

# Critique of Pure Reason the Dialectic

Immanuel Kant

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Each four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions will be reported between square brackets in normal-sized type. This version follows (B) the second edition of the *Critique*, though it also includes the (A) first-edition version of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason. Undecorated marginal numerals refer to page-numbers in B; ones with an 'A' in front refer to A, and are given only for passages that don't also occur in B. The likes of ..356 in the margin mean that B356 (or whatever) started during the immediately preceding passage that has been omitted or only described between square brackets. These marginal numerals can help you to connect this version with other translations, with the original German, and with references in the secondary literature. Cross-references to other parts of this work include the word 'page(s)', and refer to numbers at the top-right corner of each page.—The Transcendental logic divides into the Transcendental analytic, which started on page 45, and the Transcendental dialectic, which starts here.

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>155</b>
1. Transcendental illusion . . . . .	155
2. Pure reason as the seat of transcendental illusion . . . . .	157
<b>Book 1: The concepts of pure reason</b>	<b>163</b>
1. The ideas in general . . . . .	163
2. The transcendental ideas . . . . .	166
3. System of the transcendental ideas . . . . .	171
<b>Book 2: The dialectical inferences of pure reason</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Chapter I, The paralogisms of pure reason (first edition)</b>	<b>175</b>
First paralogism: Substantiality . . . . .	178
Second paralogism: Simplicity . . . . .	179
Third paralogism: Personhood . . . . .	182
Fourth paralogism: ideality (in regard to outer relation) . . . . .	184
The paralogisms of pure reason (second edition) . . . . .	197
<b>Chapter 2: The antinomy of pure reason</b>	<b>206</b>
1. System of cosmological ideas . . . . .	207
2. Antithetic of pure reason . . . . .	211
First antinomy . . . . .	213
Second antinomy . . . . .	216
Third antinomy . . . . .	219
Fourth antinomy . . . . .	222
3. What's at stake for reason in these conflicts . . . . .	225
4. The transcendental problems of pure reason, considered as downright <i>having</i> to be soluble . . . . .	230
5. A sceptical look at the cosmological questions raised by the four transcendental ideas . . . . .	233
6. Transcendental idealism as the key to sorting out the cosmological dialectic . . . . .	235
7. Critical solution of reason's cosmological conflict with itself . . . . .	238
8. Applying the regulative principle of pure reason to the cosmological ideas . . . . .	242
9. Putting the regulative principle of reason to work empirically, in connection with the cosmological ideas . . . . .	244

<b>Chapter 3: The ideal of pure reason</b>	<b>263</b>
1. The ideal in general . . . . .	263
2. The transcendental ideal . . . . .	264
3. Speculative reason's arguments for the existence of a supreme being . . . . .	269
4. There can't be a successful ontological argument for the existence of God . . . . .	272
5. There can't be a successful cosmological argument for the existence of God . . . . .	276
6. There can't be a successful physico-theological argument for the existence of God . . . . .	283
7. Critique of all theology based on speculative principles of reason . . . . .	287
<b>Appendix to the transcendental dialectic</b>	<b>292</b>
1. The regulative use of the ideas of pure reason . . . . .	292
2. The final purpose of the natural dialectic of human reason . . . . .	302

## Introduction

### 1. Transcendental illusion

..349 [Kant is about to warn us not to think that a 'logic of illusion' is a 'doctrine of probability'. The warning looks more apt in German than it does in English. The word standardly translated as 'illusion' is **Schein**, cognate to the verb *scheinen* = 'seem'. And the German for 'probability' is *Wahrscheinlichkeit* = 'true-seemingness'.] I have already characterized dialectic in general as a *logic of illusion* [see page 45]. I should head off right away two possible misunderstandings of that. **(1)** I don't mean that it's a doctrine of *probability*. For probability is truth. It's admittedly truth that is known on insufficient grounds, so that the knowledge of it is imperfect; but that doesn't mean that it is *deceptive*; so probability theory belongs not here in the dialectic but in the analytic part of logic. [A reminder: in this version, 'know' translates *erkennen*, which doesn't imply anything of the sort 'known for sure' or 'known through overwhelming evidence'; see the note on pages 2-3.] **(2)** It's even more wrong to identify *illusion* with *appearance*. The essence of *illusion* is that it leads to *error*, so the concept of illusion belongs only in contexts where 'true' and 'false' are in play. Now, there's no work for true/false to do in connection with •intuitions, as distinct from •judgments that are made on the basis of intuitions. (That's why it is right to say that the senses don't err—not because they always judge correctly but because they don't judge at all!) The domain of operation of the concepts of truth/falsity/ error/illusion is that of the *judgment*—that is, the relation of the object to our understanding. A representation of the senses never involves error, because it never makes any judgment whatsoever; and there is no error, either, in any item of knowledge that completely accords with the laws of understanding—a natural force can't deviate from its own laws unless it is

influenced from outside itself. . . . But the senses and the understanding are our only sources of knowledge; so error must be brought about by the understanding's being influenced from outside itself—specifically, by the unobserved influence of sensibility on the understanding. What happens is that the subjective grounds of the judgment join forces with the objective grounds, making the objective grounds deviate from their true function.<sup>1</sup> Analogously, a moving body would keep moving for ever along the same straight line if nothing interfered with it, but it swerves away from that line if another force acts on it in a different direction. To distinguish the proper action of the understanding from the external force that is mixed in with it, we have to regard its erroneous judgment as the diagonal between two forces—forces that push the judgment in different directions that enclose an angle (so to speak)—and to break this composite action down into the simple actions of the understanding and of the sensibility. In the case of pure *a priori* judgments this task is performed by transcendental reflection, through which, as I have already shown [see the explanation on page 144], every representation is given its place in the corresponding faculty of knowledge, so that the understanding's influence can be distinguished from that of sensibility.

I'm not concerned here with empirical illusions (e.g. optical illusions) that occur in the empirical use of rules of understanding that are otherwise correct, and through which the faculty of judgment is misled by the influence of imagination. My topic is *transcendental illusion*, which exerts its influence on principles that aren't even meant for use in experience

<sup>1</sup> When sensibility is subordinated to understanding, as providing the understanding with something to work on, it is the source of real items of knowledge. But when that same sensibility influences how the understanding works and dictates the judgments that it makes, it's the basis of error.

(if they were, we would at least have a criterion of their correctness). Transcendental illusion defies all the warnings of criticism and sweeps us out beyond the empirical use of categories and fobs us off with a merely deceptive extension of *pure understanding*. I shall label as *immanent* any principles that are usable only within the limits of possible experience, and I'll label as *transcendent* any principles that profess to go beyond these limits. ['Immanent' comes from Latin meaning 'remain inside', and 'transcendent' comes from Latin meaning 'climb over'.] Don't confuse *transcendent* with *transcendental*—they are not equivalent terms. On the one hand we have:

- the *transcendental* use or misuse of the categories, which is merely an error of the faculty of judgment when it isn't properly reined in by criticism, so that it doesn't pay enough heed to the boundary of the territory in which (the *only* territory in which) pure understanding is allowed to run free.

353 I said 'use or misuse', but in fact it is always a misuse. The principles of pure understanding, which I have expounded in the *Analytic of Principles* [pages 89–154], are for empirical use only, and not for transcendental use, i.e. use extending beyond the limits of experience. In contrast to that we have

- transcendent* principles—actual principles that encourage us to tear down all those boundary-fences, step across them, and claim an entirely new domain that recognises no limits of demarcation.

If my critique can succeed in exposing the illusion in these alleged principles, then the principles that are for merely empirical use can be set off against the others by being called *immanent* principles of pure understanding.

- Logical illusion—the illusion that a formally invalid argument is valid—is a mere imitation of the form of reason, and it happens only when we don't attend carefully enough to the

•relevant logical rule. When we look more carefully at the given case, the illusion—*click!*—vanishes. •Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, persists even after it has been detected and clearly revealed as invalid by transcendental criticism; an example of this is the illusion in the proposition: *The world must have a beginning in time*. [Kant will return to this on page 213. •In this version, 'criticism' = 'critique'. A note on page 12 explains the choice of which word to use in a given context.] The cause of this kind of illusion is the fact that certain basic •rules and maxims that tell us how to use our reason (subjectively regarded as a faculty of human knowledge) have all the appearance of being •objective principles. •That is, rules that really mean things of the form 'When engaged in cognitive activities, do X' have the appearance of being of the form 'The real world is Y'. It's not just that they are really subjective yet appear to be objective; but also they are really advice or commands, yet they appear to be informative propositions. Some ways of connecting our concepts are advantageous to the understanding, and are •in that sense •*subjectively necessary for us*, and we see these as *objectively necessary for the world*, i.e. as statements about what things must be like in themselves. This is an *illusion* that can no more be prevented than. . . an astronomer can prevent the moon from appearing larger as it rises, even though he knows that it isn't really.

354

So the transcendental dialectic will content itself with exposing the illusion of transcendent judgments, while also keeping us from being deceived by it. It can't make the illusion actually disappear (as logical illusion does), because what we have here is a •*natural* and inevitable illusion, trading on subjective principles that it foists on us as objective; whereas logical dialectic in exposing deceptive inferences has to deal merely with a failure to follow the rules—i.e. with an illusion •*artificially* created by something imitating

a valid inference. So there we have it: there's a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason. It's not something that a bungler might get tangled in through ignorance, or something that a sophist has contrived so as to confuse thinking people. Rather, it is inseparable from human reason; even after its deceptiveness has been exposed, it will go on playing tricks with reason, continually tricking it into momentary aberrations that have to be corrected over and over again.

## 2. Pure reason as the seat of transcendental illusion

### A. Reason in general

All our knowledge starts with the •senses, moves up from there to the •understanding, and ends with •reason—our highest faculty—so that it can work up the materials provided by intuition, bringing them under the highest unity of thought. As I set myself to explain this highest cognitive faculty, I find myself in some difficulty. Like the understanding, reason can be used **(1)** in a merely *formal* (i.e. logical) manner, in which it abstracts from all content of knowledge. But reason also has **(2)** a *real* use, because it contains within itself the source of certain concepts and principles that it doesn't borrow either from the senses or from the understanding. For a long time now logicians have defined our ability to use reason in the **(1)** formal way as our ability or faculty for making mediate inferences. .i.e. for drawing conclusions from two or more premises;. . .but this doesn't throw any light on the **(2)** other use of reason, in which reason itself gives birth to concepts.

[Kant's next two sentences are hard to understand unless one knows what is to come later. The present version of this paragraph is *much*

longer than the original, but adds nothing to what he meant.]

We are faced, then, with a division of reason into **(1)** reason-used-logically and **(2)** reason-used-transcendentally, and now we have to hunt for a higher concept of reason that has **(1)** and **(2)** as special cases of it—i.e. the more general concept of *reason* that is an ingredient in both of the more specific concepts of **(1)** and **(2)**. (This is the 'difficulty' to which I have referred.) To characterize the higher or most general concept of reason, we need to assemble a table or chart setting out all the concepts that fall under it; and a clue to doing that is provided by what we found with the faculty of understanding. That too has both logical and transcendental uses, and it turned out that the logical uses provide the key to the whole story of the understanding, including its transcendental part. Just think back or look back to the way we moved from •the table of judgment-kinds [page 49] to •the table of categories [page 52] and from that to •the table of principles of pure understanding [page 99]. Well, I shall show that a disciplined account of the basic logical ways in which reason can be used will point to an over-all account of the nature and shape of reason as a whole—the genealogical tree of the concepts of reason. In doing this I'll be taking reason to be the faculty of *principles*. (This is in contrast to the understanding, which I have been treating as the faculty of *rules*. I have sometimes spoken of 'principles of the understanding'; I'll explain that shortly.)

[We are about to encounter talk about syllogisms. Any argument with the form of this:

- (1)** Some bullies are cowards,
- (2)** All cowards are depressed, therefore
- (3)** Some bullies are depressed

is a syllogism. Its major premise is **(2)**, because it contains the predicate of the conclusion ('depressed'); and **(1)** is the minor premise.]

The term 'principle' is ambiguous. It is often used to stand for any item of knowledge that can be *used as a principle*,

even if its origin doesn't qualify it as *being* a principle. Any universal proposition, even one derived from experience through induction, can serve as the major premise in a syllogism, which involves its being 'used as a principle' in the weak sense of being used as a basis from which to infer something else, but that doesn't mean that it is a principle properly so-called. Mathematical axioms such as 'There can be only one straight line between two points' are instances of universal *a priori* knowledge, and therefore relate as 'principles' to all their instances. (And because they are known *a priori* they are *more* like 'principles' strictly so-called than are empirically established propositions such as 'All cowards are depressed'.) But this doesn't entitle us to say that this property of straight lines is something that we know from principles. In fact we know it only through pure intuition [see page 30].

[Kant now offers an obscure paragraph whose main point is that because any 'All. . .' proposition can be the major premise in a syllogism, and so can in that way be *used as a principle*, therefore the *a priori* propositions associated with the understanding 'can be called "principles" in the sense that they can be used as principles'. Then:]

But if we consider those basic propositions of pure understanding in the light not of how they can be used but rather of what their source is, then we can see that they are *nothing like* principles in the strict sense of propositions expressing knowledge based on concepts. Our ability to have the *a priori* knowledge they express comes from two sources, neither of which consists in *concepts*, namely:

- pure intuition (for the mathematical propositions) or
- conditions that have to be satisfied for any experience to be possible (for the others).

Consider a proposition of the second type: *Every event has a cause*. This can't be inferred merely from the concept of

*event*; on the contrary, it's a basic proposition that points to the conditions that enable us to have a determinate *event* concept in the first place. [In this passage and some later ones, 'event' translates a German phrase meaning 'thing that happens'. That's what events are—things that happen.]

Thus, the understanding can't supply us with any *synthetic items of knowledge derived from concepts*; and those are the only things that I call 'principles' *period*; though any universal proposition—and especially any that can be known *a priori*—can be described as 'relating to such-and-such in a principle-like way'. 358

It has long been wished. . . that instead of the endless complexity of the laws of the land we could find their *principles*, because that's our only hope of 'simplifying' the law. There's nothing problematic about the thought that there are such principles, because the laws we are considering here are only constraints that we have imposed on our freedom, which means that if they are harmonised and simplified under very general legal principles, the latter are directed to something that is entirely our own work—something that we have generated out of our own legal concepts. Contrast that with the thought that objects in themselves, the very nature of things, stand under principles, and are determined according to mere concepts. That is problematic: it seems impossible, or at least quite contrary to common sense. Well, we'll look into that in due course. My present point is just that

- knowledge derived from principles, strictly and properly so-called

is something quite different from

- knowledge obtained merely through the understanding,

though the latter can be principle-like in being more basic than some other knowledge. . . . 359

Just as understanding can be seen as the faculty that uses rules to unify appearances, reason can be seen as the faculty that uses principles to unify the understanding's rules. Thus, reason never applies directly to experience or to any object. What it applies to is the understanding: its role is to give an *a priori* unity by means of concepts to the understanding's complex web of items of knowledge. This 'unity of reason', as we may call it, is nothing like the unity that the understanding can create by bringing appearances under its concepts.

That's the best I can do to explain the general concept of *the faculty of reason*—or the best I can do without using examples. *They* will be provided later on.

### B. *The logical use of reason*

We distinguish what is immediately known (e.g. *A figure bounded by three straight lines has three angles*) from what is only inferred (e.g. *The sum of those three angles equals two right angles*). We're constantly in need of inferences, and eventually we get used to inferring—so much so that we stop being aware of the difference between immediate and inferred knowledge, and often treat as being immediately perceived what has really only been inferred. . . . In every process of reasoning there is

- 360      **(1)** a fundamental proposition (the premise), and  
           **(2)** another proposition (the conclusion that is drawn from **(1)**), and finally  
           the inference (logical sequence) by which the truth **(2)** is inseparably connected with the truth of **(1)**.

If **(2)** is contained in **(1)** in such a way that it can be derived from **(1)** without the mediation of a third proposition, the inference is called *immediate*. But if **(2)** can't be reached from the item of knowledge contained in **(1)** until another

judgment is added, then the inference of **(2)** from **(1)** is non-immediate. I call immediate inferences *inferences of the understanding*, and non-immediate ones *inferences of reason*. The proposition 'All men are mortal' contains the propositions 'Some men are mortal', 'Some mortal beings are men', and 'Nothing that isn't mortal is a man'—so these are all immediate conclusions from it, each drawable in an inference of the understanding. On the other hand, the proposition **(1)** 'All men are mortal' doesn't contain **(2)** 'All learned beings are mortal' (it doesn't involve any use of the concept of *learned being*), so **(2)** can only be inferred from **(1)** only with the help of a mediating judgment.

[Warning: Kant's use here of 'mediating judgment' (*Zwischenurteil*, between-judgment) is misleading. If he were using it properly, he would be talking about the case where to get from P to R you have to get from P to Q and then from Q to R. (That would make the need for a mediating judgment a subjective matter: although I can't see that  $P \Rightarrow R$  except by bringing in Q, you are smart enough to see that  $P \Rightarrow R$  without getting help from Q.) Anyway, that is *not* what Kant means when he speaks of mediating judgments. His real topic here is simply cases where R doesn't follow from P alone but does follow from P together with Q. His announced theory really is that what is logically special about reason is that it is used in inferring conclusions from *pairs* of premises. That isn't a load-bearing part of what's important in the Dialectic, but it figures in some of Kant's preliminary moves, so we need to get straight about it.—Something else that needs to be understood: the standard German word for 'syllogism' is *Vernunftschluss* = 'inference of reason'. Some of what Kant says about such inferences really does fit syllogisms and only syllogisms (e.g. the technical term 'major premise'), but much of the time he is talking more broadly about inferences-from-pairs-of-premises. From now on this version will usually translate *Vernunftschluss* by 'inference of reason'. In the following paragraph, the schematic S-M-P example, which isn't Kant's, is tied to one very simple and basic kind of syllogism, narrowly so-called. But you'll soon see that his topic is broader than that.]



In every inference of reason I first think a *rule* (the major premise) through the *understanding*:

**All M are P.**

Secondly, I bring a known item ·S· under the condition ·M· of the rule by means of *judgment* (the minor premise):

**All S are M.**

Finally, I determine [here = 'establish some fact about'] the known item ·S· by applying the predicate ·P· of the rule:

361

**All S are P,**

arriving at this—the conclusion—a *priori* through *reason*. There are different kinds of inference of reason—three of them, in fact, corresponding to the three kinds of judgments. They are:

- (1) categorical,
- (2) hypothetical,
- (3) disjunctive.

How do we decide which category a given inference of reason belongs to? By looking at the form of its major premise, i.e. at *how* that premise relates the two items that it involves. [The rest of this paragraph is an addition to what Kant wrote, but it consists only of borrowings from things he will say later.] In a (1) categorical inference of reason like the one semi-illustrated above, it is the subject-predicate relation expressed in the proposition that *all M are P*. In a (2) hypothetical one, of the form:

If P then Q,  
P,  
therefore Q,

it is the ground-consequent relation expressed in the proposition that *if P then Q*. And in a (3) disjunctive inference, of the form

R or S,  
Not-R,  
therefore S,

it is the parts-of-a-logical-division relation expressed in the proposition *R or S*.

In most cases the judgment that forms the conclusion is set as a problem—to see whether it follows from judgments already given, ones through which a quite different object is thought. [The element M in the categorical case, P in the hypothetical case, and R in the disjunctive case is 'quite different from' anything in the conclusion.] I look in the understanding to see how this conclusion is situated there; I'm trying to discover whether it stands under certain conditions according to a universal rule. If I find such a condition 'embodied in a rule', and if the conclusion relates to it in the right way, then the conclusion is deduced from the rule—which is also valid for other objects of knowledge. We see here that in inference reason tries to reduce the complex web of knowledge obtained through the understanding to the smallest number of principles (universal conditions) thereby bringing it into the highest possible unity.

### C. The pure use of reason

[In this paragraph, Kant speaks of the *Vergleichung* of one proposition with another, standardly translated as 'comparison'. It's hard to avoid that, but what he really means here is 'comparing' not in the sense of *likening* P to Q but only in the sense of *laying them side by side so as to take in their inter-relationship in a single thought*.] Here are two prima facie possible accounts of the basic status of reason: 362

(1) Reason can be considered all on its own; it is an independent source of concepts and judgments that come from it alone and give it a relation to objects.

(2) Reason is a merely subordinate faculty, whose role is to impose a certain 'logical' form on given items of knowledge. It is through reason that things known by means of the understanding are determinately related

to one another, with lower items of knowledge being brought under higher ones, . . . this being done by comparing them.

Which of these is right? That's the preliminary question we are now facing up to (you'll see in a moment why I call it 'preliminary'). The answer is **(2)** rather than **(1)**. Reason is perhaps not 'merely subordinate', in that it *demand*s that the multiplicity of rules of the understanding be unified by principles of reason. (In doing this work,

- reason makes the output of the understanding hang together in a thoroughly connected whole, by bringing it under principles,

just as

- the understanding connects up the various outputs of intuition, by bringing them under concepts.)

But a principle of reason doesn't prescribe any law *for objects*; it doesn't contain anything that is needed as a basis for knowing objects or knowing anything about them (that being what enables the understanding to prescribe laws for objects). Reason is merely a subjective law for the orderly management—the *housekeeping*—of our stock of understanding-outputs, . . . aiming at the greatest possible economy in our use of them. It doesn't entitle us to demand that *the objects* have a uniformity that will make things easier for our understanding and increase its reach; so we can't ascribe any objective validity to the maxim in which reason demands that the output of the understanding be unified. With the preliminary question thus answered, we now come to the big question that will be with us for a long time. In a word, the question is: Does reason in itself—i.e. does *pure* reason—contain *a priori* synthetic principles and rules, and what might such principles consist in?

If pure reason is capable of a transcendental principle through which it yields synthetic knowledge, what will it

be based on? We get sufficient guidance in answering that from two points about the formal and logical procedure of reason.

**First**, an inference of reason doesn't concern itself with intuitions, aiming to bring them under rules (as the understanding does with its categories). What it deals with are concepts and judgments. Thus, even if pure reason does *somehow* concern itself with objects, what it is *immediately* related to are not objects and the intuition of them, but rather the understanding and its judgments, which *do* deal at first hand with the senses and their intuition for the purpose of establishing facts about their object. The unity of understanding is the unity of a possible experience, but the unity of reason is nothing like that. The proposition *Every event has a cause* contributes to making the unity of experience possible; it's because of this making-experience-possible that the understanding can use its concepts to pull experience together through synthetic propositions like that one. In contrast with that, reason doesn't have the job of making experience possible; and that deprives it of any chance of imposing on experience any such synthetic unity as is imposed by *Every event has a cause*.

**Secondly**, when reason is put to use logically, it starts with some judgment and tries to find a universal rule of which the judgment is a special case. (The universal rule is the major premise, and the judgment in question is the conclusion.) In doing this, reason is acting on its maxim:

When you have an item of knowledge, find something more general of which it is a special case, or, to say the same thing in more technical terms,

- When you have an item of knowledge, find the condition by which it is conditioned.

Now, the major premise of any inference-of-reason also falls within the scope of reason's seek-the-condition maxim,

which means that reason tells us to look for something still more general from which *it* follows. That involves going from the inference—

$P_0, Q, \text{ therefore } R$ —

to a prior inference of reason whose conclusion is  $P_0$  and whose major premise is some proposition  $P_{-1}$ ; and from that to a still earlier one whose conclusion is  $P_{-1}$ , and so on backwards and upwards. All of this happens in accordance with reason's principle—its very own principle—

Given any conditioned item of knowledge obtained through the understanding, find the unconditioned whereby the understanding can be completely unified.

We may want to treat this logical maxim as a principle of pure reason—i.e. to regard it not merely as a command that tells us what to do, but as a statement saying that something is the case—namely that for everything conditioned *there is* a condition. This would involve us in assuming that if something conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions. . . is likewise given, i.e. is contained in the object and its connection. (Notice that if this whole series exists, it is itself *unconditioned*.)

Such a principle of pure reason is obviously *synthetic*; something that's conditioned is analytically related to some condition but not to the unconditioned. And other synthetic propositions must follow from it—propositions of which pure understanding knows nothing, because it deals only with items that are conditioned. [These days we might say that *the unconditioned* doesn't appear on the understanding's radar screen.] If there actually is anything unconditioned, we'll have to pay special attention to all the features of it that distinguish it from everything that is conditioned, and they'll provide the raw material for many synthetic *a priori* propositions.

Any principles arising from this supreme principle of pure reason will be *transcendent* in relation to all appearances, i.e.

there can't be any adequate empirical use for the supreme principle. (So it will be entirely different from all principles of understanding, because their use is wholly *immanent*—they don't transcend experience, because their only theme is the possibility of experience.) Consider the principle:

•The series of conditions extends to the unconditioned.

(This might be offered either as telling us a truth about

what there is in the world out there or as making a demand about how we are to behave when we think about the world out there.) Does this principle have objective applicability?

What does it imply concerning the empirical use of the understanding? Or is there no such objectively valid *principle*

of reason, but only a logical *command* that instructs us to

advance towards completeness by working our way up to ever higher conditions, thereby giving our knowledge the greatest

possible unity of reason? Might it be the case that this

*command* should never have been viewed as a transcendent

*principle* of pure reason, and that we went too fast when we

postulated that the objects out there in the world actually

include an unrestrictedly complete series of conditions? And

if that is how things stand, what *other* misunderstandings

and delusions may have crept into the inferences of reason

that we conduct? . . . Answering these questions will be

my task in the transcendental dialectic, which I'm aiming to

develop from its deeply concealed sources in human reason.

I'll shall divide the Dialectic into: •Book 1 [pages 163–173] on

the transcendent *concepts* of pure reason, •Book 2 [pages 174–

291] on its transcendent and dialectical *inferences*, and •an

Appendix [page 292–315].

## Book 1:

### The concepts of pure reason

In advance of settling whether there can be any concepts derived from pure reason, we know this much: if we can get them, it will be through inferences and not through reflection. Concepts of understanding are also thought *a priori*,  
 367 antecedently to experience and for the sake of experience; but all they give is the unity of reflection on appearances that have to belong to a possible empirical consciousness. Those concepts make it possible for us to have knowledge and to settle facts about the objective world. And they don't come to us through inferences; there are indeed two reasons why they couldn't possibly do so. (1) They first provide the material required for making inferences, so we can't do any inferring until we *have* those concepts. (2) There's nothing we could infer them *from*: they aren't preceded by any *a priori* concepts of objects from which they could be inferred. Their objective reality isn't based on anything inferential; its sole basis is the fact that they constitute the intellectual form of all experience; so it must always be possible to show their application in experience.

The label 'concept of reason' tells us from the outset that we're dealing here with something that can't be confined within experience, because it concerns a body of knowledge of which any empirical knowledge is only a part—indeed it may be that the whole of possible experience. . . . is only a part of it. No actual experience is ever completely adequate to it, yet every actual experience belongs to it. Concepts of reason enable us to *conceive*, and concepts of understanding enable us to *understand*. . . . Just as I have labelled the pure concepts of understanding 'categories', so I shall give the concepts of pure reason a new name, calling them

transcendental 'ideas'. I'll now explain and justify this label.

### 1. The ideas in general

Despite the great wealth of our languages, a thinker often finds himself at a loss for the expression that exactly fits his concept, and this lack prevents him from being really intelligible to others or even to himself. He could coin a new word, but that amounts to claiming to *legislate* for  
 369 language—and you can't often get away with that! Before trying that way out—which is always a long shot—we should scout around in a dead learned language, to see if *it* provides both the concept and a suitable word for it. Even if those who first launched the word were a bit careless, so that the use of it was somewhat wobbly even back then, it's always better to latch onto the meaning that distinctively belongs to it (whether or not we're sure that it was originally used in precisely this sense) than to defeat our purpose by making ourselves unintelligible.

When we want to distinguish a certain concept from related ones, and there's just one word whose existing meaning exactly fits it, we would be wise to use that word sparingly—keeping it to its own proper meaning and not also using it, for stylistic variety, as a synonym for other expressions. Otherwise we may stop focussing intently on that word, mixing it up with lots of other words whose meanings are quite different; and if that happens, we'll lose also the  
 370 thought that the word expresses and could have preserved.

From the way Plato used the term 'idea' we can see that he meant it to stand for something that not only couldn't be borrowed from the senses but even extends far beyond the concepts of understanding (which Aristotle was busy with)—because nothing that fits it can ever be encountered in experience. Plato held that ideas are archetypes of the

things themselves [= 'models from which things are copied'], unlike the categories, which are merely keys to possible experiences. In his view, ideas issued from highest reason, through which human reason comes to share in them; but our reason is no longer in its original state, and has to strain to recall the old now-obscure ideas, by a process of recollection (which is called philosophy). I'm not going to conduct a textual enquiry into what this great philosopher meant by 'idea'. I merely remark that it isn't at all unusual to find. . . . that we understand an author better than he has understood himself. Not having pinned down his concept exactly enough, an author's intention is sometimes belied by what he has said, or even by what he has thought.

371 Plato knew very well that •our faculty of knowledge feels a need for something much higher than merely spelling out appearances according to a synthetic unity so as to be able to read them as experience; and •that our reason naturally soars to items of knowledge that have to be recognised as having their own reality rather than being mere fictions of the brain, despite the fact that they go far beyond the bounds of experience—so far that no empirical object can ever fit them.

Plato found the chief instances of his ideas in the field of the practical [here = 'moral'], i.e. in what rests on freedom, which is the subject of items of knowledge that are produced only by reason.<sup>2</sup> If you try to derive the concepts of virtue from experience. . . . you'll turn virtue into something that varies according to time and circumstance, a slippery non-entity that can't be brought under any rule. We're all well

<sup>2</sup> It's true that he also extended his concept of *idea* so as to cover items of speculative knowledge, provided that they were pure and given completely *a priori*. He even extended it to mathematics, although what that science is about can be found only in possible experience. I can't go with him down that road. . . .

aware that the truth is nothing like that. We know that if someone is held up as a 'perfect example of virtue', we judge this by comparing the person, the alleged 'perfect sample', with the true original that we have in our minds. This original is the *idea of virtue*. Objects of experience can serve as 'approximate' examples of it (showing that proofs that what the concept of reason commands is at least somewhat feasible), but they can't serve as 'perfect' archetypes of virtue. [This uses the word (*Urbild*) that was translated as 'archetype' two paragraphs back; but here, and from now on, Kant thinks of an *Urbild* not as a model *from which other things are copied*, but rather as a model or ideal example *to which we may approximate*.] None of us will ever act in a way that matches up to what is contained in the pure idea of virtue, but that doesn't prove that there's something chimerical about this thought. It's only by means of this idea that we can make any judgment as to moral worth or unworth; so the idea serves as an indispensable basis for any approach to moral perfection—even if we don't get very close because of the obstacles in human nature. . . .

Plato's *Republic* has become proverbial as a striking example of the kind of dreamy perfection that could only exist in an idle thinker's brain, and he has been ridiculed for claiming •that a monarch can't rule well unless he participates in the ideas. [Here as everywhere in this half of the *Critique*, 'idea' is used only as a Platonic or Kantian technical term.] We would, however, be better advised to run with •this thought, and, where the great philosopher leaves us without help, to shed light on it through our own efforts rather than discarding it on the wretched and harmful pretext that it isn't practicable.

A constitution providing for *the greatest possible human freedom* under laws that make *the freedom of each consistent with the freedom of everyone else*

—that is, to put it mildly, a *necessary* idea; it must be made basic not only in the initial design of a constitution but also in all its laws. (I state the idea in terms of •freedom, not of •the greatest happiness, for happiness will take care of itself if freedom is assured.) In drafting a constitution, we must initially abstract from the present obstacles. ·Let’s think a little about the nature of these obstacles to successful government·. Rather than being inevitable upshots of human nature, perhaps they arise rather from something that *could* be remedied, namely the neglect of genuine ideas in making laws. Legislators commonly ·excuse their failures by· appealing to ‘adverse experience’—i.e. to contingent circumstances that thwarted their plans·. Actually, nothing could be more harmful or more unworthy of a philosopher than that. The ‘adverse experience’ wouldn’t have occurred if at the right time those institutions had been set up in accordance with ideas, rather than the ideas being displaced by crude conceptions which, just because they were derived from experience, nullified all ·the legislators’ good intentions. The more legislation and government are brought into harmony with the above idea [i.e. the one indented earlier in this paragraph], the less punishment there would be; so it was quite reasonable for Plato to maintain that in a perfectly structured state no punishments would be needed. It may be that this perfect state won’t ever come into being; but that doesn’t

374 stop the idea from being valid. What it does is to set this *maximum*—‘the greatest possible human freedom’—before us as an archetype, something we can move towards, so as to bring the legal organisation of mankind ever nearer to its greatest possible perfection. How far *can* we go along that line? How big a gap *must* there be between the ·archetypal· idea and what we actually achieve? No-one can answer this, and no-one should try, because this is all about freedom, which can pass beyond any specified limit.

Plato saw clear proofs that ideas have an explanatory role not only •in the moral sphere, where human reason exhibits genuine causality so that ideas are working causes of actions and their outputs, but also •in regard to nature itself. A plant, an animal, the orderly arrangement of the cosmos—presumably therefore the entire natural world—clearly show that they are possible only according to ideas. No individual creature coincides ·exactly· with the idea of what is most perfect in its kind; just as no human being coincides ·exactly· with the idea of humanity, though each of us carries that idea in his soul as the archetype of his actions. Despite this, these ideas are completely determinate unchangeable individuals in the Supreme Understanding ·of God·, and they are the ultimate causes of things.

[Kant offers a guarded expression of approval for Plato’s appeal to ideas outside the moral sphere. Then:] But where Plato’s doctrine renders a very special •service is in connection with the principles of morality, legislation, and religion, where the experience (of the good) is itself made possible only by the ideas—incomplete as their empirical expression must always remain. This •service hasn’t been recognized, because it has been judged in accordance with empirical rules—the very things that Plato’s approach has shown can’t validly be treated as principles ·in our moral thinking·. When we are studying nature, experience supplies the rules and is the source of truth; but when it comes to the moral laws, experience is (alas!) the mother of illusion! It is *very* bad behaviour to derive laws prescribing what *I ought to do* from what *is done*, or to limit laws on that basis. .375

Following out these considerations is what gives philosophy its own special dignity; but just now we must occupy ourselves with a less grand but still worthwhile task, namely levelling the ground and making it firm enough to support these majestic moral edifices. ·Why does it need to be *made* 376

firm?· Because this ground has been honeycombed by subterranean workings that reason, in its confident but fruitless search for hidden treasures, has carried out in all directions. What we have to do now is to get some insight into the transcendental use of pure reason, its principles and ideas, so that we can be in a position •to get the facts about what influence pure reason has and •to make a judgment as to its value. [Kant pleads with the philosophically serious reader to use 'idea' only in its original meaning rather than using it as a label for 'any and every species of representation'. There are plenty of terms for each kind of representation, he says, and he gives a list—a 'chart'—of terms with their definitions.] [•In this version, each bold-type item is the one that re-appears at the next level up. •In this one case *Erkenntnis* is translated as 'cognition', because the generally preferred 'item of knowledge' sounds too peculiar. See note on pages 2–3. •Despite its prominence here, this is the last we hear of 'notion' as a technical term.]

Bottom level:

The genus is 'representation'.

When this is accompanied by consciousness it is **perception**.

Second level:

Perception considered merely as a state of the person is 'sensation'.

Perception considered as perception *of* something is **cognition**.

Third level:

A cognition relating directly to an individual object is an 'intuition'.

A cognition relating indirectly to objects, through features that many objects may share, is a **concept**

Fourth level:

Empirical concepts.

**Pure concepts**.

Fifth level:

·Pure concepts can be schematised, i.e. amplified by something sensible·.

A pure concept originating solely in the understanding, with no input from sensibility, is a **notion**.

·And so at last we rise to our present topic, which involves 'notion' but seems not to come from any two-part division of notions, namely:

Sixth level·:

A concept that is formed from notions and outruns the possibility of experience is an **idea**.

Anyone who has familiarised himself with these distinctions must wince when he hears the representation of the colour *red* called an 'idea'. It oughtn't even to be called a concept of understanding, a notion.

## 2. The transcendental ideas

The Transcendental Analytic gave us an example of how the mere logical form of our knowledge can give rise to pure *a priori* concepts which represent objects prior to all experience. (Strictly speaking, rather than •representing objects they •indicate the synthetic unity without which we couldn't have empirical knowledge of objects.) The different forms of judgment. . . .generated categories that direct all our use of understanding in experience. In the same way we can expect that the different forms of inferences of reason. . . .will generate special *a priori* concepts (we can call them 'pure concepts of reason' or 'transcendental ideas') which will determine how understanding is used in dealing with experience as a totality.

The function of reason in its inferences is to give ·greater· universality to items of knowledge. . . . Consider the proposition, 'Caius is mortal'. I could get this from experience

by means of the understanding alone, leaving reason out of it. But I am after something more general; I'm looking for a concept (in this case, the concept *man*) that contains the condition under which the predicate. . . of this judgment ('is mortal') is given; and after I have brought the predicate under this condition taken across its whole range ('All men are mortal'), I proceed on that basis to settle on the item of knowledge about my object ('Caius is mortal').

379 Accordingly, in the conclusion of an inference of reason we restrict a predicate to a certain object, having first thought it in the major premise under a given condition taken across the whole range of that condition. This fact about the size of the range is called *universality* or *totality*. . . . So the transcendental concept of reason is nothing but

- the concept of the *totality* of the *conditions* for any given conditioned item.

What makes possible the totality of conditions is the *unconditioned*, and conversely the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned. [This use of 'conversely' here suggests that Kant meant to say that something involves a totality of conditions *if and only if* it involves something unconditioned. But that isn't what he actually says.] So we can give a general explanation of what a pure concept of reason is—i.e. what an idea is—by saying that it's a concept of something unconditioned, when the concept is thought of as a basis for the synthesis of the conditioned. That means: as a basis for a process of connecting conditioned items with one another; for example,

- discovering a causal chain among certain events would be
- conducting a synthesis of (causally) conditioned items, and similarly with the other relevant relations. There will be exactly as many •pure concepts of reason as there are •kinds of relation that the understanding represents to itself by means of the categories. There are just three of these,

expressed by **(1)** 'S is M', **(2)** 'If P then Q', and **(3)** 'R or S'. So we have to look for three kinds of unconditioned item: **(1)** the *categorical* synthesis in a *subject*; **(2)** the *hypothetical* synthesis of the members of a *series*; **(3)** the *disjunctive* synthesis of the parts in a *system*.

So there are exactly three kinds of inference of reason, each of which moves up through prosyllogisms to the relevant unconditioned item: **(1)** to the subject that is never itself a predicate; **(2)** to the presupposition that doesn't presupposes anything further; **(3)** to an aggregate of the members of the division of a concept such that nothing further is needed to complete the division. So the pure concepts of reason—

- concepts of totality in the synthesis of conditions, i.e. concepts of *going the whole way* in looking for a condition for every conditioned item—

—are necessary at least as *setting us the task* of extending the unity of understanding, where possible, right up to the unconditioned. They are based on the nature of human reason, which is essentially committed to the demand for conditions. It may be that there isn't anything for these transcendental concepts actually to apply to; in which case the only good they do is to direct the understanding in such a way that when it is extended to the uttermost it is completely free of inconsistency.

THE RIGHT WAY TO USE 'ABSOLUTE'

While I'm dealing with 'the totality of conditions' and 'the unconditioned' as equivalent labels for all concepts of reason, I come on another expression (as well as 'idea') that I can't do without but can't safely use, because long-standing misuse has made it ambiguous. The word is 'absolute'. Like just a few others, this word in its original meaning was fitted to a concept that no other word in the language exactly suits. So if the word is lost, or if (same thing) it is used



381 with several different meanings, •the concept itself will be lost too. This is a concept that reason is very busy with, and giving it up would do great harm to all judgments in transcendental philosophy. **(1)** The word ‘absolute’ is now often used merely to indicate that something is true of a thing considered *in itself*, and therefore true of its *inward* nature; in this sense, ‘x is absolutely possible’ means that x is in itself possible—which is the *least* that could be said about it. **(2)** But the word is also sometimes used to indicate that something holds true in all respects, without limitation (e.g. absolute despotism), and in this sense ‘x is absolutely possible would mean that x is *in every relation* (in all respects) *possible*—which is the *most* that can be said of x’s possibility. From here on, though I shall be *discussing* both senses of ‘absolute’, I shall *use* the word only in sense **(2)**, reserving ‘intrinsic’ for sense **(1)**. Sometimes a statement is true in both senses of ‘absolute’: if something is **(1)** intrinsically impossible then it is **(2)** impossible in any relation, and therefore absolutely impossible. But in most cases the two meanings are infinitely far apart: if something is **(1)** in itself possible, we can’t conclude that it is also **(2)** possible in every relation, and thus absolutely possible. We’ll see later on that absolute necessity doesn’t always depend on intrinsic necessity, and therefore shouldn’t be treated as equivalent. If the opposite of something is intrinsically impossible, this opposite is of course impossible in all respects, and the thing itself is therefore absolutely necessary. But we can’t run this inference the other way, arguing that if something is absolutely necessary its opposite is intrinsically impossible, i.e. that the *absolute* necessity of things is an *intrinsic* necessity. . . . The loss of a concept that is of great importance for speculative philosophy must *matter* to you if you are a philosopher. [In Kant’s usage, ‘speculative’ is the opposite of ‘practical’ or ‘moral’; it means ‘having to do with the truth

382

of theories’, and doesn’t carry any of the sense of ‘guesswork’ that the word has today.] I hope, then, that it will matter to you that we should pin down and carefully preserve the word on which the concept depends.

So there it is: I shall use the word ‘absolutely’ in contrast to what holds only comparatively, i.e. in some particular respect; referring to what is valid without restriction in contrast to what is restricted by conditions. [As well as *absolut*, which he is discussing here, Kant often uses *schlechthin*, which means ‘without qualification’. It could often be translated by ‘absolutely’, and in previous translations it often is; but the present version will use ‘absolute(ly)’ only for *absolut*, and translate *schlechthin* by ‘utterly’ or ‘unqualifiedly’ or some such expression. When Kant contrasts **(1)** things that are principle-like in this or that way with **(2)** things that are *schlechthin Prinzipien*, he is translated on page 158 as contrasting **(1)** with ‘principles *period*’. Grossly unhistorical, but it does capture his meaning.]

Now a transcendental concept of reason always aims at absolute totality in the synthesis of conditions, and its only terminus is in what is unqualifiedly unconditioned, i.e. is not conditioned in any respect. For pure reason leaves to the understanding everything that kicks off from the objects of intuition, or rather from the synthesis of such things in the imagination. Reason’s only concern is with absolute totality in the use of the concepts of the understanding; it takes the synthetic unity that is thought in the category and tries to track it up to something unqualifiedly unconditioned. We can call this the *unity of reason* in appearances, and that expressed by the category the *unity of understanding*. Reason isn’t concerned with the understanding considered as containing the ground of possible experience. Why? Because •no experience is unconditioned, so •the concept of the absolute totality of conditions isn’t applicable in any experience, •so •reason has nothing to do or say down at that

level. But reason *is* concerned with the understanding in another way: it tells the understanding what direction to take towards a certain unity, of which the understanding itself has no concept. *What* unity? It's the unity that would come from uniting all the acts of the understanding, in respect of every object, into an *absolute* whole. The objective use of the pure concepts of •reason is, therefore, always *transcendent*, while that of the pure concepts of •understanding must always be *immanent*, because the only way to use them is in application to possible experience.

[Kant now has a paragraph in which he repeats what he has already said •about the 'transcendental' nature of pure concepts of reason, •about their role as direction-setters for the understanding, and •about the ideas of *practical* reason as having a larger and more direct role in human life than do those of *speculative* reason, the latter being our concern ..385 in this book. Then:]

In saying (as we must) that the transcendental concepts of reason are *only ideas*, we aren't taking them to be superfluous and empty. Although they can't latch onto any object, they can in a basic and unnoticed way be useful to the understanding as a canon for its extended and consistent use [re 'canon', see note on page 25]. What this provides for the understanding is not

•more knowledge than it would have by means of its own concepts •unguided by reason•,

but rather

•better and more extensive guidance for the acquiring of knowledge.

386 Not to mention the fact that concepts of reason may enable us to move across from thoughts about •nature to thoughts about •morality. . . . I'll deal with that in a later work. In *this* work our concern is. . . .only with reason in its speculative use—and indeed, more narrowly, with its *transcendental*

speculative use. Let's take a tip from our procedure in the deduction of the categories, by considering the *logical form* of knowledge through reason. . . .

Reason. . . is the faculty of *inferring*, i.e. judging mediately (by bringing the condition of a possible judgment under the condition of a given judgment). The given judgment is the universal rule (major premise)

•All men are mortal•.

What brings the condition of another possible judgment under the condition of the rule is the minor premise

•Caius is a man•.

The judgment which applies the predicate of the rule (•'mortal'•) to the *brought-under* case •of Caius• is the conclusion

•Caius is mortal.

387

The rule says of some predicate that it applies to everything that satisfies a certain condition. That condition (•mortality•) is found to be satisfied in an actual case (•Caius•). What has been asserted to be universally valid under that condition is therefore to be regarded as valid also in the present case, which satisfies that condition. It's easy to see what is happening here: reason is arriving at an item of knowledge through acts of the understanding that constitute a series of conditions. Here is an example, concerning my way of arriving at the proposition that **(3)** *All bodies are alterable*. I start from the proposition that

**(1)** Everything composite is alterable.

This item of knowledge is quite distant from **(3)**; it doesn't involve the concept of body, though it does involve the condition of that concept, alterability. I then proceed from **(1)** to a proposition that is less remote from **(3)**, and stands under the condition of **(1)**, namely the proposition that

**(2)** •All• bodies are composite.

From this I finally pass to

**(3)** •All• bodies are alterable,

which connects the more distant item of knowledge (alterable) with the knowledge actually before me. By this procedure I have arrived at an item of knowledge (a conclusion) by means of a series of conditions (the premises). [In one fiercely compressed sentence, Kant says things that can fairly be spelled out as follows: An inference of reason in which we pass from conditions (in the premises) to something conditioned (in the conclusion) can sometimes be part of a longer series of conditions-to-conditioned inferences, going in either direction.

- In one direction, the longer series takes the conditions in the premises of the original inference and provide conditions of *them*, and then conditions of those conditions, and so on upwards.
- In the other direction, the longer series takes the conditioned item in the conclusion of the original inference and provide items of which *it* is a condition, and then items of which those items in turn are conditions, and so on downwards.

This can't happen with disjunctive inferences of reason, but it can happen with either of the other two forms of inferences of reason—categorical (= subject-predicate) and hypothetical (= if-then). The most natural kind of example (Kant doesn't give any) of the **hypothetical** form of inference takes the use of the hypothetical 'If . . . then' to express facts about what *causes* what. We explain the fact that •Q by putting together our knowledge that •P's being the case would cause Q to be the case and our knowledge that •P. Then we can move upward into the fact that P is caused to be the case by O, which is caused to be the case by N, and so on back up the causal chain; or downwards into the fact that Q causes R to be the case, which causes S to be the case, and so on down the causal chain. Examples of an elongated inference of reason that has the **categorical** form are harder

to provide, or even to describe; they will be returned to [page 172]. The **disjunctive** form doesn't come into this because a disjunction doesn't have a direction.]

..388

But we soon become aware that how the faculty of reason works in the •ascending series of inferences of reason, in which we infer items of knowledge by looking at

•conditions as being conditioned in their turn, is quite different from how it behaves in the •descending series, in which we look at

•conditioned items as being conditions in their turn. In the ascending inference the item of knowledge is given only as conditioned; to arrive at it by means of reason we have to assume that all the members of ·the ascending series·, the series on the side of the conditions, are given—the crucial point being that we have to think of that entire series as *already complete* . . . . In the ·descending· series, the one on the side of the conditioned, the one that looks at consequences, our only thought is of a series *in process of coming into existence*, not one already presupposed or given *in its completeness* . . . . Thus, if an item of knowledge is viewed as conditioned, reason is forced to regard the series of conditions in the ascending line as completed and as given in its totality. But if the same item of knowledge is viewed as a condition of further items of knowledge that constitute a series of consequences in a descending series, reason doesn't care •how far this downward series extends, or •whether a totality of the series is possible. That's because reason doesn't need any such series in order to draw its conclusion. [Kant's development of this point is expressed rather technically. What it comes down to, expressed here (though not by him) purely in terms of the causal kind of hypothetical inference of reason, is this:] Reason is compelled to regard any present event as the upshot of *all its causes*; without knowing whether that series has a first member (an

389

uncaused cause) or rather stretches back to infinity, with no first member, it has to regard the event as having such a totality of causes in its ancestry; the proposition reporting this one event can't be counted as true unless the entire series of its causes is unconditionally true. (This holds even if it is admitted that we can't possibly grasp a totality of conditions.) Reason *requires* this, by announcing that its knowledge is *a priori* determined as necessary, either •in itself (in which case it needs no grounds) or else •derivatively as a member of a series of grounds—a series which is, taken as a whole, unconditionally true.

### 3. System of the transcendental ideas

390

Our topic is not *logical* dialectic, which ignores the •content of knowledge and confines itself to exposing the fallacies concealed in the •form of inferences of reason. Rather, it is a *transcendental* dialectic that has to contain, completely *a priori*, the origin of certain items of knowledge derived from pure reason as well as of certain inferred concepts whose objects •can't ever be given empirically and therefore •lie wholly beyond the reach of the faculty of pure understanding. The transcendental use of our knowledge, both in inferences and in judgments, has a natural relationship to its logical use; and this relation has shown us •that there can be only three kinds of dialectical inference of reason, corresponding to the three kinds of inference through which reason can arrive at knowledge by means of principles, and •that in all of these its business is to ascend from the conditioned synthesis to the unconditioned—i.e. from something to which the understanding always remains restricted to something that the understanding can never reach.

[Kant now presents an obscure account of three kinds of relation that can be involved in a representation, from

which he derives a three-part relation-based classification (r-bc) of concepts of pure reason (i.e. transcendental ideas). In the paragraph after this one he will say that this r-bc coincides with the classification he has already presented on the basis of •logical form, namely the division into **(1)** categorical, **(2)** hypothetical, and **(3)** disjunctive. What really matters is not the r-bc itself but rather a classification that Kant supposedly derives from it, namely:]

- (1)** ideas containing the absolute (unconditioned) *unity* of the *thinking subject*,
- (2)** ideas containing the absolute *unity of the series of conditions of appearance*, and
- (3)** ideas containing the absolute *unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general*.

The thinking subject is what **(1)** *psychology* is about, the sum-total of all appearances (the world) is what **(2)** *cosmology* is about, and the thing that contains the highest condition of the possibility of all that can be thought (the Being of all beings) is what **(3)** *theology* is about. Thus, pure reason provides the ideas for **(1)** a transcendental doctrine of the **soul**, a rational psychology, **(2)** a transcendental science of the **world**, a rational cosmology, and **(3)** a transcendental knowledge of **God**, a rational theology. The understanding can't produce even a sketch of any of these sciences—even when it is supported by the highest logical use of reason, i.e. by all possible inferences through which we aim to move from given appearances right up to the most remote members of the empirical synthesis. Each of these sciences is an entirely pure and genuine product of pure reason—or *problem* of pure reason!

392

How, exactly, do the pure concepts of reason come under these three headings? I'll answer that fully in the next chapter, where we'll see that they follow the guiding-thread of the categories. If you are wondering how the categories,

which are concepts of the •understanding, come into this story about our concepts of •reason, I'll point out here that pure reason latches directly not onto *objects* but onto the understanding's *concepts of objects*. •So much for the general point, but what about the details? I shall contend that

- (1) reason, simply by the synthetic use of that very function of which it makes use in categorical inferences of reason, is necessarily brought to the concept of the absolute unity of the *thinking subject*; that
- (2) the logical procedure used in hypothetical inferences of reason leads to the ideal of the utterly unconditioned *in a series* of given conditions, and finally that
- 389 (3) the mere form of the disjunctive inference of reason must necessarily involve the highest concept of reason, that of a *Being of all beings*—a thought that, at first sight, seems utterly paradoxical.

When I complete my account •in the next chapter•, I shall make clear *how* all that can be the case.

Strictly speaking, there can't be an *objective deduction* of these transcendental ideas, like the one I gave for the categories, because the ideas—just because they *are* ideas—don't relate to any object in such a way that they could be (•or, for that matter, fail to be•) true of it. But a subjective derivation of them from the nature of our reason can be given, and in this chapter I have given it.

[We are about to meet three technical terms that have to be understood:

- (1) 'inherence',
- (2) 'dependence',
- (3) 'concurrence'.

In (1) a categorical or subject-predicate proposition, some property is said to *inhere* in a subject—e.g. mortality inheres in Caius. In (2) a hypothetical proposition something is said to *depend* on something else—e.g. the ball's starting move depends on its having been hit. In (3) a disjunctive proposition, two or more possibilities are said to divide the

whole range of possibilities amongst them; rather than some being made subordinate to others, they are all treated as on a level, as somehow going together or concurring. You'll recognize that this is just the same 1-2-3 that we have been dealing with in the past few pages. This note makes a feeble job of relating disjunction to 'concurrence', but the blame for that may lie with Kant.] It's easy to see that what pure reason has in view is the absolute totality of the synthesis *on the side of the conditions* (whether of inherence, of dependence, or of concurrence); it isn't concerned with absolute completeness *on the side of the conditioned*. It's only the former that is needed in order to presuppose the whole series of the conditions and present it *a priori* to the understanding. Given a complete (and unconditioned) condition, we don't need any concept of reason for the continuation of the series: every step in the downward direction from condition to *conditioned*—from 394 conditions to what they are conditions *of*—is taken by the understanding itself. The transcendental ideas, therefore, serve only for going *up* the series of conditions to the unconditioned, i.e. to principles. As regards the intellectual journey *down* from conditions to the conditioned, reason does indeed make a very extensive logical use of the laws of understanding, but it's not a transcendental use. If we form an idea of the absolute totality of a synthesis in a downward series—e.g. an idea of the whole series of all *future* alterations in the world—this is a mental entity that we have *chosen* to create, not something we are *forced* to presuppose by the nature of our reason. . . .

Finally, we also come to realize that the transcendental ideas themselves hang together to form a certain unity, and that it's by means of them that pure reason draws all its items of knowledge together to form a system. The advance from (1) the knowledge of oneself (the soul) to (2) the knowledge of the world, and by means of this to (3) the primordial being, •God•, is so natural that it seems

395 to resemble reason's *logical* advance from premises to a conclusion.<sup>3</sup> . . . .

[The phrase 'primordial being' translates the German *Urwesen*. The prefix *Ur-* is used to convey the idea of something that is the basic source of x, the fundamental origin of all the Fs, or the like. (English has no such resource except in words openly borrowed German—e.g. such English words as 'urkingdom' and 'urtext'.) Some Kant translators use 'original being'; but 'original' doesn't colloquially carry the weight and solemnity of *Ur-*. Thus, 'primordial', here and throughout; with apologies, and this explanation.]

<sup>3</sup> Metaphysics has only three ideas as the proper objects of its enquiries: *God*, *freedom*, and *immortality*—so related that the combination of *God* with *freedom* leads inevitably to *immortality*. Any other matters that metaphysics may deal with are merely means of arriving at these ·three· ideas and of establishing their reality. Reason needs the ideas not for the purposes of natural science but in order to pass beyond nature. Insight into them would put the faculty of speculative reason in sole charge of *theology* and *morals*, and, through the union of these two, likewise *religion*—which means that it has sole charge of the highest ends of our existence. [Kant is now going to use 'analytic' and 'synthetic' in a way that was quite standard in his day but is entirely different from the senses he has given these words up to here. In the present sense, 'analytic' and 'synthetic' are labels for two *methods of presentation* of some doctrine. An •analytic presentation starts with things we all know to be true and works its way from those to the theory or doctrine that explains and is supported by them. A •synthetic presentation goes in the opposite direction: it starts with the fundamental theses of the doctrine to be expounded, and works from those to various of their consequences, which could include the things-we-already-know that are the *starting-point* for the analytic format.] In a •systematic presentation of the ideas, the synthetic order would be more suitable; but before we get to that there has to be a •preliminary working-through of the materials, and for that the analytic order—the reverse of the synthetic—is better. It lets us start from what is immediately given us in experience—advancing from the doctrine of the *soul* to the doctrine of the *world* and from that to knowledge of *God*.