

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 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 \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 \LaTeX essay template designed for the Humanities by Shen Zhou Hong. It is available at:

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

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