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Kant and Wittgenstein: Common Sense, Therapy, and the Critical Philosophy

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Abstract Kant's reputation for making absolutist claims about universal and necessary conditions for the possibility of experience are put here in the broader context of his goals for the Critical philosophy. It is shown that within that context, Kant's claims can be seen as considerably more innocuous than they are traditionally regarded, underscoring his deep respect for "common sense" and sharing surprisingly similar goals with Wittgenstein in terms of what philosophy can, and at least as importantly cannot, provide.

Keywords Kant · Common sense · Metaphysical modesty · Wittgenstein

Kant, Wittgenstein, and the Goals of Philosophy

It is not uncommon in introductory philosophy course—and in many other places—to be presented a picture of Kant that paints him as a paradigmatic old-fashioned, detached Prussian scholar, whose walks were so predictable that the residents of Königsberg could set their clocks by them, and whose life passed as the most regular of regular verbs. Such an image is reinforced by the overwhelming attention to what might be called the "positive" dimension of Kant's philosophy, e.g. the Transcendental Analytic. There we find obscure arguments couched in arcane, inscrutable terminology, as well as intricate, elaborate proofs of synthetic a priori concepts and principles. All this makes it easy to neglect the perspective

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from which Kant viewed things—"Our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit" (Axi n.)[1]—and to forget the once-famous epithet Mendelssohn applied to Kant: "*der alles zermalmende*," or the destroyer of all.

By adhering to this traditional picture, it is easy to overlook Kant's own view of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; here I want to call this picture into question by looking briefly at some of the things Kant himself says about the purposes of the *Critique*. What was referred to above as the "positive" dimension is presented in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic; the remainder of the Doctrine of Elements consists of argument after argument *against* philosophical positions staked out by both rationalists and empiricists. This critical strategy reaches its zenith in the Antinomies, where Kant employs a skeptical method to show that in some cases, both rationalists and empiricists are making claims that are demonstrably false; in other cases, by failing to make crucial critical distinctions, they fail to recognise that presumably opposed claims are both demonstrably true.[2] Furthermore, the often-neglected Doctrine of Method is predominately critical as well, constantly reminding the reader of the necessity to *discipline* the employment of pure reason. In sum, the structure of the *Critique* reflects its title as a *critique* of pure reason, a feature often neglected by the overwhelming emphasis on the Transcendental Analytic—specifically the Transcendental Deduction—found in the literature. Indeed, this emphasis may be a result of just how successful the arguments of the Transcendental Dialectic are regarded. But this should not obscure the fact that the main thrust of the *Critique* is negative.

And this is precisely what Kant says.

> On a cursory overview of the present work it may seem that its usefulness is merely *negative*, teaching us that we must never venture with speculative reason beyond the limits of experience. Such in fact is its primary [*erster*] use (Bxxiv; Kant's emphasis).

Elsewhere, Kant tells us that the critical investigation of pure reason

> should be called a critique, not a doctrine, of pure reason. Its utility, in speculation, ought properly to be only negative, not to amplify, but only to

[1] Kant gives some of the historical background to this claim in the Jäsche logic (Ak. IX, pp. 27ff); some of its political implications are developed in the essay "What is Enlightenment?," Ak. VIII, pp. 35–42, esp. p. 40. It is worth comparing Foucault's remark in his essay of the same name, "I have been seeking to stress that the thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era." "What is Enlightenment?" in Rabinow, P. (ed.) *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), based on an unpublished French manuscript. 42. In Kant's case, it seems clear that that attitude ultimately cannot be inculcated without adopting some aspect of these "doctrinal elements," as characterised in terms of Kant's transcendental strategy establishing conditions that hold a priori.

[2] I have presented a detailed argument for this in "Kant's Critical Model of the Experiencing Subject," *Idealistic Studies* vol. 25, no. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 1–24.

> purify our reason, and to keep it free from errors—which is already to gain a great deal (A11=B25).[3]

Much later, Kant returns to make the same point:

> where the limits of our possible cognition are very narrow, where the temptation to judge is great, where the illusion that confronts us is very deceptive and the harm that results from the error is very serious, there the *negative* in instruction, which serves solely to guard us from errors, has even more importance than many a piece of positive information by which our cognition is augmented (A709=B737; Kant's emphasis).

In general,

> The greatest and perhaps the sole utility of all philosophy of pure reason is therefore only negative; for it serves not as an organon for the expansion but as a discipline for the limitation of pure reason, and, instead of discovering truth, has only the modest merit of guarding us against errors (A795=B823).[4]

I think it is a serious mistake to underestimate the negative force of Kant's project. This is not, at the same time, to deny the positive results of Kant's analysis of human knowledge; nor is it to ignore Kant's fundamental notion that the limitation of speculative reason is necessary to ground the employment of practical reason. I am simply maintaining that the claims Kant makes about the universal and necessary conditions that the subject contributes in objective cognition must be looked at within this more general critical context, underscoring the innocuous nature of these modest claims, in spite of Kant's reputation otherwise.

It is for such reasons that Kant can be placed firmly within a tendency in philosophy that might be called "deflationary." As Robert Gibbs has characterised this tendency,

> In our time, Philosophy's humility is announced by claims that we don't know. We do not know what humanity is. We do not know God. We do not know what our world should be. We do not even know what philosophy is. If we once had to learn to ask, "How can we know?," when capital "P" Philosophy was still proud, then in our time the question we are learning is "How can we not know?" But this is to lapse back into the very error of proud Philosophy. For today's question truly should be "How can we know—that we do not know?" Our humility, our professions of ignorance, may after all be too confident—the confidence of skepticism. The ignorance of philosophy itself requires a critical turn.[5]

[3] Kant adds "in speculation" [*in Ansehung der Spekulation*] for the second edition.

[4] See also Kant's comment "I shall not boast here of the service which philosophy has done to human reason through the laborious efforts of its criticism, granting even that in the end it should turn out to be merely negative" (A831=B859).

[5] Gibbs, R. "The Limits of Thought: Rosenzweig, Schelling, and Cohen," *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 43 (1989), p. 618.

A major portion of the responsibility for the tendency described here has been given to Wittgenstein. While this attribution comes as little surprise to Wittgenstein's readers, it is worth pointing out just how much Wittgenstein and Kant shared in terms of their *goals* (regardless of the vast differences between their approaches). In demonstrating that "philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday," Wittgenstein sought to show that

1) The problems arising though a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language.
2) The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself into question.

In general, Wittgenstein concludes that philosophy "leaves everything as it is."[6] Without getting into exegetical and interpretative issues about the relation between Wittgenstein's later and earlier work, there are important similarities between these points cited and the strategy Wittgenstein adopts in the *Tractatus*. In the latter, Wittgenstein is much more optimistic about the possibility of articulating the limits of thought, beyond which we must remain silent. But the attempt to say something about those limits can involve a need to say, or attempt to say, something from beyond them. In a sense, Wittgenstein recognises this:

> Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be said).[7]

But, in another sense, in working out this limit, Wittgenstein is preoccupied with the difficulties inherent in the task. In trying to solve them, he continues to both recognise this limit and try to go beyond it. Thus (in an image originally used by Sextus Empiricus), Wittgenstein concludes

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)[8]

Both the later and earlier works acknowledge the depth of philosophical problems, and that their solution lies in no longer attempting to ask questions where

[6] These citations are from the *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, I.38, I.111, I.133, I.124, respectively; (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

[7] *Tractatus*, "Preface." Translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuiness ((London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

[8] *Tractatus*, Section 6.54. "And again, just as it is not impossible for the man who has ascended to a high place by a ladder to overturn the ladder with his foot after his ascent, so also it is not unlikely that the Skeptic after he has arrived at the demonstration of his thesis by means of the argument proving the non-existence of proof, as it were by a step-ladder, should then abolish this very argument." Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* II.481; translated by R.G. Bury (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935).

none can be meaning and, therefore, responded to. Undoubtedly, the differences between how these notions are worked out in the *Philosophical Investigations* and the *Tractatus* are profound—the former providing "therapy" for an illness (or pathology), the latter seeking to establish a picture of the world by reflecting on the necessities involved in its logical expression. But both are interested in resolving certain philosophical difficulties by forcing us to recognise that they are deeply grounded in the desire to make claims that, ultimately, can be nothing but nonsense. It is this that Kant shares with Wittgenstein: the basic goal "to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense."[9]

The connections between Kant and Wittgenstein have hardly gone unnoticed, with much of the attention being focused on Schopenhauer's influence on Wittgenstein, and the similarity between the transcendental unity of apperception and the claims of the *Tractatus* concerning the metaphysical subject.[10] I have no intention of arguing that Wittgenstein—in either the early or late incarnation—was doing what Kant was doing in the *Critique*. But taking Wittgenstein's general project as dispelling illusions that an uncritical employment of thought and language generate, I think it is clear that Kant's project is similarly therapeutic. Thus, when Gibbs writes that "since Hegel announced his system, philosophy has been in a sort of joyous retreat," I would suggest that much of this retreat stems from the *Critique*, a retreat from dogmatic metaphysics (and/or an uncritical commitment to empiricism). At the same time, such retreat obviously does not, for Kant, entail an embrace of skepticism, relativism, or indifferentism. By a critical investigation of reason, we establish its scope and limits, securing what we can by making legitimate reason's justifiable claims, "even if, as a result, much that is comprised in our original aims, adopted without deliberation, may have to be abandoned as futile"

[9] *Philosophical Investigations*, I.464. As an anonymous reader of an earlier draft remarked, the commonalities here shouldn't be overemphasized, insofar as Kant preserves a role for the unschematized categories that would be distinct from mere nonsense (*Unsinn*). The ultimate epistemic significance of the categories, in any case, comes with their schematization, although this is admittedly one of the murkier chapters in a sufficiently murky text. In general, I follow Graciela de Pierris here, who notes that the "unschematized categories derived by Kant from the logical forms of judgment...do not yet have content, and the synthesis introduced in the MD [Metaphysical Deduction] belongs to the combinatorial operations of the understanding, in abstraction from its necessary connection (in knowledge) with space and time." Review of Guyer, P. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*," *Ethics*, 104 no.3, p. 657.

[10] See *Tractatus*, Sections 5.641, 5.632, 5.633. For some discussion on this latter point, see W.H. Walsh, "Philosophy and Psychology in Kant's *Critique*," *Kant Studien* 57 (1960), pp. 189–195; Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic*, pp. 69ff.; Thompson, "On A Priori Truth," pp. 475–476. More general discussions of the relationship are Erik Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), chapter XI; P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion* (revised ed.) (New York: Oxford, 1986), chapter seven, part four; Leslie Stevenson, *The Metaphysics of Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Jonathan Lear, "Leaving the World Alone," *The Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982), pp. 382–392; S. Morris Engel, "Wittgenstein and Kant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 20 (1970), pp. 483–513; Meredith Williams, "Wittgenstein, Kant, and the 'Metaphysics of Experience'," *Kant Studien* 81 (1990), pp. 69–88. I've discussed the Kantian flavor of some of Wittgenstein's work in "Was Wittgenstein a neo-Kantian? A Response to Professor Haller," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* vol. 45 (1993), pp. 187–202. For a lengthy, informed, but complex discussion of the relationship between Kant and Wittgenstein, and the scholarly interpretations of that relation, see Wallgren, Thomas. *Transformative Philosophy* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2006), esp. 217ff. I would like to thank an anonymous reader of an earlier draft for bringing Wallgren's book to my attention; it is impossible to do justice to his sophisticated and nuanced treatment of all the issues involved.

(Bvii). Specifically in terms of the Transcendental Analytic and the role of the understanding, we arrive with Kant at a reflective discovery and articulation of absolutely universal and strictly necessary concepts and principles, providing "immoderate" foundations for objective experience to be possible. But the nature of the claims made by these concepts and principles, and the requirement that we supplement the understanding with the regulative employment of reason, reveals the modesty of these foundations. Such an immoderate yet modest foundationalism brings with it two important results: a) the attempt to make cognitive claims outside the scope of experience—claims that violate or transcend the canonical logic of experience—invariably ends in nonsense, and b) the traditional topics of *metaphysica specialis*—God, Freedom, and Immortality—lie beyond the domain of possible experience, and must be dealt with otherwise than cognitively: namely, by reason in its practical employment.[11] That is, while the theoretical philosophy functions as the *ratio cognescendi,* the practical philosophy functions as the *ratio essendi* for philosophy in general, and even in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (e.g. "The Canon of Pure Reason"), Kant's emphasis on the ultimate priority of practical reason is indisputable.

It is with this first result that we find the close similarity between Wittgenstein's and Kant's therapeutic strategies. Wittgenstein, famously, wants to "show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle," and by dispelling the bewitchment by which language entrances us, reveals the emptiness of that picture which holds us captive. This brings philosophy *peace*, because then what "we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand."[12] Kant's goal is peace as well, and "In the absence of this critique reason is, as it were, in the state of nature, and it can establish and make secure its assertions only through *war*" (A751=B779; Kant's emphasis). The uncritical positions outlined in the Antinomies are engaged in such battles; the way to philosophical peace is the demonstration that the arguments are themselves mere "houses of cards":

> the very fact of their being able to refute one another is evidence that they are really disputing about nothing, and that a certain transcendental illusion has mocked them with a reality [*Wirklichkeit*] where none is to be found (A501=B529–530).

[11] In the tradition Kant works, mapped out by such predecessors as Clauberg, Geulincx, and especially Wolff, metaphysics is systematically divided into distinct parts. *Metaphysica generalis* has as its provenance "being *qua* being," and the study of *ens in genere*, the traditional Aristotelian conception of "First Philosophy." Importantly, Kant argues that the method of such investigations must be transformed, and that "the proud name of an Ontology that presumptuously claims to supply...synthetic a priori cognition of things...must give place to the modest title of a mere Analytic of pure understanding" (A247=B303). *Metaphysica special is* treats the specific questions concerning (rational) theology, cosmology, and psychology. A brief sketch of the history of this division, and of its influence on Kant, is de Vleeschauwer's "Wie ich jetzt die Kritik der reinen Vernunft entwicklungsgeschichtlich lesen," *Kant Studien* 54 (1963), pp. 351–368. As de Vleeschauwer observes (p. 353), "metaphysics as a special discipline at the time of Wolff and Kant was still very young."

[12] *Philosophical Investigations*, I.309; cf. *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 43: "Thoughts that are at peace. That's what someone who philosophises yearns for."

But in spite of Mendelssohn's derisive epithet, Kant did not want to destroy everything; this brings us to the second result. By showing what theoretical reason can establish, and just as importantly what it cannot, Kant makes possible the move to practical reason—again, a positive benefit from a negative result:

> when all progress in the field of the supersensible has thus been denied to speculative reason, it is still open to us to enquire whether, in the practical cognition of reason, data may not be found sufficient to determine reason's transcendent rational concept of the unconditioned, and so to enable us, in accordance with the wishes of metaphysics, and by means of cognition that is possible a priori, *though only from a practical standpoint*, to pass beyond the limits of all possible experience" (Bxxi; my emphasis).

In sum, we have secure foundations that necessarily and universally condition all possible experience, and which reveal the emptiness of the attempts to go beyond the field of possible experience in making claims to objective cognition. Such foundations, furthermore, make minimal claims about knowledge—the synthetic concepts and principles, employed a priori, that constitute such foundations are empty without sensibility, and must be organised and unified through the regulative employment of reason. Finally, by clearly marking out the extent and limits of experience, we show that the deepest interests of humanity are preserved, but must look to reason in its practical employment for satisfaction. All of these results, both negative and positive, can be regarded as following from the therapeutic cleansing provided by a thoroughgoing critique of pure reason.[13]

The *Ding-an-sich* and Kant's epistemological modesty

I have argued elsewhere that Kant puts forth a doctrine that can be seen as providing a set of rules as necessary for possible experience; on this reading, this set qualifies as well as a foundational set of claims, or as providing a priori a conceptual framework for the possibility of experience.[14] At the same time, the strength of those philosophical results should be regarded within the context of the negative thrust of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and that these results are intended to make judgements of experience possible —just as general logic identifies the conditions that must hold for thought to be possible—but offers nothing insofar as the truth or falsity of specific empirical claims is under consideration. The latter reveals Kant's conception of what his critical idealism establishes, relative to cognition, as modest. In contrast, Paul Guyer has urged that Kant in fact puts forth a systematically dogmatic approach, and I will here take up a part of Guyer's interpretation in order to deflect

[13] Compare the Jäsche logic, Ak.IX, p. 17: "We would then have two parts of logic: the analytic, containing the formal criteria of truth, and the dialectic, containing the characteristics and rules by which we can tell that something does not satisfy the formal criteria of truth, although it appears to. Dialectic in this sense would have its good use then as a *cathartic* [*Katharticon*] of the understanding" (my emphasis); here again, what Kant says about general logic is equally characteristic of transcendental logic.

[14] See "*Stoff* and Nonsense in Kant's First *Critique*," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1993), pp. 21–36; the point is developed much more fully in my forthcoming "Necessity and Possibility: The Logical Strategy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*" (Catholic University Press of America, 2008).

that criticism and thus reinforce what I have been calling a "modest" interpretation of Kant's critical project.

In Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, he introduces his lengthy discussion of Kant's transcendental idealism with a relatively brief consideration of the thing-in-itself. It is to Guyer's credit that he takes on as his opponent not the naïve phenomenalist interpretation of Kant, but the much stronger competition of more recent Kant scholarship, singling out for specific attention the interpretation of Henry Allison. As Guyer characterises Allison's reading,

> Kant does not advocate an ontological duplication of realms of objects but a conceptual or semantical division: not two sets of objects, but two ways of thinking of or describing one and the same sets of objects.[15]

This "two-fold" view of the object Guyer associates with an attribution to Kant of "epistemological modesty." In contrast, Guyer contends

> Transcendental idealism is not a skeptical reminder that we *cannot be sure* that things as they are in themselves *are* also as we represent them to be; it is a harshly dogmatic insistence that we *can be* quite sure that things as they are in themselves *cannot be* as we represent them to be.[16]

The crucial issue for Guyer is the claim that the "modest" interpretation of the thing-in-itself cannot support Kant's claim, *not* just that space and time are conditions of our sensibility, but the stronger claim that we can know that things-in-themselves *cannot* be spatial and temporal. As evidence of this position—that which he calls "harshly dogmatic"—Guyer cites A26=B42:

> space represents no property whatever of any things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another, that is, any determination which attaches to the objects themselves and which would remain, even if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of intuition (Guyer's translation).

While he goes on in succeeding chapters to develop his own view in detail, it is worth noting that this central criticism is reminiscent of Trendelenburg's "third possibility," as put forth in the 1860s. Trendelenburg claims that while space and time can be seen as conditions of our receptivity, they may also be features of the world itself: "space and time have an a priori origin in the representing but are at the same time valid of things."[17] The question then becomes this: how can we know

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[15] Guyer, Paul. *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 334.

[16] Guyer, p. 333.

[17] Quoted in Vaihinger, Hans. *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1887), vol. 2, p. 136; cf. pp. 35ff.. In his *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), Kenneth Westphal goes into substantial detail about the issue of the "neglected alternative," raising issues well beyond what I can consider here (cf. esp. pp. 121ff.). Elsewhere (see nn. 2 and 14, above), I have argued that Kant's conception of the judging subject is the result of an argument that puts forth as a set of possibilities an empirical/ectypal (Lockean) model, a rationalist/archtypal (Leibnizean) model, and his own. By showing that these three constitute an exhaustive set, and that the first two lead, ultimately, to an intolerable skepticsm, Kant gives an indirect argument for his own remaining "critical" model.

nothing of the thing-in-itself, yet know that it is nonspatial and nontemporal? This persistent complaint, registered by Trendelenburg and Peirce, among others, leads in Guyer's hands to the charge that Kant, far from being epistemologically modest, is in fact committed to the sheerest kind of dogmatism. In turn, an interpretation that seeks to preserve such modesty

> obviously begs the question of transcendental idealism by assuming from the outset that any necessary condition of knowledge is subjective rather than objective, even if this subjective status will be dignified by the title "transcendentally ideal" to signify that it is an indispensable rather than an arbitrary aspect of subjectivity.[18]

From this, Guyer concludes than we need not worry about confronting the well-known dilemma posed by Jacobi, that one cannot enter the Critical philosophy without presupposing the thing-in-itself, yet one cannot remain in the Critical philosophy because of the thing-in-itself.

> One can enter the critical philosophy, or at least the transcendental theory of experience, without the presupposition of the thing in itself, because none of Kant's arguments for the nonspatiality and nontemporality of things in themselves, certainly none of his arguments from legitimate claims of the transcendental theory of experience, succeeds.[19]

The problem this poses for Kant was developed in a more general fashion by his immediate successors. In various ways, they took the thing-in-itself, or the transcendental object, to be in some sort of causal relationship with the thing as it appears, and that the thing-in-itself causes the appearances by which human beings come to know objects.[20] From this view there quickly follows the idea of thing thing-in-itself as some kind of limiting concept of an object, or as representing the object the human being strives to know better and better. Such a reading, at the hands of his critics, commits Kant to a version of the "veil of perceptions" epistemology; as we have seen, Rorty has put Kant in the tradition of those philosophers trying to reconstruct accurately a mirror of the world as it really is. In the *Critique*, Kant does occasionally speak of the thing-in-itself as in a causal relationship with things as they appear:

> the categories represent no special object [*Objekt*], given to the understanding alone, but only serve to determine the transcendental object (the concept of something in general [*von etwas überhaupt*]), through that which is given in sensibility, in order thereby to cognise appearances empirically under concepts of objects [*Gegenstände*] (A251).

[18] Guyer, p. 339.

[19] Guyer, p. 335.

[20] For the purposes of this discussion, I must ignore the technical distinctions among the thing-in-itself, the transcendental object, and noumena. For an historical overview of the reactions, from Jacobi to Nietzsche, as well as a good account of these distinctions, see Moltke Gram, "Things in Themselves: The Historical Lessons," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 18 (1980), pp. 407–31.

And in the *Prolegomena*,

> we indeed, rightly considering objects of sense as mere appearances, confess thereby that they are based [*zum Grunde liegen*] upon a thing in itself, though we know not this thing as it is in itself but only know its appearances, *viz*. the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something.[21]

It is easy to see why such remarks were construed by Kant's critics as they were. However, Kant often expressly avoids such language, as in the above-cited remark at A26-B52, specifically *rejecting* the spatiality and temporality of the thing-in-itself, and thus denying the possibility of its causal relationship with the thing as it appears. The thrust of such a view is given in the "B" Preface:

> though we cannot *cognise* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to *think* them as things in themselves: otherwise there would follow the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears (Bxxvi–xxvii; Kant's emphases).

While Kant may be responsible for much of the confusion on the part of his readers, I think it is possible to present a picture of the thing-in-itself consistent with the minimal claim he makes here in the "B" Preface.

To begin in the most general fashion, it is essential to an understanding of the thing-in-itself not to take it as another kind of object in some sort of direct correspondence with objects as they appear. That is, first-order language about the thing-in-itself must be used very cautiously, to avoid giving the impression that we are talking about objects in any but a "degenerate" sense. To imply a causal connection by talking about objects as they are in themselves and as they appear, or to imply some kind of correspondence between them *as* objects, is to succumb to transcendental illusion. Thus, when Kant tells us that we may "entitle the purely intelligible cause of appearances in general the transcendental object, but merely [*bloß*] in order to have something corresponding to sensibility as a receptivity" (A494=B522), he avoids saying that the transcendental object corresponds to the thing as it appears, and uses the notion of correspondence carefully. The transcendental object is again put forth here solely to avoid the "absurd conclusion" of an appearance without something appearing. First-order discussions, about the thing-in-itself, at least in Kant's more precise formulations, use the notion only in this degenerate sense, and always in contrast to objects as they appear or as they qualify as objects of possible experience for a judging subject.

More specifically, in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic, Kant articulates the necessary sensible and intellectual conditions for the possibility of experience, and the objects of possible experience: objects in a "non-degenerate" sense. As we have seen, the possibility of human cognition of objects requires unifying and judging sensible representations received within the forms of space and time. This sensible and intellectual capacity constitutes the contribution of the judging subject, and in this sense the cognition of objects is contingent upon this contribution. It is this notion of an object that this fundamental to Kant's presentation

[21] Ak. IV., pp. 314–315.

in the First *Critique*, a notion Melnick calls an "epistemic" conception of the object. In contrast,

> the notion of a thing in itself is that concept of an object according to which being an object or a thing would make sense in abstraction from any idea of a (type of) subject and his intellectual organization of his experience.[22]

It is this that I have been calling an object in its degenerate sense. If Kant is correct that an object is essentially bound up with the contribution of the thinking subject, eliminating the subject eliminates the object as an object of possible experience. But, as we have seen, the thing-in-itself remains, as a way of avoiding the "absurd conclusion," and it remains as an object of possible *thought* that is not self-contradictory. As Thompson points out, this kind of language can easily lead us into transcendental illusion, if we take this degenerate sense of an object as a *limitation*. For

> A limitation implies objects free of the limitation, as a limitation on the range of sounds we can hear implies sounds free of this limitation. We may thus take our statement about space and time as implying objects free of this limitation they suffer as objects our possible experience. These free objects are then objects (or things) in themselves as opposed to objects in space and time, and if free objects act causally, their causality is free of spatiotemporal limitation and therefore not physical.[23]

The point could also be developed in a different way, in terms of Kant's discussion of magnetism and iron filings in the Postulates of Empirical Thought. Because the "grossness of our senses does not in any way decide the form of possible experience in general" (A226=B273), the thing-in-itself is not something we could come to know better and better were our eyesight sharper, our sense of smell more acute, etc.. Thus, in this sense the thing-in-itself does not function as a *Grenzbegriff*.

If we *begin* with a *non*-degenerate notion of an object, it becomes clearer why Kant can say that the thing-in-itself is nonspatial and nontemporal without, at this stage of his argument, being committed to dogmatism. Space and time are radically subjective forms contributed by sensibly intuiting subjects (including human beings). If we *then* abstract from this conception of objects of possible experience, we are left with the object only in a degenerate sense, relative to which it is meaningless, or a category mistake, to inquire about it "really" being spatial and temporal. Such forms of intuition make sense only in reference to the kind of subject, and the objects about which it can judge, here under consideration. Thus, any attempt to talk about the thing-in-itself, as does Trendelenburg, is to fall into transcendental illusion. His question, in other words, only gives the impression of being meaningful. Rather than taking the object as an object of possible human experience, and *then* going on to consider the implications of this conception for things as they are in themselves (or, perhaps, *the* thing-in-itself), he reverses the

[22] Melnick, *Kant's Analogies of Experience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 152.

[23] Thompson, "Things in Themselves," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Society* 57 (1983), p. 42.

procedure and produces another version of transcendental realism. For such reasons, Kant can say

> The non-sensible cause of these representations is completely unknown to us, and cannot therefore be intuited by us as object [*Objekt*]. For such an object [*Gegenstand*] would have to be represented as neither in space nor in time (these being merely conditions of sensible representation), and apart from such conditions we cannot think any intuition (A494=B522).

Kant's language is not as precise as we might like it to be—as we have seen, this notion of "cause" must be dealt with cautiously, and the final clause of this citation at least needs to be spelled out better. Moltke Gram has, however, taken the idea Kant expresses here and constructed what amounts to a transcendental argument for its central claim:

> If you interpret Kant's argument epistemically, then the relation of affection holds between phenomenal arguments and our forms of sensibility. And there is no problem about circularity in the definition of "affection." All we are asked to believe is that we cannot compare what an object is like for our forms of sensibility with what it might be apart from those forms. This is impossible just because we would have to assume that we can compare what an object of possible experience is for us with what it might be under other forms of sensibility. But this, in turn, requires us *per impossibile* to be able to compare what an object of possible experience is like when it is not an object of possible experience.[24]

As we have seen, the notion of an object of possible human experience essentially involves the intellectual contribution of the judging subject. Indeed, it could be said that in the *Critique*, Kant presents two degenerate senses of "object." The first is that notion of an object "given" to us without the application of intellectual conditions: "since intuition stands in no need whatsoever of the functions of thought, appearances would none the less present objects to our intuition" (A90–91= B123). The second would be the object taken as it is in itself, stripped of the sensible conditions that are necessary for an object to be given to our intuition. Neither description of an object yields an object of possible experience. Only the kind of object, what I have been calling the object in its non-degenerate sense, qualifies as an object of knowledge, cognition, or experience for the kind of judging subject under consideration here. Guyer, however, argues that in contrast to this result, Kant's transcendental idealism is not "an anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty."[25] Guyer's argument is, simply put, that if Kant is not modest in his assertions about the thing-in-itself, then he is dogmatic. Guyer wants to affirm this antecedent—to reject the idea that Kant's idealism is a "salubrious recommendation of epistemological modesty"[26]—while I want to deny the consequent and claim that therefore Kant is being modest in making the claims he does, specifically about the

[24] Gram, "Things in Themselves," p. 429; compare the argument Kant gives at A104.

[25] Guyer, p. 336.

[26] Guyer, p. 333.

thing-in-itself (and, more specifically, as those claims are presented in the Second edition of the *Critique*).

The basic point to be made against Guyer is that it is the object of possible human experience—the object in its non-degenerate sense—that is the fundamental conception of the object operative in Kant's account of human cognition (and of any agent who judges similarly). This notion is distinct both from the sense of an "object" given to us, which Kant contrasts with knowledge "properly so called" (A78=B103), and from the thing-in-itself. If we go on to ask whether the thing as it appears, as it is in itself, is "really" spatial and temporal, we are being seduced by a picture of two sets of objects in some sort of causal interaction.[27] This picture leads to an obvious contradiction that one would suppose Kant would also have noticed. For if, as he says, space and time are not applicable to things in themselves, they would lack just that (minimal) condition—temporality—necessary to be in a causal relationship. Thus, again, such notions must be stated very carefully, for even in saying that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal, we give the impression of making meaningful claims about *objects*. This is precisely what the modest interpretation of the thing-in-itself seeks to avoid, insisting that meaningful cognitive judgements cannot be made about a thing-in-itself, but only about things as they appear. Only if we *begin* with objects of possible experience, and then go on to abstract from this conception to arrive at the object in the degenerate sense of a thing-in-itself, can we avoid the perils of an *ontological* distinction and a "two-worlds" view, with its accompanying transcendental illusion. Kant is perhaps most emphatic in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where he explicitly points out that *within experience*, no question is ever even *asked* about the thing-in-itself (A30=B45).

Rather than a "harshly dogmatic" claim about things in themselves, such a view serves as an "anodyne" and "salubrious" recommendation of epistemological modesty not to venture beyond the realm of possible experience with any hopes of satisfying cognitive claims—a recommendation, that is, to be content within the "fruitful bathos of experience". But neither is Kant's "modest" epistemology to be seen as "prudish." Beyond the limits of experience we cannot have any hopes of gaining the cognition of objects, but there is no obstacle thereby given to the fullest development of knowledge within those limits. As Kant puts it in the *Prolegomena*, "In mathematics and natural science human reason admits of limits [*Schranken*] but not of bounds [*Grenzen*]."[28] It is again the point made by Melnick, which admirably

[27] Similarly, the language that suggests human beings only have "access" to objects is through phenomena is to be resisted. Guyer uses such language in rejecting an argument of Allison's; Allison argues that "objects must conform to the *conditions* under which we can alone represent them to ourselves as objects," *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) p.37. Otherwise, we are involved in the contradiction of having "access" to an object stripped of those conditions that would make such access possible. For Allison, this notion of "access" is used in a very weak sense, and only in contrast to what goes on in the human experience of objects. For Guyer, this notion of "access" is used in a strong sense in asserting that Kant assumes we can deny spatiality of objects while "continuing to assume that we have access to such objects even when spatiality is a necessary condition of our knowledge" (*Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, p. 339). On the modest epistemic interpretation of Kant's thing-in-itself, this idea of "access" plays a minimal role; as Melnick puts it, "It is important to understand how *little* the notion of what we have access to, or what is knowable to us, is the basic one in this interpretation of a thing in itself" (*Kant's Analogies of Experience*, p. 153).

[28] Ak. IV, p. 352.

captures the essence of Kant's foundationalism, viewed as both immoderate and modest:

> at least part of Kant's empirical realism is that everything is "left open" that *could* be left open. By "left open" here I mean undecidable on a priori grounds or not in any sense contributed by the subject.[29]

Kant does not deal explicitly with the method he himself uses in the *Critique*, nor with the perspective from which he himself begins in presenting his theory of experience. I have tried to indicate that such a lack of explicit discussion results from the internal, yet global, nature of Kant's critical strategy. That is, if what Kant argues in the *Critique* is sound, the doctrines articulated in the *Critique* must hold as well for the articulation of that doctrine itself. Kant's general approach—carried out by means of a first-person or radically subjective orientation—has come to be known by a variety of names, usually associated with Copernicus: thus we find that approach called the "Copernican hypothesis," the "Copernican method," and, most commonly, the "Copernican revolution."[30] What I think must be seen is that his notion of the thing-in-itself must be regarded as complementary to that Copernican revolution, by fundamentally changing our conception of what constitutes an object, specifically, an object of possible experience.

Hence, while Guyer is correct in rejecting Jacobi's dilemma, I think his own reasons for this rejection are incorrect. As I have tried to show, the "legitimate claims" of Kant's theory of experience essentially include his account of what constitutes an object of possible experience, an account that incorporates the fundamental "assumption" that human receptivity is conditioned by space and time. This is the basic notion of an object operative in the Critical philosophy, upon which any inquiries into the thing-in-itself are parasitic. Granting that this fundamental assumption may be itself "dogmatic," Kant's arguments for the nonspatiality and nontemporality of the thing-in-itself become much more plausible if we see that spatiality and temporality are notions applicable only within his transcendental theory of experience. And, as Kant himself summarises the more general point,

> a complete review of all the powers of reason—and the conviction thereby obtained of the certainty of its claims to a modest possession [*eines kleinen Besitzes*], even in the case of the vanity of higher pretensions—puts an end to all conflict, and induces it to rest satisfied with a limited but undisputed property (A768=B796).

Kant and Common Sense

Kant famously credits Rousseau for having taught him to "honor humanity," and, particularly in his various lectures on logic, Kant repeatedly identifies the healthy

[29] Melnick, *Kant's Analogies of Experience*, p. 56.

[30] Kant's own reference is to a strategy that is analogous to "the first thoughts of Copernicus" (Bxxii n.); strictly speaking, hypotheses are found only *within* empirical science. Kant addresses the topic in "The Discipline of Pure Reason in Regard to Hypotheses" at A769ff.=B797ff.

and common human understanding as a faculty available to all. In a number of texts—*The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and especially the *Critique of Judgement*—Kant praises "common sense." Thus, in the latter he writes

> we can assume common sense as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which must be presupposed in any logic and any principle of cognition which is not skeptical.[31]

At the same time, he seems critical of common sense, as in the natural disposition human beings have to speculate uncritically, generating what Kant derides as "pious brainstorms," succumbing to a wide variety of philosophical positions Kant finds suspect, including enthusiasm, skepticism, relativism, indifferentism, atheism, fanaticism, and superstition.[32] He notes further, in the *Prolegomena*, that "it is not necessary that everyone study metaphysics," implying that many are simply not equipped to do so, and in any case, in metaphysics, common sense—even sound common sense—"has no right to judge at all."[33] Such claims, obviously enough, seem to be in conflict, suggesting a problem Kant must address, namely: what respect does "sound common sense" deserve, if any?

Kant's solution to this problem is to recognise that, in different ways, common sense and metaphysics, on Kant's construal of the latter, play complementary roles relative to each other. Common sense, as Kant indicates by noting the natural human disposition to ask questions that are, fundamentally, metaphysical, focuses specifically on issues of crucial importance, precisely those that constitute the *ratio essendi* of philosophy (and philosophical criticism). At the same time, human beings—at the level of common sense as well as for those attempting a more "sophisticated" philosophical analysis—fail to submit their own speculative results to critical scrutiny. In sum, the philosopher's role is to provide that scrutiny, thus providing at least a reminder of the dangers of failing to observe the limits of speculative philosophy, particularly because the "natural and unavoidable dialectic" that accompanies pure reason and is inseparable from it will constantly require attention and correction (A298=B355). To be sure, common sense has a somewhat diminished role in the theoretical philosophy, where the results of the Critical philosophy affects the "monopoly of the schools" (Bxxxii), although even here the critical results of Kant's account cannot contradict the practices of the healthy human understanding. For it is in the practical philosophy where common sense can be seen to be an advantage, relative to the "abstruse philosophers":

> the most remarkable thing about ordinary reason in its practical concern is that it may have as much hope as any philosopher of hitting the mark. In fact, it is almost more certain to do so than the philosopher, because he has no principle which the common understanding lacks, while his judgement is easily confused

[31] *Critique of Judgement* Ak. V, p. 66 (Section 21).

[32] For a sustained treatment of some of these views, see Kant's relatively early (1766), empirically-oriented "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics."

[33] *Prolegomena*, Ak.IV p. 263, 260.

> by a mass of irrelevant considerations, so that it easily turns aside form the correct way.[34]

Yet here as well, "ordinary" reason is in need of the critical discipline required to determine if in fact its claims pass muster. Again, the results indicated by that discipline will not conflict with the practices of the moral agent; but it has the advantage of being able to give warrant to those practices, and indicate those practices that may appear justified but, in fact, are not.[35] For, as W.H. Walsh has made the point, the "philosophy of the uninstructed mind is either an affair of incoherent speculation or an unconvincing defence of common sense."[36]

Thus both common sense and the critical philosophy complement each other, and there is, or should be, no ultimate conflict between them. As Manfred Kuehn summarises the point, Kant

> rejects common sense as a criterion or tool of philosophical inquiry—be it in theoretical, practical, or aesthetic contexts. And all his polemic against common sense concerns *such use* of it. But he just as clearly *accepts* common sense as the field of philosophical inquiry. Because metaphysics and common sense are for him inextricably intertwined, the latter is relevant for him even in speculative philosophy, though it is perhaps more apparent in practical and aesthetic contexts.[37]

McGowan has pointed out that "only in Hegel…does the notion appear that some special form of interpretation is necessary to understand Reason's principles, and that notion almost invariably induces certain groups of interpreters who have privileged and superior insight."[38] Particularly in the practical philosophy, Kant remains consistent in showing respect for the sound and healthy common understanding possessed by all those who demonstrate the capacity for reason—those to whom we are willing to call "rational"—and, while recognizing the particular disciplinary provenance of the philosopher, does not claim the kind of "privilege" McGowan refers to here. In contrast, as Karl Ameriks has put the point, "Kant's philosophy has an unusual openness to a wide variety of considerations and a special respect for universal common sense."[39]

Thomas Wallgren has displayed remarkable erudition and considerable depth in exploring the nature of both the traditional goals of philosophy, as exemplified by Socrates and Plato, and the challenge to those goals from a wide variety of thinkers, including Kant and Wittgenstein (and, it is almost superfluous to add, Nietzsche).

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[34] *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak.IV, p. 404.

[35] One example of this would be the famous "alleged" right to lie from benevolent motives; see Korsgaard, C., "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 15.4 (1986), pp. 325–349.

[36] Walsh, W.H. *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 254.

[37] Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1790* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 202. As Kuehn notes, Kant "had to show as convincingly as he could that his own critical philosophy was rather different from naturalism" (p. 193), and this led Kant to emphasise his differences with the Scottish philosophers who, as Kuehn persuasively argues, had such an effect on Kant's thought.

[38] McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) p.33.

[39] Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 38.

While I cannot hope to do justice to his account, it is worth looking briefly at some of Wallgren's remarks on Kant.

> The self-reflective turn Kant propogates as the tool we need to live up to the Socratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian ideals all at once comes with a keen awareness that there is a price we have to pay for the turn in the in the direction of our attention. The new, critical philosophy can only provide knowledge within limits and the direct contact with higher reality that Plato and Aristotle reached at the pinnacle of their philosophy withdraws from its reach."[40]

Kant regards the price paid here to be not onerous, but rather beneficial: it consists of giving up the traditional, glorious, albeit illusory, dreams of metaphysics, which he characterizes as a battlefield upon which are strewn the casualties of fruitless battles and over which Hecuba weeps (A viii–ix). Recognizing the legitimate restrictions on possible human experience—while, as noted above, insisting that within the range of those limitations there are no bounds [*Grenzen*]—is only to curb our desire to reach cognitive goals that are unreachable. To be sure, to recognize such restrictions—or, perhaps, to untie the knots in our language—is an ongoing struggle, an illusion that continues to appeal in its seductiveness, and to mock our failures to resolve it.[41]

Arguments continue to rage over Kant's understanding of the traditional goals of Philosophy. Should it be taken to be "constructive and optimistic" or "therapeutic and deflationary"?[42] As characterized above, Kant (and, in a more complex fashion, Wittgenstein) might will regard such terms not so much as in conflict as complementary. Within the limits of human cognitive experience—deflationary relative to the traditional but vainly-sought goals of Philosophy—we discover "how to go on," whether in mathematics, natural science, or making ordinary empirical judgements. At the same time, those limits delineate the proper sphere for cognitive claims and identify the appropriate domain for the *practical* employment of reason. Thus, a better understanding of the scope and limits of human reason is constructive, allowing us to determine the legitimate domain and the correct theoretical and normative tools relative to that domain. Dialectical illusion will continue to mock us,

[40] *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 93.

[41] This raises an important distinction between "logical illusion" (here in the sense of *general* logic), and "transcendental illusion": when an error in reasoning in general logic is made perspicuous, the illusion disappears (or at least should disappear), while transcendental illusion persists, is "inseparable from human reason," and continues to call for correction (A298=B354–55). I once heard Paul Ricoeur characterize the latter quite nicely as "the tragedy" of human reason.

[42] These are the terms Wallgren uses to characterize the positions (*Transformative Philosophy* p.128 n.326). In addition to Wallgren, others engaging in this debate are Cora Diamond, Kenneth Westphal, John MacDowell, James Conant, and many others. Important considerations, which obviously can't be addressed here, have also been introduced by Karl-Otto Apel and Donald Davidson; often neglected in these discussions are the insightful remarks of Jürgen Habermas (e.g. his collection *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), Hilary Putnam (e.g. his collection *Realism with a Human Face*, including a valuable introduction by James Conant (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), and Penelope Maddy (e.g. *Second Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

generating the need for what Kant calls "Discipline" but which could just as easily be regarded as an on-going demand for therapy. In sum, discovering the legitimate questions and justifying the tools to address them is, if anything, a source of optimism.[43]

Conclusion

In reflecting upon my thought and experience, I find myself in a world I did not create. But I also discover that the very capacity to reflect reveals a spontaneous ability to think and to judge about that world. Pursuing this, I come to realise that for these thoughts and judgements to be meaningful, they must conform to certain minimal, but universal and necessary, conditions, conditions I thus discover reflectively that I must presuppose. A thought, if it is to make sense, cannot violate a rule that would, for instance, permit it to be self-contradictory. A judgement of experience, to be such that its truth-value could be investigated and determined, must conform to those rules that make that experience possible. Such rules are subjective: they are imposed by a thinking subject, and are presupposed by that subject in articulating the very conditions of objectivity. But such rules are also objective, in being universal and necessary conditions that must hold for any such thinking, judging subject, and range over the domain of possible thought and possible experience.

This yields a sobering re-evaluation of the pretensions of both dogmatic metaphysics and uncritical empiricism. Kant characterises these results in traditional foundationalist terms, thereby revealing the scope and limits of his own foundationalism:

> …although we had contemplated building a tower which should reach to the heavens, the supply of materials suffices only for a dwelling-house, just sufficiently roomy for our business on the level of experience, and just sufficiently high to allow our looking beyond it (A707=B735).[44]

[43] Here, of course, we see a contrast between Kant and Wittgenstein. Whereas Kant insists that philosophy will always be required to defend human reason from the seductive hazards of dialectical illusion, this conflicts with the well-known goal Wittgenstein sees for philosophy correctly carried out: to stop doing philosophy. In terms used earlier, Kant may be less sanguine than Wittgenstein about arriving at a place where "thoughts are at peace."

[44] This picks up on an image from the "A Preface," where Kant cites Persius: "Tecum habita, et noris quam sit tibi supellex" (Axx), translated by G.G. Ramsey in *Persius and Juvenal* (London: Heinemann, 1918), IV.52 as "live in your house, and recognise how poorly it is furnished." Kant makes a similar point in the much earlier "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer," at a period when his thought was perhaps closer to Hume's than at any other, by having Socrates exclaim "How many things there are, and see how I don't need all of them!" (Ak. II, p. 369.) It is worth noting in this context Wittgenstein's remark that "I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house." *On Certainty*, translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), Section 248.

No doubt, Kant is committed in many cases to such claims as "*this* is how it must be!"[45] Such claims invariably invite "skeptical" responses, ranging from simply ask "why?," to putting forth an equally strong argument for a directly opposed claim, to perhaps an even more radical form of skepticism. Even if Kant's arguments are successful in showing that any meaningful claim must presuppose certain necessary conditions for that claim to be possible, or meaningful, and even if a "transcendental argument" can proved the existence of an external world and the necessity of the causal principle, there are still skeptical candidates that remain unrefuted. But it is not clear (a) that such a position can be *formulated* and (b) what its *interest* would be, if it could be formulated (and, presumably, somehow communicated). Once it is put forth as a meaningful utterance or set of utterances, it would seem to be committed already to at least those kinds of conditions discussed above, that are necessary for the possibility of meaning in its most general, non-technical (common) sense. And if it is not formulated in such a way, it does not seem that it could engage us in any philosophically significant way.[46] As Wittgenstein puts the point in the *Tractatus*,

> Skepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.
>
> For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something *can be said*.[47]

Later, Wittgenstein moved away from some of the views that show remarkable similarity to Kant's, and was content to talk in terms of moves in language games, and "forms of life"; what Kant would call universal and necessary conditions become practices that a community has adopted, insofar as "they make good sense for members of a given community."[48] But if we take Kant's results seriously, we might wish to conceive of those conditions, *qua* universal, as holding for anyone who could qualify as a member of any community. As mentioned earlier, the attribution of rationality and agency to another is, for Kant, a contingent claim, albeit a claim that brings with it a priori commitment to such an agent being able to use the pronoun "I," judge conceptually, and to regard itself as free. The question then becomes whether one who fails to satisfy these minimal constraints—and it would have to be the case that "common sense" would unthinkingly embrace these constraints as well—would count as a member of any community.

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[45] As Cora Diamond describes this "Kantian spirit," this involves laying down "internal conditions of language's being language, or throught's being thought"; *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 32–33. The modal status of such conditions, and how one interprets what follows from adopting those conditions, is a topic of much dispute among scholars of Kant, of Wittgenstein, and, of course, those who consider the relationship between the two.

[46] A more colorful way of making the point is provided by Franz von Herbert, as quoted by Ameriks (*Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, p. 65): "experience is...presupposed, postulated, or however one calls it. Now if a skeptic were dumb and shameless enough to say 'But is there experience?' there is really no answer for such a type other than a beating."

[47] *Tractatus*, Section 6.51.

[48] Norris, "What is Enlightenment?," p.162.

On Kant's view, then, we have the following results: (1) an argument against a variety of skeptical positions, by offering secure and justified rules that are universal and necessary for the possibility of experience; (2) a thoroughgoing dismantling of the dogmatic pretensions of an uncritical employment of speculative reason; (3) rules for experience that preserve the essentially contingent nature of individual judgements of experience; (4) "making room for faith," or for the deepest moral concerns of practical philosophy, by limiting theoretical reason to its legitimate (and modest) domain, thereby revealing the necessity of practical reason for those issues that lie beyond this domain. Undoubtedly, some would object that Kant's logic of experience, as presented here in outline, is still too weak; others will ague that any conception of synthetic claims, made a priori, as an indispensable dimension of human knowledge always involves a commitment that is too strong. I would simply respond that Kant wants to acknowledge that in metaphysics and epistemology, "proud Philosophy" can do and establish many things—but not everything. For, as he reminds us at A727=B755, "it is precisely in knowing its limits that philosophy consists."[49]

[49] I would like to thank an anonymous reader of an earlier draft of this material for some valuable references (see nn. 9, 10, 43 above) and very helpful comments.