause which follows upon natural laws, but does not arise out of them.

The transcendental analytic proved the truth of the antithesis, and Kant is unwilling to compromise on this point. Kant's Copernican turn showed that insofar as I have experience of anything as real, space and time are the basic conditions that characterize that experience; but they are not conditions of things in themselves (i.e., of noumena). The third antinomy arises when metaphysicians extend the forms of space and time to the conditions of things in themselves. This leads them to the conclusion that they are able to make judgments about those things—such as the absolute beginning of a series, the unconditioned condition—for which there will never be any sense impression. As a result they apply the categories to non-sensuous intuitions. This is an inappropriate demand of the understanding, and never results in theoretical knowledge.²⁵

The thesis in the fourth antinomy declares, "There belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary," and in the antithesis, "An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause."

The antithesis here asserts two possibilities if such an absolute being does, in fact, exist as part of the world: either there is a beginning in the series which is absolutely necessary or the series itself is without any beginning and, though conditioned in all its parts, is absolutely necessary and unconditioned as a whole. The first possibility is impossible because it is in conflict with the law governing the determination of appearances in time (discussed in the first antinomy) and the second is self-contradictory, since the existence of a series could not be necessary unless at least one of its parts were necessary.

If it is assumed by the antithesis that there exists some being as an absolutely necessary cause of the world, but existing outside of it, this being would need to begin to act to set

²⁴Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.410

²⁵Hergott and Shargell, "How does Kant's 'Copernican turn' solve the third antinomy?" *Summary of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Southern Illinois University, 1998) p.19

the wheels of causality rolling. However, the causality of that act would have to exist in time, and would therefore belong to the world, and is therefore self-contradictory.

The thesis maintains, on the other hand, that in the world there are contained a number of alterations. These alterations are conditioned by time and causality and each, under its conditions is thereby necessary. Each given condition implies an unbroken series of conditions all the way back to the unconditioned cause, which alone is unconditionally or absolutely necessary. Thus since alterations are effects of an absolutely necessary existence, and we experience such effects, that existence must be posited. Further, this being must belong to the sensible world because if this was not the case, then the highest condition of all alterations would derive its cause from something not belonging to the world. This is impossible, since the beginning of a temporal series can only be derived from that which precedes it in time.

Kant believes that the third and fourth antinomies demonstrates that the antitheses and the theses are not in themselves mutually exclusive. Rather, Kant has left open the possibility that the thesis in each of these may also be true. He contends that in the dynamical antinomies, no actual contradiction exists. This is the noumenal aspect of Transcendental Idealism which will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

3. The Transcendental Ideal of Pure Reason is to attain and comprehend the idea of a supreme being, God. This is the pseudo-rational pursuit of theology.

This idea of God is of a being which must, by it's supposed nature, exist independently of the conditions for the possibility of experience. It is responsible for the ultimate reality upon which all things depend, therefore it is considered to exist independently of our existence. Furthermore, God is a being whose existence cannot even be thought of in terms suggested by experience. Clearly, God as an object is well outside of the realm of any possible sensuous intuition, and therefore transcends the application of the categories of understanding.

Kant insists on Transcendental Idealism, a metaphysical theory that affirms the unknowability of things in themselves and, therefore, relegates knowledge to the purely subjective realm of appearances.²⁶He insists that appearances are representations only and that time and space are strictly forms of our sensible intuition and are not to be considered as things existing in themselves or as conditions of external objects as things

²⁶Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) p.3

in themselves.²⁷ We must then deny any possible theoretical knowledge of the existence or nature of God as illusory.

II. The Possibility of Practical Knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*

A. Freedom (Third Antinomy)

In the third Antinomy Kant introduces the possibility of transcendental freedom. The thesis states that “Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom.”²⁸ This particular statement is denied by Kant who refers back to the second analogy in the transcendental analytic which asserts the necessity that “all alterations take place in conformity within the law of the connection of cause and effect,”²⁹ as a condition for the possibility of the unity of experience into one consciousness.

It is specific elements of the thesis, however, that he disagrees with and finds unacceptable, not the concept of transcendental freedom itself. In particular, the thesis is attempting to show that the *appearances* of the world may be derived from some free causality. Kant insists, that anything belonging to the phenomenal world, the world of experience, must be viewed as a state which is conditioned by some previous state and is, in turn, itself conditioning the following state.

This distinction between phenomena (things as they appear) and noumena (things-in-themselves) is extremely significant for Kant in his resolution to the third antinomy. It is this very distinction that allows for the possibility of freedom when events that are subject to causal determination, if viewed solely as phenomena, are viewed, instead, as noumena. In this latter instance, it is possible for the noumenal events to manifest free causality.

²⁷Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.345

²⁸Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.409

²⁹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.218

The mere possibility that we may think of noumenal objects as having free causality, or having any predicate for that matter, is very different from having knowledge of these things. In fact, it is impossible to have theoretical knowledge of noumenal objects because they are not objects of possible experience. Nevertheless, Kant believes we may make certain claims about noumenal objects providing that we are given sufficient reason to do so. These claims would not be in conflict with any valid claims to theoretical knowledge, and could not be contradicted by any such claims, since they lie beyond all possible limits of theoretical knowledge. "Therefore while transcendental idealism insists that there can be no knowledge of any noumenal entities, it does so in a way that creates room for the thought of such entities and guarantees that propositions about them are not inconsistent with theoretical knowledge."³⁰

Kant has here placed his foot firmly in the door leaving open the possibility that transcendental freedom may exist. It is discovered when the category of causality is applied to noumena, which can never yield theoretical knowledge, but may however yield a different kind of knowledge: practical knowledge. However, the assertion that viewing certain events as determined by some sort of noumenal free causality is not inconsistent with the world view of transcendental idealism falls far short of giving us positive warrant within that system for doing so.

B. Soul (Paralogisms), God (Idea/Ideal)

The possibility for the immortality of the soul and the existence of God are important to mention here because they are later posited as postulates of pure practical reason. The difficulty in discussing them within the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, rests in the fact that the Paralogisms seem to suggest that there is no soul. While the existence of God is then considered to be possible, but unprovable from the perspective of theoretical knowledge (Fourth Antinomy, Idea/Ideal), when Kant finally asserts its reality, it is as the second postulate of pure practical reason, and the argument relies on the existence of the soul.

C. What Ought I to do in the Transcendental Doctrine of Methods?

³⁰Reath, Andrews, Introduction to the *Critique of Practical Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.xii

In the Transcendental Doctrine of Reason, Kant makes more clear his argument for practical knowledge. It is here, in the Canon of Pure Reason, that he explains more thoroughly what it is and why it is necessary.

He believes himself to have exhausted the possibilities for theoretical knowledge, and found nowhere in it the answers to those questions that reason insists upon asking. Unsatisfied that the answers just don't exist, he turns from the merely speculative employment of reason to the only other path remaining, namely, its *practical* employment.

First Kant wishes to remind the reader of the ultimate end of the employment of reason at all. This end concerns primarily three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. In the name of speculative reason alone, we should not have bothered to undertake the transcendental investigation since, in respect of reasons theoretical employment we should not be able to make much use of any discoveries in these matters. Even if the will is free, we must still regard our actions as phenomenally determined in accordance with the law of causal connection. Even if there exists some immortal soul, we would not be able to explain in theoretical terms the appearance of our present life or the nature of any future one. Even if God exists, we would still not be able to figure out thereby the ordering or disposition of the world in any particular, specific terms. These three objects of the ultimate ends of reason are ironically transcendent of any theoretical employment of it. We cannot have any theoretical knowledge of them, and so if reason has any interest in these propositions at all, which experience strongly suggests it does, it must be only a practical interest.

'The Practical' Kant defines as everything that is possible through freedom. Therefore to speak of the practical, one must first posit the existence of freedom, which we have no speculative grounds for doing. In this sense, reason's business is to determine all of our possible actions in respect of the one single end of attaining happiness. The laws that reason may determine in this field are practical or pragmatic, but reason cannot hope to supply laws that are pure and completely determined *a priori*. Such laws are moral laws, and these are what belong to the practical employment of reason. The question concerning us as far as we may be concerned with moral laws is, "If the will is free, what ought I to do?" or "What reason have I for choosing any one course of action over another?"

It is in this practical sense that Kant now wishes to speak of freedom. Namely in the sense that we appear to have the ability and even a necessity to make decisions consistently throughout the course of our lives. In choosing one course of action over another we employ a will. "A will which can be determined independently of sensuous impulses, and therefore through motives which are represented only by reason, is entitled *freewill (arbitrium liberum)*, and everything which is bound up with this will, whether as ground or as consequence, is entitled *practical*."³¹ Experience affirms this will in that we are able to overcome that which immediately acts upon our senses and conjure representations of that which is desirable in respect to our whole state. Since it is reason which provides these representations, one may accurately say that reason provides imperatives or *objective laws of freedom* which prescribe to us *what ought to happen*, although perhaps it never does, as opposed to *laws of nature* which simply relate to us *that which happens*. For since reason commands that such actions should take place, it must be possible for them to take place. The laws of freedom are therefore practical laws.

Whether reason itself is determined in respect of still other influences or whether that which we here entitle freedom is not actually, in relation to higher and more remote causes, just nature again does not concern us here in our present enterprise. Those are questions of theoretical knowledge, speculative questions, which can be left aside for the time being. Practical freedom itself is a cause in nature, that of reason in the determination of the will. Transcendental freedom, however, is contrary to the law of nature and so continues to remain a problem. There are now two questions remaining for the in the canon: Is there a God? and, Is there a future life?

Kant believes that pure reason, in attempting to escort us to ideas which reach to these ends must be met with in the practical sphere. It is from this standpoint of its practical interests that perhaps it can supply us with the answers it altogether refuses to supply in respect of its speculative interests. All of these interests of reason can be combined into three questions: 1.) What can I know? 2.) What ought I to do? 3.) What may I hope?

Kant modestly believes that he has exhausted the possibilities of speculative reason, at least in form, and thereby answered the first question. He therefore moves on to the next two.

³¹Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.633

Happiness is the singular satisfaction of all our desires. This provides his answer to the first of the remaining two questions of pure reason that concern its practical interest: *Do that through which thou becomest worthy to be happy.*³²

In regards to the last question, Kant maintains that just as the moral principles are necessary according to reason in its practical employment, it is necessary for its theoretical employment to assume that everyone has ground to hope for happiness in the measure in which he has rendered himself by his conduct worthy of it.

The system of morality is therefore inseparably bound up with that of happiness. Such an idea, however, of self-rewarding morality is only an idea, the carrying out of which rests on the condition that every single person in that system does what he ought. All participating beings act rationally and make decisions in accordance with the moral law, just as they should. This supposed necessity of the connection between the hope of happiness with the endeavor to render oneself worthy of such happiness cannot be known through reason alone. It is only in the ideal of some supreme original good that reason finds the grounds for this connection.

This is the grounds simultaneously for a moral world. Since we are constrained by reason to represent ourselves as belonging to such a world, and since the senses present us with nothing but the world of appearances, we are forced to assume that the moral world is a consequence of our conduct in the world of sense. However no such connection between worthiness and happiness is there exhibited. Therefore, we must posit the existence of a future world. "Thus God and a future life are two postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligation which that same reason imposes upon us."³³

Reason must assume this future life, together with a wise Ruler, in order to salvage moral laws as being anything other than empty figments of the brain. It is this connection that causes people to view moral laws as commands which connect *a priori* certain consequences to rules, thus creating a system of promises and threats.

It is therefore a person's moral disposition which conditions and makes possible that person's participation in happiness, the ultimate end of all desires. It is not, however, the prospect of happiness that makes possible the moral disposition.

³²Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.638

³³Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.639

Kant believes that a theology of this kind is advantageous to traditional theologies. His justification of this, however, is the reason why he was politely asked not to teach theology: "Neither in transcendental nor in natural theology, however far reason may carry us, do we find any considerable ground for assuming only some one single being which we should be justified in placing prior to all natural causes, and upon which we might make them in all respects dependent."³⁴

It is believed here by Kant that he has shown that pure reason, though only in its practical employment, has finally connected with its ultimate ends, namely the concept of a sole primordial being as the supreme good. This concept is not something which can be established or demonstrated, but can be thought only, and must be thought of as a postulate which is absolutely necessary, given the ultimate interests of reason.

There is a third and final section of the canon of pure reason, *Opining, Knowing, and Believing*, in which Kant attempts to draw a distinction between the three. To hold an opinion is to hold a judgment which is consciously insufficient, not only objectively, but subjectively as well. If one holds a judgment which is subjectively sufficient and yet takes it to be objectively sufficient as well, this is believing. We may be said to know something, however, only when we hold a judgment which is sufficiently shown to be true both subjectively and objectively.

Kant is trying here to demonstrate why his holdings about theology are not merely his beliefs, but it is somehow required that everyone hold these beliefs. He claims that once an end is accepted, the conditions for attaining it must also be, at least hypothetically, necessary. This necessity is only subjectively sufficient if he knows of no other way to attain this end. The necessity is absolutely sufficient, however, if he knows that under no possible conditions can anyone else have knowledge of another means for attaining that end. It is the difference between a merely contingent belief and a necessary belief.

There are some instances where contingent belief is enough. This is illustrated in the first Critique by the example of a doctor who, upon examining a patient in danger, can find no certain diagnosis, but believes it to be a case of phthisis. A contingent belief of this kind, which is yet used as the ground for the actual employment of means to certain actions is called pragmatic belief. The value or degree of this belief is found through betting, and this seems to be precisely what Kant thinks we are doing each time we

³⁴Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.641

exercise our wills. "Sometimes it turns out that [one] has a conviction which can be estimated at a value of one ducat, but not of ten. For [one] is very willing to venture one ducat, but when it is a question of ten he becomes aware, as he had not previously been, that it may very well be that he is in error. If we represent ourselves as staking the happiness of our whole life, the triumphant tone of our judgment is greatly abated."³⁵

The judgments with which practical knowledge concerns itself are of a specific type that there is no existing means of arriving at certainty in these matters. We may entitle beliefs of this kind to be doctrinal beliefs. Any doctrine of the existence of God is precisely this sort of doctrinal belief. Kant is able to make this assertion, however, because he knows of no other condition under which he may be guided in the investigation of nature except if there is some supreme intelligence which has ordered everything according to the wisest ends. Therefore, this belief is not strictly practical, but doctrinal, as is the belief in the future life of the human soul. He is here required not to assume the concepts of a God or future life, but only the existence of such.

I feel compelled before going on to give one more example of such a doctrinal belief held by Kant: "I should be ready to stake my all on the contention - were it possible by means of any experience to settle the question - that at least one of the planets which we see is inhabited. Hence I say that it is not merely opinion, but a strong belief, on the correctness of which I should be prepared to run great risks, that other worlds are inhabited."³⁶ Make of this what you will.

Moral belief is something quite different. It is a necessary belief and requires necessarily that I must conform to the moral law. The end is clearly established and accepted and there is only one possible condition under which this end can have practical validity by connecting with all other ends: that there be a God and a future world. For Kant there is also a complete certainty that no other person may have any knowledge of some other conditions which would lead to the same unity of ends under the moral law. From this he derives his belief in a God and future life, this conviction being not logical, but moral. While no one can assert that he knows there is a God and future life, at least no one may pretend that there is any certainty that there is no such being and no such life. Kant, however, is so certain that he states, "Nothing can shake this belief, since my moral principles would thereby be themselves overthrown, and I cannot disclaim them without

³⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.648

³⁶Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.648

becoming abhorrent in my own eyes.”³⁷ Further, to Kant, the only point that may even seem questionable is the basing of this rational belief on the assumption of moral sentiments.

III. The Possibility of Practical Knowledge in the *Critique of Practical Reason*

A. Freedom

“Freedom and unconditional practical law reciprocally imply each other.”³⁸ However it is only through consciousness of the moral law that we may become conscious of our freedom. In order to establish the existence of freedom, Kant must first establish the moral law. The question here becomes, “Does reason, by itself, provide grounds sufficient to determine the will?” and it becomes “Incumbent upon the *Critique of Practical Reason* to prevent empirically conditioned reason from presuming that it, alone and exclusively, furnishes the determining ground of the will.”³⁹ To answer this question it is sufficient to show that reason by itself and free of empirical determinations can generate principles to serve as practical laws.

Kant defines practical principles as those propositions that motivate one to act. A maxim is any such principle or rule of conduct. When the conditions for action are regarded as holding only for one’s own will, the principles involved are subjective. If, however, the conditions may be regarded as holding for the will of all rational beings, the principles are more than just subjective maxims, they are objective or practical *laws*.

Any practical principles which presuppose some matter or object of desire as the determining ground of the will are mere maxims. They are all empirically determined and

³⁷Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.650

³⁸Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. by Mary Gregor (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.26

³⁹Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.12

can not yield objective practical laws. The determining ground of the will is the reason or principle on which one acts. It is impossible to determine whether a person has reason to act on a principle of this sort without having empirical information about that person's individual desires and circumstances. The validity of a practical law, however, must be grounded in the basic and universal features of reason. They cannot be dependent on conditions and features which distinguish one individual from another.

Further, all material principles of this sort may be categorized under a general principle of self-love or concern for one's own happiness. "What Kant does here is to make explicit a structural feature shared by material principles. In acting on such a principle, one takes the fact that the object offers prospective satisfaction as a reason for acting, and one decides how to act by asking how much satisfaction it offers."⁴⁰ The satisfaction of desire-based interests is favorable, but only when certain moral conditions are met.

We come upon practical laws only when we abstract the matter of a principle as a potential reason for action and we are left with its form. Thus, only if a principle is able to determine the will in virtue of its form alone, may it properly be called a practical law. Whether a principle has the form of law determines whether there is sufficient reason to act on it, and if a principle does not have the form of law there is sufficient reason to refrain from acting on it. The form of law is determined by whether one is able to universalize a given principle for action and still maintain that the action is commendable. If this principle for action has the form of law, the action in question thus becomes not only permissible, but a moral obligation. Such a system holds that there are moral absolutes and that one discovers what they are by determining whether a principle or rule for action has a universalized form of law.

The mere form of a law, void of any substance, is not an object of sensible intuition; it can be represented by reason alone. It, therefore, does not belong with the world of appearances. The representation of the form of law as the determining ground of the will is, therefore, distinct from all empirically determined events which conform to the natural law of the connection of cause and effect. Such events must themselves be determined by appearances. However, if no determining ground other than a principle's form can serve as law, such a will is independent of the natural law governing appearances and their relationships to one another, the law of causality. This independence is transcendental

⁴⁰Reath, Introduction to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.xxi

freedom. All actions following from the principle of one's own happiness, where one acts in accordance with one's desire-based interests, are ultimately traceable to the empirical conditions that produced those desires. If one is able to act on a principle which determines whether a maxim has the form of law, regardless of the content, object, or matter of the action, one can act independently of empirical conditions, and thus conforms to the definitions of transcendental freedom.

This will is free from the causal chain, but is not free to do whatever it pleases. It is only free to act in accordance with the moral law. Even a free will must act on some sort of principle. Otherwise it would display simply random, arbitrary acts which can hardly be described as volitional. "A free will, as independent of empirical conditions, must nevertheless be determinable."⁴¹ The principle on which a free will acts is that of taking the prescriptive form of a practical law as sufficient reason for action.

We thus come to the Fundamental Law of Pure Practical Reason, the Categorical Imperative: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law."⁴² We are directly aware of this moral law and its authority rest in the fact that it is rooted in ordinary thought and experience. Kant calls this a fact of reason. The fact that there are practical laws shows that reason can indeed provide sufficient determining grounds for the will without submitting to any authority external to it. Moreover, we know that we can act in accordance with the moral law simply because we have a feeling that we ought to.

As a matter of moral blameworthiness, however, Kant must make it clear that this capacity to act independently of empirical conditions underlies every action. Even if we do not choose to act morally, we could have; we had the freedom to act in accordance with the moral law. This ability to act in accordance with moral law must be omnipresent, otherwise there would be a need for some way to account for when and why we are able to exercise free, non-empirically determined, volition in some instances, but not in others. We exercise freedom with every decision. If this were not the case, we would only be responsible for those actions which conform to the moral law and could not be held responsible for acts based on our own interests or non-moral motives.

⁴¹Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.26

⁴²Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.28

Kant's demonstration of transcendental freedom affords it "objective and, though only practical, undoubted reality."⁴³ Yet he insists that it does not extend our theoretical knowledge. In order to do this he must find a rational basis his claim that is somehow different than the basis used for knowledge claims. The rational grounds that he claims are that freedom is revealed and proved by the law of practical reason. But since moral consciousness is not a spacio-temporal intuition, it has no theoretical basis, and is therefore fundamentally different than that sort of knowledge claim.

Moral law and freedom therefore do imply each other, but it is only through our recognition of moral consciousness that we may also become aware of freedom. "Morality first discloses to us the concept of freedom. One would never have ventured to introduce freedom into science had not the moral law, and with it practical reason, come in and forced this concept upon us."⁴⁴ Thus, "the moral law is the basic principle [of pure practical reason], and transcendental freedom is the kind of causality exercised by agents whom it can motivate."⁴⁵

B. Antinomy

The Antinomy of Practical Reason investigates the difficulty of the highest good (summum bonum). There are two subordinate parts of the highest good, the supreme good (bonum supremum) and the complete good (bonum consummatum). The supreme good is morality while the complete good is happiness. In the highest good which is practical for us, virtue and happiness are thought of as necessarily combined.

This relationship must either be analytic or synthetic. If it were analytic, the two would reciprocally imply each other. However, since it has been everyone's experience to know people who are happy, but not virtuous, and virtuous, but not happy, Kant eliminates the possibility of the relation being analytic. It must be synthetic. Since it is a synthetic relation and it concerns a practical good, or one brought about through action, happiness and virtue must also be thought of as connected by cause and effect. Therefore, either the desire for happiness causes virtue or moral maxims having the form of law are the causes of happiness.

⁴³Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.43

⁴⁴Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.27

⁴⁵Reath, Introduction to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.xxiv

Maxims which put the determining ground of the will in the desire for one's own happiness can not be moral. They are empirically conditioned, and thus simply take place within the natural law of the connection of cause and effect. Therefore, the first possibility is impossible. However, virtue cannot be the cause of happiness, either. "Any practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as a result of the determination of the will, does not depend upon the moral dispositions of the will but upon knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical ability to use them for one's purposes."⁴⁶ It follows that no necessary connection of happiness with virtue in the world can be expected.

The resolution to this antinomy, similar to the third and fourth antinomies from the Critique of Pure Reason, rests in the distinction between phenomena and noumena. While the first proposition, that the desire for happiness can cause a determining ground for moral disposition is absolutely false. That a virtuous disposition necessarily produces happiness, however, is only conditionally false. It is false if the only existence of a rational being is existence in the sensible world. Since we are justified in considering our existence also as noumena, it is possible, even necessary that there be a connection between morality of disposition and happiness. Acting in accordance with the moral law provides us with a purely intellectual determining ground of causality in the sensible world. "The supreme good (as the first condition of the highest good) is morality, whereas happiness constitutes its second element but in such a way that it is only the morally conditioned yet necessary result of the former."⁴⁷

Kant believes himself to have proven that there must be a connection between the consciousness of morality and the expectation of happiness in proportion to it. However, the problem still exists that happiness simply does not appear to be divvied out in proportion to virtue in the world. Thus he proposes the existence of a soul, so that you can be certain you will be around long enough to receive the happiness you deserve, and the existence of God as the moral author of the universe devising the natural laws in just such a way as is appropriate to ensure that happiness is granted in proportion to virtue. These are the two postulates of practical reason.

C. Soul (Immortality)

⁴⁶Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.95

⁴⁷Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.100



A will determined in accordance with the moral law is necessarily interested in the production of the highest good in the world. The condition of the highest good, however, is complete conformity to the moral law, which is a level of perfection unattainable in rational beings of the sensible world, or holiness. Since the highest good must remain the goal of a moralistically determined will, it is necessary to assume endless progress toward such conformity as the real object of our will.

Endless progress is possible only through endless existence. The highest good is therefore only possible if we assume the immortality of the soul. This immortality is thus termed a postulate of pure practical reason. It is a necessary condition of the practical possibility of the highest good, and for that reason is bound up with the moral law.

D. God

As moral and rational beings we have a responsibility to do all that we can to bring about the highest good in the world. While the possibility of the highest good is consistent with the laws of nature, our experience offers no evidence that such a state is achievable. Since we cannot rationally and in good faith adopt an end that we do not believe is a real possibility, and yet morality demands a duty to try to promote such a state, an apparent contradiction arises.

We must therefore devise some way in order that we may conceive of the highest good as a possibility. The only way Kant believes this can be done is by assuming the existence of God as a moral author of the universe who has arranged the laws of nature in just such a way that they are conducive to moral ends. Kant goes much farther than simply asserting that we are justified in postulating the existence of God. He claims that “it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God.”⁴⁸

The arguments for the immortality of the soul and existence of God here also do not extend our theoretical knowledge. This means that they may not be used to explain any events or occurrences in nature. Also, since the grounds for these assumptions is the possibility of the highest good in the world as an achievable end, we may assert only what is necessary to render the highest good conceivable. Finally, since there is no sense impression given in any intuition for these postulates, we are unable to make claims

⁴⁸Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.105

intended to describe or determine their nature in any specific way. We can posit their existence, but we still cannot reasonably assert anything about their nature.

IV. Critique of System

A. Is Kant's Approach Consistent?

The short answer is: no. There are a few very important points in the Critique of Pure Reason that Kant must maintain if his critical system is to succeed. These include the distinction between phenomena and noumena, time and space as forms of perception alone, and the necessity of the connection of cause and effect in the phenomenal world.

In the Critique of Practical Reason, however, Kant argues for a causality through noumena-willing. Everything that we do in the world of sensibility is empirically conditioned and on that account must take place in accordance with the natural law of cause and effect. If we act, however, not based on any empirical intuition, but rather on a moral law originating from within reason itself, we are not subjecting our will to any external force and therefore escape the causal nexus. In this case we are acting as noumena. This is how we are able to act freely as an unconditioned cause. The only non-empirical, and therefore free, motive for action is the moral law, which "even the most common understanding can distinguish."⁴⁹

Time and space are real only empirically, insofar as they are the necessary conditions of any external or internal (time only) object of intuition. All appearances are conditioned by space and time. But they are only transcendently ideal. They are filters which we bring to all perceptions, and we impose them upon the noumenal entity which we perceive.

⁴⁹Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p.25

Space and time do not exist in the objects-in-themselves. They cannot exist in objects as noumena because, if they did, subjects would admit of impossible predicates (Zeno's paradoxes would find no resolution).

This creates an irresolvable problem for Kant's system. He asserts that all alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect. This is perfectly acceptable in a phenomenal world, but it becomes impossible to impute causality to noumena. The connection between a cause and effect is defined, among other things, by their relation to each other in time. For noumena to partake in a causal relationship, either as the cause or the effect, would necessitate its existence in time. Ironically, while Kant insists that we cannot have any theoretical knowledge of noumena, the one thing he concedes we must know is that it is not spacio-temporal.

The very idea of causality as necessary for the unity of consciousness seems incorrect to begin with. Even within the context of Kant's system it seems more probable that causality is empirically real, but transcendently ideal, much like space and time.

Kant argues that in order to have a unity of experience, all alterations must take place in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect. It appears to me, however, that the unity of experience is simply a component of our cognitive apparatus we therefore impose an apparent causality upon the world around us, again similar to the way Kant believes we impose space and time onto the world around us.

I call this idea "blind spot" causality. This sort of causality is named for an experiment I once did to find the blind spot in my eye. The blind spot occurs when an image, instead of being projected onto the retina, falls directly on the optic nerve. I placed an "X" and an "O" about an inch apart on my hand. Next, I held my hand at my nose and, closing my left eye, I focused on the image on the left side while slowly bringing my hand away from my face. When I reached my blind spot, the image seemed to disappear. What actually happened was that my brain, having no sense data for the area of my hand containing that image, took the surrounding area and made it collapse onto the blind spot. The same type of situation occurs when one tries to pin-point the moment they fall asleep. It cannot be done. When you wake, the last thing that you remember is falling asleep (or the quasi-conscious state of dreaming). A span of time passed, but your mind simply connected the various conscious states to create a unity. The same sort of unity the Kant is trying to account for.

B. Is Kant's System Adequate?



Again, the short answer: no. The first inadequacy is, of course, the internal inconsistencies which I have just pointed out. There are further deficiencies, however.

In the transcendental doctrine of method, Kant draws a distinction between opining, believing and knowing. An opinion is a judgment which is consciously insufficient, objectively and subjectively. If one takes a subjectively sufficient judgment to be objectively sufficient as well, it is believing. It may only be considered knowing when a judgment is shown to be sufficient both subjectively and objectively.

Once an end is accepted, the conditions for attaining it must also be, at least hypothetically, necessary. This necessity is only subjectively sufficient if he knows of no other way to attain this end. Kant believes the conditions for fulfilling the end are absolutely sufficient, however, if he knows that under no possible conditions can there be another means for attaining that end. It is the difference between a merely contingent belief and a necessary belief. The judgments with which practical knowledge concerns itself are of a specific type that there is no existing means of arriving at certainty in these matters.

Kant proposes an end and what he believes is the only possible means of attaining that end, but he gives no proof of the end itself. If the existence of the means for an end are necessary based only on the existence of the end itself, then Kant has perhaps given a sufficient argument for why *his* theology should be accepted, but has not proven the argument for why theology itself should be accepted, but to save himself from becoming “abhorrent” in his own eyes.

Also, still in the transcendental doctrine of method, Kant defines practical as all that which is possible through freedom. Yet if freedom is only to be “proven” in the practical sphere of reason, Kant is committing the fallacy of *petitio principii*, or begging the question. While it certainly seems like a worthy undertaking to try and determine such practical principles (since it at least appears as though we exercise freedom), anything which is concluded must be suspect, and not taken for knowledge in any absolute sense.

Reason simply cannot hope to supply laws that are pure and determined completely *a priori*. If the world of sensible appearances, the one in which we live, is completely phenomenally determined, where is there room for freedom, and, hence, morality? Reason itself may be determined in respect of still other influences, and that which Kant entitles freedom may actually be just the causation again in relation to higher and more

remote causes. Practical freedom is itself a cause in nature, that of reason in the determination of the will.

“The greatest and perhaps sole use of all philosophy of pure reason is therefore only negative; since it serves not as an organon for the extension but as a discipline for the limitation of pure reason, and, instead of discovering truth, has only the modest merit of guarding against error.

“There must, however, be some source of positive modes of knowledge which belong to the domain of pure reason, and which, it may be, give occasion to error solely owing to misunderstanding, while yet in actual fact they form the goal towards which reason is directing its efforts. How else can we account for our inextinguishable desire to find firm footing somewhere beyond the limits of experience?”⁵⁰

This passage from the opening of the Canon of Pure Reason demonstrates how desperately Kant is trying to allow for practical knowledge. After hundreds of pages of careful consideration and insight into our cognitive resources, checking the limits of what we may claim to know, he now makes the claim that there must be more, simply because we want to know more. After all the care that he took to ensure certainty in our knowledge claims, he admits that we will be prone to error in our practical pursuits, but that this is the only way in which we may satisfy reason.

⁵⁰Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.629