

# A TRAVELLER'S JOURNAL

## OF THE CRITIQUE:

### Adventure in the Land of Transcendental Metaphysics

By Shen Zhou Hong

St. John's College

April 9, 2021

## Introduction

*How is mathematics possible? How is physics possible? Is metaphysics as a science possible at all?* These are some of the questions which Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* attempts to answer, through a systematic, and entirely novel presentation of a *transcendental* metaphysics. Over the course of some eight hundred-odd pages, Kant examines the human faculties of *sensability*, *understanding*, and *reason*, culminating in a complete metaphysical system with the ambition to serve as a foundation to all physics and a posteriori knowledge. Just exactly how successful is this Kant's endeavour, which even he himself likens to a 'Copernican Revolution?' What *exactly* is the 'synthetic unity of apperception?' What do the dialectical 'illusions' of pure reason hold, for the nature of truth in Philosophy? And are the mathematical and physical sciences truly *empirical*, under the terms of Kant's transcendental foundation? This paper seeks to explore these questions, and more, in a critical discourse of Kant's Critique. Thus, one may call this essay a Critique of the Critique of Pure Reason: a paper that seeks not to refute Kant's thesis, but rather more of a traveller's journal. A journal that documents our expedition through this strange new country, that asks both the tourist's questions – as well as record all the sights and marvels of the trip.

We will begin our metaphysical adventure with the Critique's *Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements*, where we walk along with Kant on his journey to discover the a priori foundations (i.e. the epitomous *elements*) of all human knowledge. Starting at the trailhead of *Transcendental Aesthetics*, we will explore the human faculty of sensibility, to find the a priori forms which underpin all sensate intuition. Moving on to the *Transcendental Logic*, we will attempt the very same campaign upon the faculty of understanding, making the demonstrative leap from *judgements* to *categories*, all in pursuit of the *pure concepts of understanding*. With our prize in hand, we will follow Kant as he unifies the two faculties, and explore *cognition* – the only heir to *sensability* and *understanding*'s union. And finally, once we have summited the peaks of this Analytic mountain, we will at last be able to survey the island of Kant's *transcendental metaphysics*. We will see both the beaches of a priori certainty – as well as the fogbanks of the stormy, dialectical sea.

**The Three Faculties: Sensability, Understanding, Reason**

**The Transcendental Aesthetic**

**The Transcendental Analytic**

**The Transcendental Dialectic**

**Conclusion**

## Bibliography

- Kant, Immanuel and Gary Hatfield. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics: That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science: With Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.
- Kant, Immanuel, J. Timmermann, and H. Klemme. *Kritik Der Reinen Vernunft*. Nach der 1. und 2. Originalausg. Koch, Neff & Oetinger & Co, 1956. Print. Philosophische Bibliothek.
- Kant, Immanuel, Marcus Weigelt, and Friedrich Max Müller. *Critique of pure reason*. Penguin Books, 2007. Print. Penguin classics.
- Kant, Immanuel, et al. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Paperback. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996. Print.

## Technical Notes

This essay is typeset using  $\text{\LaTeX}$ , an Open Source document typesetting language by Donald Knuth, and version-controlled via Git. The git repository containing notes, source code, and revision history is available upon request.

This essay is written using the EssayTemplate, an open source  $\text{\LaTeX}$  essay template designed for the Humanities by Shen Zhou Hong. It is available at:

<https://github.com/ShenZhouHong/EssayTemplate>

This  $\text{\LaTeX}$  essay is also available in Microsoft Word, OpenOffice, HTML, and plain text upon request.