

## *Introduction*

*James R. O'Shea*

The publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 reconfigured the intellectual landscape in ways that still, to this day, shape our most fundamental debates not only about knowledge, perception, freedom, and God, but about the very nature of philosophy and the possibility of any future 'rational metaphysics' itself. From that date onward Kant's book was widely known not only for its 'all-crushing' criticisms of the traditional alleged proofs of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but also for attempting to reorient entirely our understanding of how our theoretical concepts and our morally practical will are related to the reality that we attempt to know and to transform for the better. Each successive generation of readers of Kant's *Critique* has been struck in equal parts with the novel transformative power of its complex ideas and arguments and with the unusually difficult task of interpreting and understanding those ideas. The aim of this *Critical Guide* to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is to present cutting-edge research by leading scholars representing a variety of interpretive perspectives, and to do so in such a way that the volume also serves to explain the most fundamental themes and arguments that are to be found in one of the most fertile and revolutionary texts in the history of philosophy.

The relative newcomer to Kant's first *Critique* – that is, the first of his three famous *Critiques*: of pure reason, of practical reason (1788), and of judgment (1790), respectively – should find that the chapters of this book cover nearly all of the main topics of Kant's enormous edifice of argument in the *Critique*. The aim of each chapter in this *Critical Guide*, however, is not so much to introduce all of the main concepts and arguments that are involved in the given topic of which each chapter treats, but rather to illuminate and probe some particularly important or currently much discussed aspects of that topic. Serving the twin tasks of introduction and exploration has been one of the most successful features of Cambridge's *Critical Guides* series, and it is hoped that this volume continues that helpful practice.

Those readers who are, on the other hand, more deeply acquainted with the sharp interpretive controversies that have continually accompanied Kant's works over the last two centuries should find that the chapters to follow represent an appropriate selection of interpreters who take very different stands on some of those most hotly debated topics in Kant scholarship today: for example, in relation to ongoing disputes concerning the nature of Kant's *transcendental idealist* distinction between "appearances" and "things in themselves," or concerning the conceptual and nonconceptual dimensions of our cognition, and so on. But in line with the emerging tradition of *Critical Guide* volumes, I will keep this introduction short and close by letting the chapters speak for themselves, in a brief summary of their contents.

The volume begins with certain key features of Kant's thinking during his "pre-Critical" period (i.e., prior to the publication of the first *Critique* in 1781), but in ways that lead intelligibly to some of the most fundamental distinctions and themes of his Critical philosophy. **Eric Watkins** in Chapter 1, "Kant on the Distinction between Sensibility and Understanding," seeks to clarify the foundations of Kant's transcendental idealism by offering a novel account of the key distinction between sensibility and understanding as it develops throughout Kant's pre-Critical career. The idea is that Kant thinks that because existence is not a real predicate, it cannot be cognized fully solely by the understanding, but also requires a distinct faculty of sensibility through which objects are "given." This idea finds historical support in the fact that Kant focuses on the distinction between existence and real predicates early on and then throughout his pre-Critical career, and it finds philosophical support in the fact that it is plausible to think that existence is different from other kinds of properties and thus requires a different kind of analysis. Watkins's account enables a compelling explanation of Kant's relation to Leibniz on this issue, not only because it has Kant reacting to Leibnizian ideas, but also because it is reasonable to view Leibniz's position as vulnerable in its explanation of the status of existence.

**Stephen Engstrom** then follows with an analysis of similarly fundamental themes in Chapter 2, "Knowledge and Its Object." His focus is on how Kant, in undertaking to explain how a priori knowledge of objects is possible, proceeds according to the idea that "the objects must conform to our knowledge." Engstrom suggests that Kant's reliance on this "Copernican" way of thinking is puzzling, since on the one hand most readers find it paradoxical, yet on the other the nature of Kant's project in the *Critique of Pure Reason* precludes all reliance on questionable assumptions. Engstrom's

chapter addresses this puzzle by articulating the basic self-understanding involved in theoretical knowledge. It argues that in this self-understanding, such knowledge is understood to have two essential features, which entail that it bears a relation to its object that implicates the Copernican way of thinking. The chapter also describes the main factors that contribute to the customary misconception that “our knowledge must conform to the objects.”

With **Lucy Allais's** Chapter 3 on “Transcendental Idealism and the Transcendental Aesthetic: Reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* Forward,” we move into the complex and dense short section in which Kant discusses the ontology of space and time, conditions of mathematical cognition, and the role of space in representing objective particulars. Here Kant introduces his novel and puzzling idea of a priori intuition and presents and argues for his complex form of idealism – transcendental idealism. This chapter presents an account of Kant's transcendental idealism as it is presented in the Aesthetic, as well as an account of his argument for this position, starting with a focus on his notion of intuition and the role intuition plays in cognition. Allais argues that this role is that of giving us acquaintance with the objects of cognition, and that this explains how a priori intuition can provide Kant's general answer to his question of how synthetic a priori cognition is possible. She argues that this general question, including in its application to geometry, does not concern how we justify synthetic a priori claims but how it is possible for them to concern given objects and therefore qualify as cognition. Kant argues that this requires a priori intuition and he takes this to lead to idealism.

The historical and conceptual roots of Kant's transcendental idealist conception of space are then pursued in Chapter 4, “Kant on the Ideality of Space and the Argument from Spinozism,” by **Michela Massimi**. She explains that Kant's engagement with Newton's account of absolute space was complex and problematic. The received view has it that after endorsing relationism about space in his *Physical Monadology* in 1756, Kant came to defend Newton's absolute space in the 1768 text, *Directions of Space*. But Kant's flirting with Newton's absolute space was short-lived, soon to be ended with the *Inaugural Dissertation* in 1770, where the ideality of space was first introduced, and fully defended in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this chapter Massimi focuses on one particular aspect of Kant's departure from Newton's absolute space: what she calls the *argument from Spinozism*. First she clarifies the argument's premises and structure, highlighting what she takes to be the Newtonian spirit of its premises. Second, she argues that Kant's reasons for associating absolute space with Spinozism are to be

found not in the debates (including charges of Spinozism) that surrounded Newton's own view and Newtonianism about space. Instead, they have to be looked for in an influential metaphysical tradition that – from Leibniz, to Baumgarten – addressed what she calls *the problem of the world* as a totality of substances in interaction. Thus Massimi ultimately argues that we should read and understand Kant's defense of idealism about space in the argument from Spinozism against the latter intellectual backdrop.

Moving now from the forms of space and time, as the sensible conditions on our knowledge, to the forms of judgment and the categories as its intellectual conditions, in Chapter 5, "How Precise Is Kant's Table of Judgments?," **Michael Wolff** explains how Kant's Table of Judgments provides the ground plan for his Critical philosophy and for the systematic form of all its parts. This is why Kant emphasizes that this Table is complete and precise: complete insofar as it can be proved that there is no logical function and no logical form which does not contribute to what Kant calls the 'quantity,' 'quality,' 'relation,' or 'modality' of a judgment, and precise insofar as it can be shown that in each of the four cases there are no less than three 'moments' of the logical form of a judgment. Michael Wolff has long been a leading commentator on these aspects of Kant's thought, so Ken Westphal's translation of this new essay by Wolff into English will certainly be welcomed by many English-speaking readers of Kant's first *Critique*.

From the logical forms of judgment and Kant's 'metaphysical deduction' of the categories, as it is called, we then come to Chapter 6 and **Barry Stroud**'s analysis of the leading ideas behind "Kant's 'Transcendental Deduction.'" Overall Stroud provides a schematic description of the goal of Kant's "Transcendental Deduction," the general structure of the argument, the conditions of its success, and its implications for the defense of "transcendental idealism." Both those new to Kant's argument and seasoned readers of the secondary literature on the Deduction will find much of value in Stroud's careful delineation of its aims and implications, including the difficult questions that Stroud takes the argument to leave us with.

**James Conant** argues in Chapter 7 that the argument of Kant's Transcendental Deduction has generally been misinterpreted by the main lines of twentieth century English-speaking commentary on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In "Kant's Critique of the Layer-Cake Conception of Human Mindedness in the B Deduction," Conant suggests that according to many commentators, the point of the Transcendental Deduction is to show that the categories of the understanding represent conditions on the thinkability for us of that which is heterogeneously given to us in a self-standing form of sensible consciousness. He argues that Kant should rather be read as

taking aim at the central assumption that underlies such a reading – namely, the assumption that our nature as sensibly receptive beings, in so far as it makes a contribution to cognition, represents a self-standingly intelligible aspect of our nature. According to Conant a proper understanding of the B Deduction requires appreciating how it involves a rewriting of the A-Deduction with an eye to highlighting why the standard way of summarizing the teaching of the *Critique of Pure Reason* involves a fundamental misunderstanding of its teaching.

**Patricia Kitcher** then takes up a different fundamental theme in the Deduction, one that is also central to Kant's "Paralogisms of Pure Reason" later in the Transcendental Dialectic section of the *Critique*. In Chapter 8 on "The Critical and 'Empty' Representation 'I Think,'" Kitcher explains how in the Transcendental Deduction Kant describes the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception as the "highest principle" of cognition (e.g., A117n, B136), the principle from which much (other) a priori cognition can be gleaned. According to this principle, any mental state or representation must belong to a common cognitive subject, an 'I think' in Kant's terminology. Yet in the Paralogisms chapter, Kant characterizes the representation 'I think' as 'empty' (A345–46/B403–4). The tension between these central doctrines (the 'I think' principle is the most important principle of cognition; the representation 'I think' has no content) has led scholars to reject Kant's claims for the importance of the principle of apperception. In this chapter, Kitcher attempts to establish that Kant has a solid argument for the transcendental unity of apperception and that, when we understand how that argument works, we can also understand his puzzling claim about the emptiness of the representation 'I think.'

In Chapter 9 **Lisa Shabel** then investigates "Kant's Mathematical Principles of Pure Understanding," a chapter which clarifies key concepts and principles that are intimately related to other key sections of the *Critique* as well, such as the Transcendental Aesthetic, the Schematism, and the Discipline of Pure Reason. As Shabel explains, the mathematical principles of pure understanding (the Axioms of Intuition and the Anticipations of Perception) are those judgments that are meant to establish the application of the categories of quantity and quality to the objects of possible experience. The principles of pure mathematics are the axioms or fundamental truths of the mathematical sciences. Both sets of principles comprise judgments that are, according to Kant, intuitively certain, synthetic, and a priori knowable, but the former (mathematical principles of pure understanding) ground the "possibility and objective a priori validity" of the latter (principles of pure mathematics). In this chapter Shabel explores the relation

that the mathematical principles of pure understanding bear to the principles of mathematics proper, while also exploring Kant's very notion of a "principle," whether of pure understanding, mathematics, or sensibility.

From the mathematical principles we then move to Chapter 10 and **Kenneth R. Westphal's** analysis of "Kant's Dynamical Principles: The Analogies of Experience." Westphal explains that Kant's justification of a transeunt account of causal interaction – contra Hume – is not in the Second Analogy of Experience alone, but in all three Analogies conjointly. Officially the *Critique of Pure Reason* aims to justify our use of the general causal principle: every event has a cause. The relevant causal principle is more specific: every spatiotemporal event has a distinct spatiotemporal cause. The Critically justified use of this specific principle is still more specific, according to Westphal, because this *regulative* principle of causal inquiry obtains *constitutive* significance only by making true and justified causal judgments about particular causal relations among spatiotemporal phenomena. On Westphal's analysis of Kant's arguments, identifying actual causal relations requires conjoint use of all three principles of causal judgment because causal judgments are discriminatory: we can identify any one causal relation only by distinguishing it from causally possible alternative scenarios. According to Westphal, Kant's analysis of legitimate causal judgments bears upon such issues as 'relevant alternatives' in epistemology, justificatory fallibilism, the role of imagination in cognitive judgment and the semantics of singular cognitive reference (predication as a cognitive achievement, not merely as a grammatical or logical form). Kant's analysis of causal judgment and its a priori transcendental conditions hold independently of transcendental idealism, Westphal argues, because Kant's 'Analytic of Principles' (to which the 'Analogies' belong) is a transcendental 'Doctrine of the Power of Judgment' (B171ff.).

In Chapter 11 **Ralf M. Bader** then analyses Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" in the B-Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* by examining the conditions that must be satisfied for inner states to be objectively determined in time, focusing in particular on the question to what extent their temporal ordering is parasitic on an objective ordering of outer states. Such a dependence of the ordering of inner states on that of outer states would show, contrary to the problematic idealist, that one's existence (understood in terms of one's mental states) cannot be objectively determined in time unless there is an external world. Bader carefully sorts through complex questions concerning the starting points and assumptions of Kant's argument, as well as its implications for varieties of both skepticism and idealism.

Continuing to follow the broad structure of Kant's first *Critique* itself, we then move from the Transcendental Analytic to the Dialectic, beginning in Chapter 12 with **Graham Bird** on "The Antinomies: An Entirely Natural Antithetic of Human Reason" (Kitcher's chapter having addressed key themes from the Paralogisms). Kant refers, in his own terminology, to the traditional conflicts outlined in the Antinomies as an "entirely natural antithetic of human reason" (B433). Bird highlights how this terminology reflects Kant's central aim in the Antinomies to resolve issues where reason inevitably "comes into conflict with itself" (Axii–xiii) and "precipitates itself into darkness and contradictions" (Aviii). That project, Bird explains, is an essential part of Kant's wish to reform philosophy by laying bare the underlying errors which have encouraged the futile pursuit of these apparently insoluble conflicts. Bird argues that the upshot of Kant's account, however, is not negatively to reject reason but only to restrict it by recognizing more positively its legitimate function. That conclusion is captured in his claim that reason has only a "regulative," but not a "constitutive" role. Kant's position has been much criticized, but recently among commentators such as Allison (1983), *A Defense of Transcendental Idealism*, and Grier (2001), *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, these criticisms have been modified. Bird's chapter looks in detail at Kant's account of the first and third Antinomies which exemplify respectively what Kant distinguishes as "mathematical" and "dynamical" antinomies.

The analysis of the Antinomies leads smoothly into **John J. Callanan's** Chapter 13 investigation of Kant's conception of "The Ideal of Reason." As Callanan explains, Kant's critical analyses regarding the origin and basis of religious belief have often been interpreted negatively and as undermining ordinary attitudes, despite Kant's intentions to the contrary. This suspicious reception, Callanan claims, stems not just from Kant's famous attack on possible proofs for the existence of God but also on his account of the positive grounds for the origin of our concept of God. Kant's account engages with a tradition that had raised the possibility of a radical difference between human and divine rationality and that also questioned the motives for perceiving any commonality between them. Callanan argues that Kant's account can be seen to be premised on an acceptance of many such claims, yet nevertheless demands that such attitudes remain rationally warranted. Focusing on the notion of an *archetype*, Callanan contends that Kant's Critical account demands the peculiar position that it is one of the "interests" of human rationality that it projects its characteristics onto the idea of a divine being, yet only for the purpose of subsequently viewing human reason as a copy of that original divine reason.

Finally we turn to the concluding sections of the first *Critique*, and in particular to **Andrew Chignell's** Chapter 14 analysis of Kant's views on "Knowledge, Discipline, System, Hope: The Fate of Metaphysics in the Doctrine of Method." In this chapter Chignell highlights the apparent tensions between Kant's very stringent critique of metaphysical speculation in the "Discipline of Pure Reason" chapter and his endorsement of Belief (*Glaube*) and hope (*Hoffnung*) regarding metaphysical theses in the subsequent "Canon of Pure Reason." In the process Chignell examines Kant's distinctions between the theoretical and the practical bases for holding a "theoretical" conclusion (i.e., a conclusion about "what exists" rather than "what ought to be") and argues that the position is subtle but coherent. In the second part of the essay Chignell then focuses on Kant's account of rational hope in the Doctrine of Method: its nature, scope, conditions, and role in the philosophy of religion generally.

For the more detailed explanations and arguments, of course, we now turn to the chapters themselves. I would like to end this introduction, however, by thanking all of the above contributors to this volume for their exceptionally kind patience and persistent hard work in producing what I hope has turned out to be a helpful and thought-provoking critical guide to Kant's extraordinary book. Special thanks also to Ken Westphal for his translation of Michael Wolff's essay, to Fabio Gironi for his work on the Index, and to Hilary Gaskin of Cambridge University Press for her perceptive guidance from start to finish.



## CHAPTER I

*Kant on the Distinction between Sensibility  
and Understanding**Eric Watkins\**

Fundamental to Kant's mature theoretical philosophy as it is expressed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is his distinction between appearances, or things as they appear to us, and things in themselves, or things as they are in themselves. The distinction is necessarily presupposed, for example, by transcendental idealism, the view that we can have theoretical cognition only of appearances, which essentially depend on space and time as merely subjective forms of sensible intuition, and not of things in themselves, which cannot be given to our senses and thus must lie forever beyond the limits of our cognition, even if they can be objects of thought. But Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves depends, in turn, on his distinction between sensibility and the understanding. For appearances, he maintains, can be given to us only through sensibility, and things in themselves can be thought by us only through the understanding.<sup>1</sup> It is thus crucial that we understand the exact nature of the distinction Kant wants to draw between these two faculties and what argument he can offer in favor of drawing the distinction in the way that he does. His entire theoretical philosophy depends on it.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is possible to come to a full appreciation of the distinction Kant draws between sensibility and the understanding in the first *Critique* only if we take a broader historical view, one that includes several of his pre-Critical works as well as his relation to his predecessors. For on this

\* Thanks to Lucy Allais, Tobias Rosefeldt, Clinton Tolley, and Marcus Willaschek for two rounds of comments on earlier versions of this essay. This should lay to rest any doubts about the possibility of supererogatory acts.

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between sensibility and understanding, which are faculties, differs from that between intuition and concept, which are representations. However, the fact that human intuition is, for Kant, sensible and not intellectual can, at times, make it difficult to discern whether it is the sensible or the intuitive character of a sensible intuition that is supposed to bear philosophical weight.

<sup>2</sup> The standard view, represented by Hans Vaihinger, Michael Wolff, and Lorne Falkenstein, is that Kant has no argument for the distinction and that it is thus a fundamental, un-argued-for assumption of the first *Critique*. See also Gloy (1990).

latter point, Kant explicitly criticizes both his rationalist and empiricist predecessors for mistakenly conceiving of the distinction as involving a difference of degree rather than a difference in kind. Specifically, Kant charges, “Leibniz **intellectualized** the appearances, just as Locke **sensitized** the concepts of the understanding” (A271/B327).<sup>3</sup> That is, Locke “sensitized” our understanding’s representations by rejecting innate ideas and trying to trace all of our ideas back to experience (whether that takes the form of sensation or reflection), while Leibniz “intellectualized” appearances by holding that our sensory representations are not in fact generated by external objects affecting the senses, but rather are simply confused modes of intellectual representations. As a result, Kant thinks, “instead of seeking two entirely different sources of representations in the understanding and sensibility . . . , each of these great men holds on only to one of the two, which relates immediately, in his opinion, to things in themselves, while the other does nothing but confuse or order the representations of the first” (A271/B327). Thus, rather than first positing a single faculty that privileges one kind of representation and then explaining the other kind away as a deficient exemplar of the former by appealing to some difference in degree between the two (e.g., in their degrees of clarity and distinctness), Kant asserts the need for “two entirely different” faculties of sensibility and the understanding that can then be used to account for the differences between these different kinds of representations. But this gives rise to two central questions. What exactly is the nature of each of these faculties? And why should we think that they are distinct in kind, as Kant supposes?

Though we shall be able to appreciate the complexity of Kant’s answer to the first question only after we have considered some central pre-Critical texts (especially the Inaugural Dissertation (*ID*)), it is useful to have a brief preview of his main answer to the second question. Kant takes sensibility and understanding to differ in kind, I suggest, both because they are responsible for representations that have different and in fact irreducible representational characters, which allow sensible and discursive clarity, respectively, and because they fulfill different functions within cognition insofar as, unlike the understanding, sensibility allows for objects to be given to us in intuition in such a way that we are immediately aware of the existence of objects and can provide evidence that our understanding’s judgments actually refer to what exists.

<sup>3</sup> All translations are my own, though I have frequently consulted the relevant volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.