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PART ONE

Preliminary Observations: Rethinking the Object

KANT MAINTAINS THAT every human advancement, especially in the sciences, originates in a revolution in the mode of thinking, which elevates a certain domain of knowledge to the level of an apodictic science. In the past, this had taken place in mathematics and physics, and now, after many centuries of groping in the dark, the conditions are ripe for a revolution that would signal the royal road also for philosophy.

The core of the philosophical revolution lies in a completely new understanding of the concept of object, or objective being, and its relation to human knowledge. Kant compares the required reversal to the one Copernicus performed in astronomy. Until Copernicus, the earth was seen as fixed in the center and the sun as revolving around it. Copernicus made us see that, on the contrary, the sun stands in the center while the earth revolves around it. Similarly, philosophers since ancient times believed that human knowledge revolves around the object, that is, must fit the structure and features of an object that stands in itself independently from the outset, and does not depend on the process of knowledge. The Kantian revolution abolishes the object's metaphysical independence and makes it dependent on

the structure of human knowledge. The structure of the object—meaning the empirical object, the only one we know—is derived a priori (free of sense-experience) from the human understanding (intellect) that connects a multitude of sensible items into a unity; and the modes of this unification are drawn from the primordial unity of the "I think." Kant's bold idea thus says that the understanding, in knowing the world, does not copy the basic patterns of its knowledge from the world, but rather *dictates* these patterns to the world. Doing so is a condition for the very existence of an empirical world ruled by necessary laws (which alone deserves the title "objective"), and for the existence of real objects and events in it.

This means not that the human understanding creates the world ex nihilo, but that it constitutes a cosmos from chaos. The understanding is a formal, a priori structure that cannot function without the material we acquire from the senses by being passively exposed to them. The senses supply the understanding with a crude element that is not yet a real object but only the material for it; and the understanding, a spontaneous factor, must order and shape this material according to its (the understanding's) own a priori modes of operation.

This implies that objectivity is a status that is *constituted* rather than immediately given or passively encountered. When the understanding applies its a priori patterns, called "categories," to the sensible material, it creates an objective synthesis between them. It is this objective synthesis that constitutes the empirical entities and states of affairs that deserve being called real or objective. As such, the concepts "object," "objectivity," and "empirical reality" acquire a radically new philosophical interpretation.

At the background of this doctrine stands the recognition that all the contents of our thinking and perception are mental images (called "ideas" by Descartes and Hume, and "representations" [*Vorstellungen*] by Kant) and never things beyond the mind. Humans have no way of leaping outside the sphere of the mental and hold on to something that lies in itself beyond their representations. Therefore, even such features as permanence

and substantiality, and the rest of the necessary relations that build up an objective state of affairs, must be drawn *from the mind itself*—in its function as intellect.

Few would deny that an objective state of affairs lays down a normative model to which, in order to be true, all our cognitive propositions must correspond while also agreeing among themselves.[1] This is a nominal feature of truth; and the question is how the correspondence is achieved. The prevailing metaphysical realism maintains that objective states of affairs exist in themselves, outside the mind, which must adjust its representations to them; whereas Kant reverses this order in stating it is the mind itself that endows the representations with the unity, the permanence, and the necessary relations by which the objective state of affairs (in short, the object) is constituted.

The Foundations of the Sciences

The question about the object takes in Kant also the form of the question about *the foundations of mathematics and the natural sciences*: what makes their validity possible? The two issues converge because it is on the scientific level of knowledge that the synthesis of the sensual materials that constitutes an object is carried out. For this reason—and also because of the historical context—the question about the natural sciences and the question about the object are two faces of the same investigation by which Kant sought to create a critical metaphysics. Many English-speaking interpreters, as well as neo-Kantian German scholars, tended to present the issue from the viewpoint of the natural sciences, and thereby reduced Kant's philosophical innovation to epistemology and the validity of science. The present study prefers the standpoint of the object, in order to highlight the Critique's broader philosophical meaning (and role in modern thinking), which concerns the human being's standing in the

1. That is, every true proposition (judgment) regarding the object should agree with every other true proposition regarding the same object.

universe and his or her relation with the world—including the world of action, ethics, and history—and not only the validity of the science we possess.

In this context, two opposed and complementary directions are to be observed. On the one hand, Kant's revolution places the human subject at the metaphysical/philosophical center, as a constitutive and determining factor with respect to the world and within it.[2] On the other hand, human reason, in all its doings, is inexorably dependent on the presence of sensible material—the given of Being—without which the spontaneous activity of reason could not take place, or would be meaningless and void of content. As a result, Kant distinguishes himself from all his predecessors who were philosophers of reason—from Plato to Descartes and from Spinoza to Leibniz and from the thinkers of the pre-Critical enlightenment—and stands in dual opposition to them: first, in ascribing to human reason an extraordinary power within its legitimate domain, and second, in radically shrinking and limiting this domain. Hence, as much as Kant is the modern philosopher of reason in its world-shaping role, he is also the genuine philosopher of reason's *finitude* and the finitude of the human being.

The Critique as Self-Consciousness and as an Act of Autonomy

This duality already inheres in the Kantian concept of critique, which has an affirmative and a negative side. The Critique is a complex reflective act in which philosophical reason explores and examines *itself*. Due to his tendency to legal metaphors, Kant assigns the Critique the mission "to institute a court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere

2. Copernicus dwarfed man's *physical* place in the universe, while Kant responds with upgrading man's *metaphysical* role.

decrees but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws."[3] The ruling of this court is based upon a descriptive examination of the facts and functions of reason that allows to determine its limits and pass judgment on all its claims, the valid and the invalid. In this respect, the Critique is first of all a mode of philosophical self-consciousness. Kant argues that such self-consciousness must precede and prepare, and also criticize in advance, all claims to know objects. The knowing human subject must first know itself, its mental capabilities and inexorable ontological limitations, before trying to determine anything about the world, what it contains, and what is supposed to lie beyond it.

In calling his Critique "an essay on method" Kant links onto an issue that has been on the philosophical agenda since Bacon and Descartes. Most premodern philosophers (excepting Spinoza) agreed that prior to setting out to know, one must study and determine the nature of knowledge itself and how it is legitimately obtained.[4] Kant widely broadens this approach: in order to know the ways and modes of knowledge one must first know the *knowing being*, and the spectrum of his or her capabilities—mainly, though not only, the a priori capabilities, those that are not derived from experience. The Critique, says Kant, in performing this task, serves as "propaedeutic" (preparatory essay) to a new, valid metaphysics that would at long last count as a rigorous science rather than mere opinion. However, we should notice that the Critique itself already supplies substantive philosophical contents and not merely a formal method, and can therefore be seen as a *philosophical science of self-consciousness*

3. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), preface of the first edition (Axi–xii).

4. Spinoza claimed, against the mainstream of modern philosophy, that in order to know what certain knowledge is, one should already possess certain knowledge. Therefore, substantive knowledge is prior to knowing the method, and is even a precondition for it.

and a kind of "metaphysics of metaphysics," as Kant himself once called it.[5]

This new metaphysics that the Critique was to prepare was meant to branch off into two branches, a critical metaphysics of *nature* (including epistemology and ontology), and a critical metaphysics of *moral action* (including law, politics, history, and a moral religion). But again, it turns out that the Critique itself offers a substantive theory, not only of self-consciousness but also of the foundations of the natural world. For, according to the "Copernican" principle set by the Critique, the conditions for *thinking* objects in nature are equally the conditions for these *to be* objects in nature. Therefore, in knowing the grounds of thinking natural objects we at once know the first grounds of nature itself, that is, we possess what Kant calls "a pure science of nature" (and also, "nature in a formal sense"). Based on these foundations and on sensible materials, we also need an *empirical* science of nature (such as physics and its derivatives in astronomy, organic chemistry, biology), since it is only by empirical science that we come to know particular objects and specific natural laws, and even to know there is a world. And since empirical science is based on the a priori science, we are able to know in advance, as a conditional proposition, that *if* there is a natural world and there are natural objects in it, they all necessarily obey certain primary conditions, which the Critique determines and formulates a priori. In this respect, the Critique that exhibits the science of consciousness generates, by the same move, an a priori science of the foundations of nature.

This is the affirmative aspect of the Critique: discovering the legitimate power of the understanding in constituting the formal foundations of nature. Yet the same reason that affirms this power and ascribes it to itself at the same time realizes its boundaries and forbids itself to contravene them. This is its negative role. In Kant's legal metaphor, reason stands trial before its own court:

5. In a letter to Marcus Hertz, 11 May 1781.

not only does it discover its limits through a *cognitive* act, it also determines itself, in an act of will, to respect those limits and prevail over the temptation to transgress them, a temptation that Kant sees as inherent in the nature of rationality and therefore as possessing a privileged power, which nevertheless must and can be overcome. This means, in Kantian terms, that *the Critique performs an act of autonomy already in the field of knowledge*.

Kant's concept of autonomy is usually associated with the areas of action and morality, where it refers to the will that restrains itself according to the laws of its own rational nature (as spelled out in the categorical imperative) and thereby attains self-determination and freedom. A similar pattern exists (latently) in the critique of knowledge: theoretical reason restrains itself—not in an arbitrary and accidental way but "according to the eternal and unchangeable" laws of reason itself (see the quote above, Axii), and thus realizes itself and becomes autonomous. In less doctrinal words, by submitting to the limits of reason, with all the pain and sense of loss this may entail, there lies a constructive liberating force.

Finite Rational Beings

Accordingly, Kant calls the human being "a limited rational being" and also "a finite thinking being." Both adjectives, "rational" and "finite," are equally essential to the definition (and to each other). The human being is not rational in separation from his finitude; rather, his reason is finite and his finitude rational. This intermediation is central to Kant's theory of man. We cannot be rational except through reason's finitude, just as this finitude must be attributed to us as creatures of reason from the outset.

No Intellectual Intuition

A major expression of human finitude is the ontological fact that we have no intellectual intuition nor an intuiting intellect. By intuition Kant understands the perception of particulars, and by

intellectual activity he means the thinking of universal concepts and principles. An intuiting intellect (an imaginary construct) would, by thinking a universal concept or principle, know immediately all the particulars that fall within the range of that universal principle, without having to acquire them inductively from external sources, like sense perception. And intellectual intuition is one that observes a single particular and immediately sees in it the full power of the corresponding universal, without the need to go through all other particulars in order to draw the universal from them. These two modes of perception express one and a single capability, by whose negation the human finitude is defined, namely, the power to grasp immediately, without further assistance, the universal factor within a single particular and the totality of particulars within the common universal they share. The activity of such an intellect is creative throughout, devoid of all sensibility and subject to no external influence, yet particularizes itself into specific contents.

Kant does not say there are actually creatures with such superhuman qualities, nor that there is a God who fulfills this ideal; he uses this superhuman image only as a model against which to define our own limitations, the kind of rationality we *do not* possess. The starting point of the Critique is that *humans are not endowed with an intuitive intellect*. Our intellect can only think, and our intuition can only perceive particulars. In other words, human intellect is discursive and not intuitive,[6] and human intuition is always sensible and never intellectual. These two, thinking and intuition (more precisely, sensation, which serves intuition as material), are two radically distinct operations that should by no means be confused. Rather, their rigorous separation is the living nerve of the Critique. The intellect's action is spontaneous and flows from itself, whereas

6. Intuitive—grasping immediately or seeing at once the entirety of the issue; discursive—gaining knowledge by the mediation of universal concepts, deductions, and inferences, etc.

sensation is receptive, and passively driven by outside stimuli (just as the British empiricists described it). Thereby the intellect is considered pure and a priori, contrary to sensation, which is empirical and a posteriori. Yet the intellect is merely formal, and depends on sense perception in order to receive the necessary data for the cognition of objects. Therefore, albeit the fundamental heterogeneity between them, our intuition and understanding must work together in order for us to have an objective cognition and an empirical world to be cognized. Here it is worthwhile quoting Kant's own words:

> Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is *given* to us, through the latter it is *thought* in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). Intuitions and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognitions, so that neither concepts without intuitions corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition. Both are either pure or empirical. *Empirical*, if sensation (which presupposes the actual presence of the object) is contained therein; but *pure* if no sensation is mixed into the representation. (A50/B74)

> If we will call the *receptivity* of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way *sensibility*, then on the contrary the faculty bringing forth representations itself, or the *spontaneity* of cognitions, is the *understanding*. It comes along with our nature that *intuition* can never be other than *sensible*, i.e. that it contains only the way in which we are affected by objects. The faculty for *thinking* of objects of sensible intuition, on the contrary, is the *understanding*. Neither of these properties is to be preferred to the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and

> without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. . . . These two faculties or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise. But on this account one must not mix up their roles, rather one has great cause to separate them carefully from each other and distinguish them. (A51–52/B75–76)

The radical heterogeneity between these two sources—spontaneity and receptivity, or the pure and the sensible—is the foundation of the rigorous dualism that characterizes Kant in *all* parts of his system. Kant needs to sharply separate between the two in order to maintain critical purity in knowledge and in ethics, yet on the other hand he needs to link them reciprocally to ensure the possibility of knowing objects and performing moral action. Hence the problem of bridging the duality (known as "schematism" in the broad sense) that recurs in most parts of his system: what is it that enables the two poles to come together despite their stark heterogeneity? Some Kant followers suggested that both the intellect and the senses branch off from a secret and unknowable common root, but Kant adamantly rejected this solution. The unknowable source can only be intellectual intuition, and whoever affirms the existence of such a source is already claiming to know and to use it. The question of the common source lies beyond the scope of reason, and the Critique, which expresses the structure of the rational creature we are, must necessarily start from human duality as an unshakable fact.

Skepticism and Dogmatism

The Critique also traces Kant's road between the two great ills he finds in philosophy, dogmatism and skepticism. Dogmatism ascribes to human reason capacities it does not possess, and

skepticism denies it the capabilities it does possess. The first builds groundless castles in the air, the second undermines all the grounded buildings. Thus dogmatism is flawed by excessive affirmation and skepticism by excessive negation, whereas the Critique, after rigorous scrutiny, combines within itself the negation and affirmation in a state of reciprocal and balanced tension. Historically, Kant associates dogmatism with Leibniz's rationalist school and skepticism with the British empiricists; at the same time he finds that each of those opposing movements also commits its opponent's fallacy: empiricist skepticism is dogmatic since it does not question its own presuppositions, and rationalist dogmatism breeds skepticism because it leads to inner contradictions in reason.

Dogmatism is usually understood as a stubborn or habitual attachment to an unproven position. Kant gives the concept further, more specific interpretations. First, Kant's dogmatist is a philosopher of reason who not only affirms something without proof, but also fails to check whether *in principle* it can be proved (or refuted). Second, the term "dogmatism" indicates in Kant not only a flawed intellectual disposition, but also a specific philosophical position, the one his Copernican revolution is out to reverse. A dogmatic in Kant's vocabulary takes it for granted that objects are things in themselves, and that reason can derive existence from mere concepts without the cooperation of experience. The dogmatic therefore believes that reason can know what lies beyond experience, to penetrate into the "interior" of things, as it were, and rise to the knowledge of God, the freedom of the will, immortality, and the cosmos as totality—the traditional queries of metaphysics.

Among the dogmatists Kant counts all the rationalists since antiquity, including Plato, Aristotle, the scholastics of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and in recent generations—Leibniz, with his army of followers, and he himself, Kant, in his precritical period. In those years, Kant says, he had been submerged in "dogmatic slumber," until skeptical challenges drove

him to discover a new road. Who exactly awoke Kant from his slumber? Kant's answer has two versions. In a famous place in the *Prolegomena* Kant gives the credit to Hume,[7] while elsewhere he attributes his awakening to the antinomy of reason.[8] These two sources are allegedly distinct, but as we shall see later, they are actually linked.

By the antinomy of reason Kant refers to the contradictions that inhere in philosophical reasoning when it tries to conceive of the world in its totality and describe its characteristics without critique. Does the world in itself have a beginning in time? Is it finite or infinite in space? Is the world made up of free, contingent events, or is it deterministic? Questions such as these have resulted in paradoxes and contradictions ever since Zeno of Elea—especially when the answer takes on the form of formal proof. Thus the authority of reason was undermined as contradictory arguments were equally supported by reason.

Kant started with the presupposition he held unshakable, that reason, by its very concept, cannot contradict itself. Therefore, if nevertheless we encounter a stubborn antinomy that refuses to disappear, it must necessarily be a merely apparent contradiction that, however, is deeply rooted in our ordinary ways of thinking. From here Kant's way led to searching for the deep causes of the contradiction, and their removal. The conclusion of this investigation was that seeming contradictions occur when our mode of thinking takes the objects of our knowledge to be things in themselves. Therefore the Copernican reversal is needed, which replaces the dogmatic way of thinking with a critical way that sharply distinguishes between objects as phenomena and as things in themselves. Thereby naïve realism is replaced by the philosophical outlook Kant names Transcendental Idealism. And since the latter allows, as

7. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. L. W. Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), introduction, 8.

8. A407/B434, and regarding the cosmological idea, *Prolegomena* §50.

by-product, to solve the antinomy and restore reason to itself as a coherent system, Kant sees this result as reinforcing the reversal he suggested.

David Hume, as Kant reads him, actually awoke Kant twice: first, as a modern skeptic who destroys the possibility of the new science, and consequently also as a classical skeptic who finds contractions and *aporias* in reason. Hume had started from Locke's empiricist doctrine, which states that all our valid concepts, and even the Understanding (intellect) itself, are derived exclusively from experience. From here Hume rightly concluded that on this basis we shall never be able to reach an objective being, nor universal and necessary natural laws and phenomena. Our natural laws will always rely on incomplete induction and therefore will never be truly universal, and our ideas will be linked by merely accidental associations that do not necessarily express an objective reality. Conclusion: from the philosophical standpoint, a universal and necessary science is impossible. On the other side, Kant could not imagine Hume denying Newton's laws nor their mathematical demonstrations or foundations. On the contrary, he assumed that Hume's "good sense" would force him to accept the mathematical physics of his time even though his rational-philosophical reasoning tells him—necessarily, given his empiricist assumptions—that such a science is impossible. Result: a valid natural science is both real and impossible—a contradiction that undermines the very authority of reason.[9]

The cause of this contradiction, Kant thought, was not the failure of empirical natural science as such, but the failure of philosophical reason, *as long as it is based on empiricist assumptions*. Hence, in order to explain the possibility of natural science we must abandon the assumptions of empiricism and assume instead that the understanding is an independent and

9. According to my interpretation, this is how Kant understood Hume. (I do not necessarily imply it is how Hume himself meant to be understood.)

separate a priori fact, and that it is the action of the pure understanding that introduces the necessary connections into the matter of experience, thus constituting an object and an objective world.[10]

From here one can see that Kant's struggle against skepticism and dogmatism concerns not only method but content as well. It does not simply seek a middle position between the two but anticipates Kant's distinctive positive philosophy. The same Copernican thesis that replaces dogmatism is also meant to refute the skeptics in both their ancient rationalist form and their modern empiricist version, and its success in doing so provides a reinforcement of the revolutionary thesis.[11]

The term "reason" has several meanings in Kant. Its broadest sense refers to the human mind in its general capacity for intellectual thinking and self-consciousness—that which distinguishes us as humans. In a much narrower sense, the term points to all the mind's *pure* (absolutely a priori) functions, those that contain no sensible elements and are not derived from the senses. (As we shall see later, there is also pure intuition and pure imagination in Kant, and not only pure thinking.) Finally, pure thinking works either as "understanding" (*Verstand*) or as "reason" (*Vernunft*) in a restricted technical sense. Understanding/*Verstand* works by applying itself to the senses, while reason/*Vernunft* does not relate to the senses, but works to systematically order the scientific products of the intellect, while striving, beyond them, to take off toward an unconditioned reality.

The title "critique of pure reason" connotes all three. (1) The Critique explores and maps the overall range of human

10. It is worth noting that Hume himself mentions such a conclusion, but dismisses it as an absurd idea that contradicts common sense. Kant, however, dared taking this allegedly absurd idea seriously, and used it as a foundation for a new worldview.

11. The indirect confirmation of the Copernican turn will be addressed in detail when we discuss the "regressive argument" of the Transcendental Deduction and the antinomies.

intellectual capacity; (2) it concentrates especially on the mind's "pure" or a priori functions; (3) the Critique's negative and restraining side refers to reason in the transcendent narrow sense, that is, dogmatic rational theology and philosophy that claims to know the unknowable.

Actually there is in Kant no notion of reason as such, as a Platonic idea; there are *creatures* of reason, for whom finite rationality is their essential mode of being and acting. Kant insists he is investigating this activity not as a causal process in time, that is, not as an empirical psychologist would study them, but as a philosopher investigating the atemporal forms by which objects are thought. Thus he sets up a new kind of logic (a "'transcendental logic") supplanting the formal logic (see later). Kant was interested in deciphering these forms of logic (in knowledge and ethics) so that some readers get the impression that reason for him was an inert formal calculus, a system of mere static rules. However, Kantian reason, by its nature and source, is always the activity of a rational *subject* operating in the first person and capable (at least latently) to say "I" to itself in all its thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and acts of will.

Furthermore, the subject-dependent Kantian reason is not inert. It is driven by certain inner tendencies that strive toward goals that inhere in rationality itself. Therefore, to get a fuller view of Kant's background assumptions, we should consider his concept of "the interests of reason."

The Interests of Reason and Its History

The "interests of reason" is a key concept in Kant's metaphilosophy and, in different variations, recurs hundreds of times in his works. In the Critique it is implied in the two prefaces and arises again, more explicitly, toward the end, in the chapters on the *architectonic of reason* and the *history of reason*. From these meta-philosophical texts it is clear that the history of reason—its self-discovery and self-explication throughout the

ages—depends according to Kant on the clash between opposite interests of reason and the attempts to reconcile them.[12]

By reason's "architectonic" Kant means the art of building a system by which a cluster of random cognitions is given a scientific coherence and quasi-organic unity (see A832/B860). Kant emphasizes that the unification of the many ingredients into a system depends on the *goal* or *end* that organizes it. If the goals are external or accidental from reason's viewpoint, the unity of the system is merely *technical*.[13] A truly architectonic unity is achieved only when the organizing end of a system expresses the *essential ends* of reason. As human reason is limited and borne by a finite subject, the essential ends of reason are not necessarily in a state of realization; rather, reason strives to realize the ends imprinted in it, and this striving is configured as an *interest* of reason. In different contexts (historical, cultural, political, philosophical) it may well be that different rational interests look contradictory or actually clash; yet this cannot be their fundamental state. Hence the task of creating a valid philosophy requires us to reconcile different rational interests and find the right architectonic balance between them. The continued effort to do this is the history of reason—embodied in the history of philosophy—in which reason partially explicates itself to itself, while also generating obscurity and contradictions.

The nuclear paradigm of the system of reason is latent in human reason from its infancy, and comes into partial and flawed view in the various historical systems of philosophy. Philosophical progress may be achieved piecemeal on some disparate particular issues, but the systems built upon them, being one-sided and contradictory, must eventually collapse, leaving their ruins as building blocks for a later philosopher to pick up

12. Different versions of this necessary and dynamic link between rationality and subjectivity are characteristic of German Idealism.

13. In these cases reason acts instrumentally, serving not its own ends but the interests of others (as do strategists and technological systems).

for his new construction—which must expect a similar fate; and this process continues as long as the critique of reason has not performed its revolution.

Thus Kant identifies in the philosophical culture of his time a clash between the metaphysical interest of reason, embodied in Leibniz's dogmatic rationalism, and its critical interest, expressed one-sidedly in Hume's skepticism. The history of reason is thus the historization of its pure paradigm, the actual shape that reason's interests have assumed in their partial, one-sided, and contradictory embodiments in past philosophical trends and masters.[14]

Kant writes:

> Systems seem to have been formed, like maggots, by a *generatio aequivoca*, from the mere confluence of aggregated concepts, garbled at first but complete in time, although they all had their schema, as the original seed, in the mere self-development of reason, and on that account are not merely each articulated for themselves in accordance with an idea but are rather all in turn purposively united with each other as members of a whole in a system of human cognition, and allow an architectonic to all human knowledge, which at the present time, since so much material has already been collected or can be taken from the ruins of collapsed older edifices, would not merely be possible but would not even be very difficult. (A835/B863)

This historical process is driven by the interests of reason. Reason's interests are inherent to it and not directed to any external goal. In other words, *human rationality is a goal-oriented activity, whose goal lies in itself rather than in anything other than itself.* The common interest (call it a meta-interest) is the

14. It is surprising to notice how, in this argument, Kant anticipates ideas that were later ascribed to Hegel.

realization of rationality as end in itself in the various domains of human activity: in knowledge, in the activity of the will (morality, social, and political life), and also in the areas of beauty and the sublime. The striving for rationality thus takes different modes that constitute special interests of reason, including the *theoretical* interest (to know the world), the *practical* interest (to morally reshape the world), and also the *aesthetic* interest.[15] In addition there are rational interests that work in all domains: the *metaphysical* interest of reason, its *critical* interest, and the *architectonic* interest that seeks to establish the right balance between the other interests and to resolve the oppositions that occur between them in a given philosophical culture.

The topic of "The History of Pure Reason" (the last section in the book) was left undeveloped by Kant. But other, scattered, pages allow the following reconstruction of his views.

The metaphysical interest had characterized reason since ancient times and has gone through several transformations. This is the drive toward the absolute, the supersensible, the infinite, and the total. One cannot abolish this interest without abolishing rationality itself. Rationality demands a sufficient reason for everything finite, and will not cease until its explanations cover everything. Hence, the drive to transcend the world of finitude and the senses and rise to the infinite and total is essential to the human mind, and it would be irrational to disregard or try to eliminate it. However this drive has time and again generated fallacies and delusions, from ancient magic and mythology to religion in its several variations, and again to theology and the systems of dogmatic metaphysics that arose throughout the

15. The aesthetic interest is directed to the experiences of beauty as a universally valid judgment, and of sublimity as the embodiment of the infinite. Moreover, like cognitive truth and like the moral will, the beautiful is free from external interests, and its end is nothing but itself. These characteristics suggest that the beautiful embodies the essential features of Kantian rationality.

ages. In all of these, a genuine rational interest was given a false and distorted expression.

Unlike the primeval metaphysical interest, the critical interest is basically modern. In fact, its rise characterizes modernity. In its wider scope this interest demands to reexamine accepted beliefs and entrenched ways of thought and practice; but in a narrower sense it forbids making claims about real existence where no relevant sense perception is given—or *can* be given. Among other things, this means that any attempt to infer the existence of things from mere concepts, which is the way of thinking of the scholastics and of traditional ontology or metaphysics generally, is strictly banned.[16] Finally, reason's architectonic interest seeks to overcome the tensions and oppositions between its specific interests (the result of their being falsely interpreted), and to reconfigure them according to their true meaning, so that they complement each other in one coherent system.

Kant described his project in three programmatic texts: the two prefaces to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the opening sections of the *Prolegomena*, and in all three he says it responds to the urgent need to resolve the antinomy that arose in reason between the metaphysical interest and the critical interest. Both are necessary conditions of rationality, yet they oppose each other in the contemporary philosophical culture. While many cling obstinately to an antiquated, "worm-eaten" metaphysics, others despise all metaphysics or treat it with indifference. Kant diagnoses this indifference as feigned and built on self-deception. "It is pointless to affect **indifference** with respect to such inquiries, to whose object human nature **cannot be indifferent**" (Ax). Nevertheless, Kant realizes that the indifference does not express lightweight thinking, but results from the "ripened **power of judgment [of the age]**, which will no longer be

16. We already saw that Kant has a specific concept of "dogmatism"; parallel to it, he has a specific sense of "critique." Both concern the claim to derive reality from an a priori concept (without the aid of intuition).

put off with illusory knowledge" (Axi). This power is the critical drive of reason that attained maturity in the age of Enlightenment, and now has the task of creating the basis for a new, critical metaphysics, which would reconcile the different interests of reason and have the status of "science," that is, a valid and certain body of knowledge.[17] This, he says, is his goal not only in the present Critique but also in those to follow, suggesting that practical philosophy will also belong to the critical metaphysics, and serve as a metaphysics of morals.

17. With these explicit declarations, Kant disproves a long tradition of interpretation that was especially current in the English-speaking world, according to which Kant had destroyed metaphysics. Kant, however, believed that he only abolished the possibility for dogmatic metaphysics, and established the critical metaphysics in its place. In the following pages we will see how he could justify this view.

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