From Kant to Davidson

Philosophy and the idea
of the transcendental

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The idea of the transcendental in Kant's early thought

Camilla Serck-Hanssen

Introduction

It is well known that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant gave the word 'transcendental' a new meaning. For the Kant of 1781 'transcendental' is intimately linked to the idea of a special kind of justification that appeals to 'conditions of the possibility of experience'. He also contrasts 'transcendental' with 'transcendent', which refers to that which is beyond possible experience. Moreover, the notion of transcendental also set the agenda for a special kind of philosophy, namely transcendental philosophy. What in fact transcendental philosophy is, and even how to interpret Kant's understanding of it, is a controversial issue. The purpose of this discussion is not to engage in the current debate on what is meant by 'transcendental philosophy'. Rather, my aim is to approach the question of Kant's understanding of transcendental philosophy, but to do so in a somewhat indirect fashion. The reason for choosing this strategy is that in the light of recent trends to 'transcendentalize' philosophy and to attach 'Kantian' to many different views in the field, I find it all the more important to remind and inform the contemporary debate of the historical and philosophical premises of Kant's philosophy proper. An unargued premise of this chapter is that Kant's transcendental philosophy can only be understood from within the constraints of his critical agenda. It is the origins of this critical path that will concern us here. I argue that if one focuses on his diagnosis of philosophical problems and their solution, and if one is also aware of a triad of philosophical controversies towards which any philosophy student in mid-eighteenth century Königsberg would be geared, one will see that the germs of Kant's critical conception of philosophy are present already in his first published work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces* (*Living Forces*).[1] Before I embark upon this main project I will present in brief some historical and textual data concerning Kant's understanding of 'transcendental'.

The origins of 'transcendental' in Kant's writings

In the early eighteenth century, German writers used the term 'transcendental' in a number of different ways. Here I can only mention a few important figures and will concentrate on their understanding of 'transcendental philosophy'.

Franz Albert Aepinus (1673–1750), who taught in Rostock from 1712, identified transcendental philosophy with the whole of metaphysics or ontology.[2] In other words, transcendental philosophy is the complete and all-encompassing theory of being. Both Joachim Georg Darjes (1714–91) and Johann Nicolas Tetens (1736–1807) studied in Rostock under Aepinus and there is little doubt that their works made a direct impact on Kant's thinking. Even though we do not know if Kant ever studied Aepinus, his ideas must have been influential in the environment in which the young philosopher was trained.

Christian Wolff (1679–1754) explained his understanding of 'transcendental philosophy' as a special kind of cosmology that determined what the actual and every possible world have in common. In other words, it is a theory that presents necessary truths. It is also a theory of objects and relations *in general*. Why he restricts 'transcendental philosophy' to one domain within special metaphysics[3] is easier to grasp when we see that he also says that transcendental philosophy stands to physics just as ontology or first philosophy stands to philosophy as a whole.[4] Transcendental philosophy offers only a subset of necessary truths, the truths that ground physics. Hence, Wolff presents it as an answer to the heated debate of the time concerning the status of the first principles of natural philosophy. Kant was clearly familiar with Wolff's understanding of 'transcendental philosophy' and this was also the sense in which it was used by other writers who influenced Kant from early on: Georg Bernhard Bülfinger (1693–1750), Johan Peter Reusch (1691–1758) and Friedrich Christian Baumeister (1709–85).

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62), however, employed 'transcendental' in the old scholastic sense of the transcendentals of ontology: *ens*, *unum*, *bonum*, *verum*, *perfectum*. Hence, for Baumgarten transcendental philosophy is the philosophy which has the transcendentals as its objects. We know that Kant read and wrote comments in two copies of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*. Unfortunately, the earliest one of these has been lost. The one preserved is the 1757 edition, and the marginalia that inform us about Kant's reactions to Baumgarten are believed to be from the late 1760s. From these notes, as well as from the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself, we can gather that at least from the 1770s and onwards Kant understood his own transcendental project as continuous with the old tradition.[5]

To summarize, the term 'transcendental philosophy' was used in a variety of ways by the German-speaking philosophers of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, they all seem to agree that transcendental philosophy belongs to metaphysics. Kant must have been familiar with these different meanings and formed his own concept partly in continuity; partly in opposition to them. It is, however, noteworthy that, apart from two findings in his Latin texts between 1756 and 1770, the term 'transcendental' appears relatively late in Kant's writings.[6] In the German texts it is used first in a letter to Marcus Herz in 1772,[7] and just after that it appears in several so-called *Reflexionen*, unpublished notes and drafts. Since Kant published nothing between the *Dissertatio* of 1770 and the *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781, quite naturally the first published work in

German in which we find the word 'transcendental' is the first *Critique*. Its first appearance here is in the introduction, where it is annexed both to 'knowledge' and 'philosophy':

> I call all cognition *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects in so far as this is to be possible *a priori*. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy.[8]

The earliest explicit formulation of what constitutes one of the main projects of the *Critique of Pure Reason* stems from the beginning of 1772. In the already mentioned letter to Herz, Kant claims that apart from one single point he is content with his *Dissertatio*. The issue he finds inadequately treated is that of explaining how intellectual, i.e. *a priori*, representations can relate to objects.[9] Another way of formulating this problem is obviously: 'How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible?'. Given the tradition of partly equating metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, since the *a priori* concepts of the intellect are fundamental metaphysical concepts such as substance, accidents and cause, Kant may be regarded as quite traditional when in the same letter he says that the answer to this problem is transcendental philosophy. From this point of view, he is also quite traditional when in some *Reflexionen* written between 1772 and 1774 he refers to these concepts as transcendental concepts.[10] However, the justification he gives of these concepts is innovative.[11] These concepts convey *a priori* knowledge of objects (and are thus metaphysical or transcendental in the traditional sense) because they are the conditions of the possibility of our knowledge of objects in general. Metaphysical concepts that are justified in this sense would, if they were fully analysed and arranged in a complete system, constitute transcendental philosophy.[12] Although Kant himself is hardly always consistent in his use of terminology, we can easily see that some of the apparent confusion with respect to his views on metaphysics is brought about simply because his critical project is seen as in dialogue with a tradition. He therefore employs 'metaphysical' as a predicate that covers both justified (in his own sense) and unjustified *a priori* concepts, judgements, inferences and sciences. The same is partly true about 'transcendental', although most of the time he uses this term to single out legitimate concepts and so forth.

In 1781 transcendental philosophy is only an idea, according to Kant; in other words, no such theory is yet within grasp. A critique is to result in the complete and systematic outline of transcendental philosophy. Sometimes Kant identifies the *Critique* with this achievement.[13] In this case the *Critique* is itself a part of transcendental philosophy: it is the framework of a theory that only needs to be filled out further through analysis and derivation. But in so far as the *Critique* is identified as a *propaedeutic* or discipline of the system entitled transcendental philosophy, 'critique' refers to the science of the examination of pure reason, of its sources and limits, rather than to the outcome of this examination.[14] In the latter sense a critique contains important elements that

would not themselves appear as a part of transcendental philosophy, but rather serve as conditions for establishing its scope and limits.

Although there are certain hints in early works which make Kant's way of justifying metaphysical concepts in the *Critique of Pure Reason* understandable,[15] the first recognizable versions of it stem from around 1772.[16] As late as 1770 he justifies metaphysical concepts by claiming, seemingly dogmatically, that they represent objects as they are as opposed to how they appear (to sensibility). So not only can there be no full transcendental philosophy, in Kant's specific sense, in the early works (although this is trivial given that in 1781 it is still a mere idea and, in fact, Kant never presented such a system), but since the concepts to be arranged in the complete systematic outline depend for their identification and ordering on Kant's specific way of justifying them – that is, by his arguing that they are conditions of the possibility of experience – so must that part of transcendental philosophy that he identifies with the *Critique* be absent in the early works also. However, as we shall now see, important features of the propaedeutic aspects of the *Critique* are in fact present already in Kant's first published work.

Living Forces and Königsberg 1746

In *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces* Kant takes on no less than the resolution of a conflict that began eighty years earlier and occupied some of the greatest thinkers of that time. The dispute concerned the estimation of force and began with Leibniz purporting to have found a mistake in Descartes' estimation of the force of a moving body. According to Descartes, the proper estimation of the force of a body is proportionate with its velocity. According to Leibniz, however, it is the square of the body's velocity. The respective positions reflect two different conceptions of force itself. Descartes and his followers recognized no other force than that which is given to a body from a source external to itself and which causes the body to move. Leibniz and his adherents, however, argued that, in addition to the kind of power that the Cartesians accepted, there is also a living force whose source lies within the body itself.

After a contribution by D'Alembert in 1743 which was taken to settle the matter in favour of the Cartesians, the debate had in fact ebbed away both in the European academies and in the literary circles of Madame de Châtelet and Voltaire, where it had had a vivid existence just a few years before. Only at the more provincial universities such as Königsberg was the debate still alive. Through his teacher Martin Knutzen, who had been a student of the Leibnizian philosopher Wolff, Kant thus came to believe that the conflict had not at all been settled.[17] In his mind both parties had found equally good support for their views and they both maintained that their opponents would have come to the same conclusions as themselves if only they were willing to abandon their preconceived views and assume a state of judgemental equilibrium.[18]

Since both parties cannot be right, or at least so it seems, the dispute is antinomial and can be presented in the following way:

Thesis	When a body is grasped in real movement its force is the square of its velocity.
Antithesis	When a body is grasped in real movement its force is proportionate to its velocity.

Kant boldly tells us that either this *Streit* is going to be solved shortly or never. The ground of this optimistic statement is that he believes that he has found a method that provides the only means for solving such a conflict.[19] The importance of this method can hardly be exaggerated. Kant himself says that the whole thesis on living forces is a creation of this method alone.

The first remark to be noticed is that a certain Herr Bülfinger has provided a rule that Kant hopes to have applied in a successful manner to the *Streit* on living forces. The rule says that when we have to do with a problem where men of good reason form contrary judgements, we should always focus our attention on some middle premise which in a certain way allows both parties to be correct.[20] This accords with the logic of probability, i.e. dialectics.[21] In other words, the origin of antinomies seems to be an inference in which the middle premise of the argument that leads the parties to their conclusion contains some kind of ambiguous term which the parties interpret differently. If this is the case both parties may in fact be right, although not, as they themselves thought, absolutely and unconditionally so. They can only both be right if the object about which they both purport to judge is taken in two different ways.[22]

From the short remark on Bülfinger, several important points concerning Kant's understanding of philosophy can be read off. First of all, since Kant claims that he always employs Bülfinger's rule in the investigation of truths and this search must be the hallmark of philosophy, it seems that for him all philosophical problems are antinomial or follow from antinomies. This suggestion is supported by the fact that in all of Kant's philosophical writings in this early period, *Universal Natural History*, *New Elucidation* and *Physical Monadology*, he is concerned with antinomial conflicts.[23] Further, philosophy is a critical and conceptual enterprise which aims at resolving misguided reasoning based on conceptual confusions. Moreover, since reason is the same in all men,[24] to philosophize successfully according to the agenda set by antinomies is really to resolve a conflict within reason itself. Add to this picture the following three questions which were heavily debated in Kant's philosophical environment:

(i) Are the foundational principles of natural philosophy mathematical or metaphysical?
(ii) What is the proper method of philosophy?
(iii) What is the status of the Aristotelian categories, do they belong to logic or metaphysics?

The first question is explicitly answered by Kant in *Living Forces*. The scope of mathematics is restricted to a certain limited conception of objects that the proper conception of natural objects transcends. Hence, mathematics needs a

metaphysical underpinning in order to inform us about nature. According to Kant, Leibniz, on the one hand, erred in extending mathematics beyond its proper domain. Descartes, on the other hand, erred in restricting his conception of 'object' to that of the mathematical/geometrical. Kant thus approaches (i) by seeking to establish the proper domain of the respective sciences via a disclosure of their respective sense of 'object' and other fundamental concepts. The human intellect, in Kant's mind, obviously has a natural tendency towards identifying a limited conception as a complete one. He also seems to hold that this is due to conflating our conception of the object with the object itself; a dispute concerning the *ratio cognoscendi* is mistaken for a dispute about matters of fact. Moreover, this hypostatizing tendency is expressed, upheld and concealed by language where the same word is used in quite different senses.[25]

This all implies that in addition to natural philosophy or metaphysics there must be some kind of critical metaphilosophy that operates at the level of concepts and investigates into the proper domain and limits of, on the one hand, the mathematical sciences and, on the other, natural philosophy, and also explains the relation between them.[26] With respect to the mathematical sciences, Kant seems to have accepted Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry as providing true 'data'.[27] This meant that the claims of metaphysics had to accord with them, but also that the philosophical task of finding their correct interpretation was less difficult than the corresponding one in metaphysics. Since no fully true metaphysics had yet been established,[28] the question of the proper interpretation of its concepts runs parallel to, or even precedes, the question of what its basic principles are.

These considerations link us to questions (ii) and (iii) above. The last point relates Kant's inquiry to the question of the status of Aristotelian categories.[29] In Germany there had been a revival of the *universalia Streit* in the seventeenth century. Several treatisies were written on the topic of the correct interpretation of Aristotelian categories. One figure of major importance is Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), a radical nominalist whose father, Jacob, had been the teacher of Leibniz. According to Thomasius, metaphysics belongs to logic as a theory of concepts. Moreover, ontology is nothing but a list of arbitrary definitions constructed by the human intellect. Thomasius had many important followers and the tradition continued into the eighteenth century. Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728–77), whose importance for Kant's development is beyond question, makes allusions to Thomasian ontology in his work *Architectonic* (1771). This shows that the Thomasian tradition was still alive in Kant's environment. Another important figure before Thomasius is Abraham Calov (1617–86), who for a period was a professor in Königsberg. He belonged to a group of philosophers, known as the Wittenberger School, who attempted to solve the problem of the categories by creating a new special science, gnostology, the science of the fundamentals of knowledge. Calov also created another science, 'noology', the science of the intellect, to which the question of the categories was assigned. Although both attempts failed and were not revived until after Kant's death, he clearly knew of this neo-scholastic discussion because of the strong

influence of Aristotelian teachers at his university. As late as 1704 Paul Rabe had published there a very detailed examination of the categories.

Another point about ontology should also be mentioned. Among the German philosophers of the eighteenth century the fundamental theme of ontology was the question of *things in general*. The title of the second chapter of Wolff's main work in German (1719), the chapter containing his ontology, reflects this understanding: 'Of the first grounds of our knowledge and all things in general'.[30] Kant must have been accustomed to thinking about ontology in this sense from early on. In a later *Reflexion* to Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* his debts to this discussion, as well as its relation to his own understanding of transcendental philosophy, become clear: '*A science of things in general* really abstracts from all differences and determinations of things as objects (*Gegenstände*) and concerns therefore only pure reason: *Transcendental philosophy*.'[31] So most likely Kant from the very beginning of his philosophical career understood metaphysics as the pretension to determine the essential character of objects qua objects, and he saw the challenge to metaphysics as being that of explaining how our fundamental concepts could accomplish this rather than merely exhibiting the structure of our thought.

The method of philosophy, i.e. (ii) above, was a much-debated theme in eighteenth-century Germany. The philosophical community recognized two main questions concerning method and metaphysics. The first (a) was whether metaphysics is an inductive or a deductive science. The second (b) was whether metaphysics proceeds analytically or synthetically. The latter question (b) is, however, muddled by the fact that it covers several distinct problems, some of which are indeed identical with the former question (a): it can refer to a question concerning the discovery of metaphysical truths, or, what need not be the same, their justification; it can also refer to a question concerning exposition or presentation of the theory. Moreover, although 'analysis' refers to some kind of regression, just what it is supposed to regress from and towards is a matter of confusion. It can be a regression from a compound to its components, a regression from a conclusion to its premises or from effect to cause. 'Synthesis' is likewise a vague concept although it always refers to some kind of progression. It can mean a progression from parts to a whole, from axioms or other premises to conclusions or from cause to effect.

It is remarkable that, although in *Living Forces* Kant is preoccupied with the question of method, he addresses neither of the standard questions. Admittedly, in the last part, in which Kant tries to argue for the metaphysical reality of living forces and for their estimation being that of MV^2, he touches upon them when comparing metaphysics and mathematics. Mathematics, according to Kant, proceeds deductively from axioms and definitions that are stipulative and autonomously established by mathematics itself.[32] Metaphysics too is a deductive science for Kant. However, its definitions are neither stipulative nor established by an autonomous metaphysical science. Metaphysics is based on the analysis of concepts that are not, at least in the scientific sense, exclusively metaphysical since they also make up our ordinary understanding of the world. To meet the

challenge from those who are sceptical towards any kind of metaphysics, one should eventually appeal to corresponding experience.[33] So metaphysics, according to the young Kant, must follow the hypothetico-deductive method. It also involves the analytic method in the sense of requiring analysis of compound concepts into their constituent parts and of regression from the known to the unknown.[34] It certainly involves synthesis too. Synthesis, in the sense of a progression from principles to conclusions, is of course nothing but deduction, and hence a method of metaphysics. Reasoning from cause to effect is also present in *Living Forces*. Analysis as well as synthesis is clearly primarily applied as a means of justification.

Kant's explicit remarks on the method of philosophy, however, concern a method that applies to the meta-level of metaphysics. This method, which we shall look into in the following section, is a method for finding and diagnosing fallacious reasoning. It is a critical and therapeutical method designed to clear the grounds for a true metaphysics, the science that Kant said it was his fate to fall in love with. Although he explicitly acknowledges that the method is taken from other thinkers, Kant's employment of it is, as far as I know, innovative.

Kant's meta-method

The rule adopted from Bülfinger can be formulated as the following imperative: *Find the middle premise that allows both parties to be correct.* In the following I will refer to this imperative as the B-rule. In §88 of *Living Forces* Kant claims that he had found a method in Herr Mairan's work that could liberate human understanding from the tyranny of errors.[35] Kant says that, through lack of this method, the tyranny of errors has held human understanding captive for whole centuries. Without it one would have to look for specific errors in the proofs. However, since human reason has the tendency to accept reasoning that appears correct, it tends not to take on itself the difficult task of finding mistakes in inferences which seem to be valid:

> One must have a method by means of which one in every case can decide, through a general estimation of the principles on which a certain opinion is built and through the comparison of those with the conclusion that is drawn from them, if also the nature of the premises includes everything which is required with respect to the doctrine [*Lehren*] which is inferred from them. This happens when one carefully attends to the determinations that attach to the nature of the conclusion and focuses on whether in the construction of the proof one has chosen such principles which are restricted to the same determinations as those which lie in the conclusion.[36]

The method can be formulated as a two-step rule that, in the following, I will refer to as the M-rule:

1 Find the determinations on which the conclusion depends.
2 Check whether in the construction of the proof such premises are chosen that are restricted by the same determination as that which lies in the conclusion.

Kant exemplifies his use of step 1 of the M-rule by telling us that at first he was fully convinced by Leibniz's proofs for his estimation of living force. However, by a general consideration of the conditions of the Leibnizian estimation of force he realized that the condition of this estimation was the reality of movement. Hence with 'determination' Kant means an assumption which specifies the condition under which the conclusion is taken to be true. The Leibnizian conclusion is of course that the proper measure of force is MV^2. The determination on which this conclusion hinges, according to Kant, is that we are considering objects in real movement. Kant then tells us that he came to see with great certainty that this could not yield the desired conclusion. The reason is that the proofs attempted are all mathematical but when we look into what is meant by the words 'real movement' we find that it cannot get any mathematical support. Indeed the assumption of real movement can be shown to be inconsistent given certain fundamental mathematical principles, in particular the law of continuity.[37] His argument goes as follows: By 'real movement' the Leibnizians mean a movement that has some temporal duration. At the starting point the movement is not real and the body has no living force but however small the time is that lapses there is real movement and living force. On the one hand, it is time as such that is the condition of living force, no minimal or determinate duration is required. On the other hand, if in thought you shorten the time span between the starting point A and a point B where the body has a living force, you realise that at some point of shortening B would reach A and the object would lose its living force. But this implies that the shortening of time both is and is not the condition that affects the living force.[38]

Now, since the mathematical interpretation of 'real movement' is shown to be inconsistent, we know *a priori* that the concept of real movement cannot have played a genuine role in the proofs. In other words, the restriction on the conclusion is found not to be satisfiable in the constructions of the proofs. So, as opposed to what one might think given Kant's formulations, step 2 of the M-rule is not carried out empirically by looking into the specific proofs but by examining whether the restriction of the conclusion *can* play a role in the kind of proofs that are presented. Another way of putting this is to say that step 2 tells one to investigate whether a certain concept has a legitimate use within a given domain. This point is more clearly expressed in §90 of *Living Forces*. Here Kant concludes that the reality of movement has no place in mathematics, that this concept is idle – a fifth wheel that does not accord with the mathematical way of looking at things. Hence, 'real movement' cannot function as a condition of the premises of the purported mathematical proofs and the discussion has been mixed up with philosophical reasoning.

Although Kant applies mathematics to check the truth value of metaphysics,[39] we must not forget that he does not himself restrict metaphysics to

mathematics. The reason why this method is applied in this case is that Leibniz himself purported to give his metaphysics mathematical support. So the mathematical demonstrations against Leibniz's position should be seen not only as expressions of Kant's firm belief in the truths of Cartesian mathematics but also as a step to salvage metaphysics.

> What is at stake here is only the estimation of forces that is cognized through mathematics. And it is no miracle if this does not make God's wisdom perfect enough. This is but one science drawn from the means of all knowledge. By itself it cannot provide the rules of decency and morality and it must be taken together with the doctrines of metaphysics if it is to be applied completely to nature. The harmony that holds between truths is like the harmony in a painting. If one separates a part of it, the decent, the beautiful and the purposive disappear; however one must see all of them together to perceive this. The Cartesian estimate is contrary to the purpose of nature; hence so is its true estimate. But this is no obstacle to its being the true and justified estimation of force in mathematics. The mathematical concepts of the properties of objects and their forces are widely different from the concepts that are met with in nature. It suffices that we have seen that the Cartesian estimate is not contrary to these. We must, however, connect the metaphysical laws with the rules of mathematics in order to determine the true estimation of force in nature. This will fill the gap and better satisfy the purpose of God's wisdom.[40]

Unfortunately, Kant says very little more about his philosophical method. But he explicitly acknowledges that more detailed considerations would have been in place, if the treatise had not been a treatise concerning the justifiability (*Gerichtsbarkeit*) of mathematics.[41] In other words, the method of meta-metaphysics can be an object of a special kind of inquiry. How to proceed with such a task, especially how to avoid an infinite regress of meta-philosophical worries, is left unanswered. What we do know, however, is that the M-rule is a means for disclosing that an apparently valid proof, or set of proofs, must be invalid. By following this rule, one can show that certain proofs must be formally invalid because they necessarily involve an ambiguous employment of terms. In other words, they are shown *a priori* to be paralogistic fallacies. Moreover, the method discloses the invalidity by seeking out its ground. But as we know, Kant does not only want to show that the Leibnizian proofs are fallacious. He also wants to argue that in one way both the Leibnizian and the Cartesian estimations of force are correct. To do so we are to follow the B-rule. Here is the relation between the B-rule and the M-rule: the M-rule enables you to carry out the B-rule. The condition of the premises, in this case the concept 'real movement', is precisely that ambiguous middle term of the middle premise that allows both parties to be in some sense correct.[42] In this sense the M-rule functions as a necessary condition of the B-rule and hence also as a necessary condition of resolving antinomies.

The seductive character of pre-judgements

One might object that if an antinomy is really based on different interpretations of an ambiguous middle term, this ought to be so obvious that it is hard to understand how any antinomy could survive debates over the centuries between the most splendid minds. Kant can hardly be said to have provided an adequate answer to this objection in *Living Forces*, but his main point is found already in the preface. Here he says that although the human mind is free to question all received opinions and apparent truths, it also has an unavoidable tendency to form hasty and uncritical judgements, so called pre-judgements (*Vorurteile*). A pre-judgement has the character of an illusion, since it is a subjective belief or opinion which appears as an objective truth. Since he takes the trust in the authority of famous men, a trust which conceals all other views and makes them appear as if they were perfectly alike, to be a result of being taken in by pre-judgements, the purpose of Kant's presenting this view in the preface is of course partly that he wants to defend his right to criticize great thinkers even though he himself is young and unknown. However, his reference to pre-judgements plays a much more significant role than this. When we turn to his criticisms of the different proofs of the Leibnizians, they more or less explicitly show that he takes their arguments to be grounded in different kinds of pre-judgements.

For instance, Kant contends that Leibniz was led to an error, i.e. his estimation of living force, by the misapplication of a Cartesian principle, to wit that 'the same force is needed to lift one pound four feet as four pounds one foot'.[43] This principle is not unconditionally true, it only holds if the lifting of each of the two bodies takes the same amount of time. Hence, time is a variable that has to be taken into consideration. Leibniz, however, did not recognize this restriction, and Kant believes that the reason why he did not is that he was led to this principle by Descartes' explanation of the nature of a lever. The nature of the lever, however, is such that the time span is necessarily equal; the two arms of the lever cannot but move and come to equilibrium during the same period of time. Since the temporal variable is kept constant when we have to do with levers, Leibniz was not aware of it as a variable and took the judgement to be unconditionally true. Hence the misapplication that Kant claims to be the source of Leibniz's mistaken estimation of force is the application of a principle beyond the constraints of its truth. In this case the misapplication is grounded in a pre-judgement which mistakes a judgement of the senses, namely that the lever uses the same force to lift one pound four feet as four pounds one foot,[44] for an unconditional principle about the force of objects in general.

Another example is found in Kant's criticism of Bülfinger. He says that although Bülfinger's inferences are in some sense perfectly true, his application of them is incorrect and has the mark of a hasty judgement.[45] As was the case with Leibniz, Bülfinger does not recognize the conditions on which his proofs hinge and he draws conclusions which are unrestricted. As it happens, the only reading of his proofs that would render them sound yields a conclusion which is totally irrelevant for the debate on the proper estimate of force. The pre-judgement at

work in Bülfinger's case is that he conflates the true but restricted principle that 'A body moving through the diagonal has *with respect to the two planes CD and BD* a force which is equivalent to the sum of the two forces of the sides' with the unrestricted principle that 'A body moving through the diagonal has a force which is equivalent to the sum of the two forces of the sides'.[46]

We find a third example of how pre-judgements ground fallacious inferences in §61 of *Living Forces*. The Leibnizians were often charged with the objection that their estimation of force could not explain the collision of inelastic bodies which, as the clearest case of force, also ought to be the test case for the existence of living forces. This objection was met by saying that, in the case of a collision of inelastic bodies, one part of the power was always spent to compress the parts of the body, an argument that seems simply ad hoc.

Kant says that the source of this error is the conflation of what belongs to the realm of experience and natural science on the one hand and purely mathematical considerations on the other. In nature hard, i.e. inelastic, objects are so constituted that their parts are conjoined in a way that allows them to compress when the body is hit. Although in fact the hardness of a body usually goes together with such a construction of its parts, we should not let that affect our mathematical understanding of inelastic bodies. The pre-judgement which plays the crucial role here is thus that of taking the empirical sense of 'inelastic body' to be the mathematical sense.[47]

As we see, in all of these cases the pre-judgement consists in taking a judgement whose truth is restricted by a certain set of conditions to be unconditionally true. The ground of this conflation seems to lie in a tendency to regard one's own point of view as representing the absolute one. This tendency is also described as the eagerness to extend knowledge beyond its justifiable grounds.[48]

The critical agenda of 1746: a summary

Our analysis of *Living Forces* has shown that several of the elements that we find in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are already present in the mind of the 22-year-old Immanuel Kant. Philosophy as a critique is a necessary *propaedeutic* to metaphysics because the intellect naturally falls into conflicts with itself. These conflicts are conceptual and first philosophy must therefore be concerned with concepts rather than objects. Further, the conflicts of the intellect are merely apparent since they are really the outcome of paralogistic reasoning. To solve them we need to apply a method that locates ambiguous middle terms. These ambiguities are concealed to us because of our general tendency to form pre-judgements where a subjective and conditioned point of view is mistaken for an objective and absolute one. This tendency can again be seen as stemming from an eagerness to extend knowledge beyond what can be justified.

When the locus of ambiguity is disclosed, another task is set for philosophy: find interpretations of the ambiguous term that allow both parties to be correct! In other words, find different justified ways of reading the terms so that the proofs turn out to be sound. Through such a procedure one sets the limits of

justified employment and subsumes the object of discussion under its appropriate domain. For instance, an object in the mathematical sense must be considered merely within the constraints of this science, an object in the metaphysical sense must be considered within the constraints of metaphysics. So already at this point Kant's interest lies in defining the limits of different domains of justified beliefs and not in a psychological project of describing the functioning of the intellect.[49] However, since no true metaphysics was yet available, the task presented to philosophy by the antinomy of living forces is a major one. The ground of metaphysics had to be established, its limits settled and its relation to the truths of the mathematical sciences would have to be explained. Now since our most fundamental concepts of objects, or our conception of things in general, are all metaphysical concepts, the project of defining and justifying metaphysics overlaps with the inquiry into our conception of objects. In other words, the required *propaedeutics* to metaphysics can be identified with the project of settling the proper limits of speculative reason.[50]

Although Kant might have come to frame his critical programme simply through his preoccupation with the antinomial conflict of living forces, as a matter of fact he was and took himself to be part of a tradition which tried to establish a firm basis for metaphysics. His philosophical upbringing took place in an environment where the old questions of the universals were still alive, where nominalism of different kinds had reigned shortly before his own time and where questions concerning the proper method of metaphysics were eagerly debated. But even if his general project of establishing a true metaphysics was not in any sense unique, his attempted solution to the task is. In this chapter I have argued that the beginning of this solution lies in his special way of identifying philosophy as a science of resolving antinomies.

Although much of the essentials of the later critical philosophy is found in its rudimentary form in the work of the 22-year-old Kant, many important steps are still missing. An account must be given of pre-judgement or illusion that grounds its necessity by reference to its systematic role in cognition rather than the more psychologistic approach we find in *Living Forces*.[51] The distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements is worked out in the mid-1760s. The distinction between intuition and concept can be traced back to 1766, and the arguments for space and time being forms of intuition appear in the *Dissertatio* of 1770. The question 'How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible?' appears in its first form in a letter to Herz of February 21, 1772, and the distinction between reason and understanding stems from around 1775. To show the background of these steps and their connection to the points made about *Living Forces* would, however, take me beyond the scope of the present discussion.

Notes

1 Most commentators pay little or no attention to this work. Norbert Hinske is an exception here. In *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, Berlin, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1970, he refers to *Living Forces* several times in his effort to explain Kant's development towards the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I agree with Hinske's understanding

of the importance of antinomial conflicts for this development and also agree that *Living Forces* supports this view. However, my analysis goes far beyond Hinske's brief remarks on this work. All references to *Living Forces* are to the version in both in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co. (Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), 1910ff, vol. 1.

2 See Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, p. 57.
3 In addition to cosmology, Wolff counted rational psychology and rational theology as belonging to special metaphysics.
4 See Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, p. 46.
5 Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, pp. 63–4.
6 The first appearance is in *Physical Monadology* (1756), the second in *Dissertatio* (1770), both in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.
8 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, A11.
9 'Letter to Herz', *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, pp. 130–31.
10 For example, *Reflexionen*, R 4473. *Reflexionen* are referred to by their number in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17.
11 This line of justification is developed in the so-called silent decade, that is, in the period 1770–80. For an analysis of this development see C. Serck-Hanssen, 'Transcendental Apperception', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, San Diego, University of California, 1996, Ch. 2.
12 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A13/B27.
13 See, for example, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A13/B27.
14 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A11/B25.
15 See Serck-Hanssen, 'Transcendental Apperception', Ch. 1.
16 See, for example, *Reflexionen*, R 4276 and R 4629, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17.
17 The historical information in this paragraph is taken from Irving I. Polonoff, *Force, Cosmos and Monads and Other Themes of Kant's Early Thought*, Bonn, Bouvier Verlag, 1973, Ch. 1 and 2.
18 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 16, 32.
19 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 16, 32.
20 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 32.
21 For the identification of 'dialectic' and 'logic of probability' see Giorgio Tonelli, *Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason *within the Tradition of Modern Logic*, New York, Georg Olms, 1994, p. 6.
22 For example, as a mathematical and a natural body, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 139–40.
23 See Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, pp. 89–93.
24 See 'It concerns the defence of the honour of human reason …', *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 149.
25 Kant is often criticized for not having recognized the (allegedly) pivotal role of language in philosophy. It is true that Kant does not say very much about language. In his published writings there are only 115 tokens of the word *Sprache* and 162 of *Wort* or *Wörter*. Many of the places where they occur have little or no philosophical significance. However, most places where these words are used to make philosophical points are places where Kant discusses dialectical inferences and illusions. It is noteworthy that in his precritical writings, 19 tokens of these words appear in this connection.
26 See *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 98.
27 See also Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. xiii.
28 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 30.
29 For the following points see Tonelli, *Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason *within the Tradition of Modern Logic*, pp. 165ff.

30 Cf. Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*, p. 31.
31 Kant, *Reflexionen*, R 5129, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17, also cited by Hinske, *Kants Weg zur Transzendentalphilosophie*.
32 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 139.
33 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 150.
34 See, for example, his argument in §126, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 149.
35 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 95.
36 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 93.
37 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 181.
38 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 36–7n.
39 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 30.
40 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 107.
41 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 97.
42 See *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 34: 'This word "real movement" was the reason for disagreement with the Cartesians, maybe it can also serve as the reason for a reunion.'
43 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 42.
44 Notice that Kant says [loc. cit.] that in the first place Herr Leibniz was led to this opinion by his *perception* of falling bodies, but that it was the illegitimate employment of Descartes' principle that led to the mistake. Here the perception plays the role of the illusion that seduces one's judgement.
45 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 79–80.
46 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 80–81.
47 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pp. 69–70.
48 *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 31.
49 See *Reflexionen*, R 4600, R 4601, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17, where he distances himself from Lambert's and Tetens' projects.
50 For Kant's first explicit statements concerning the relationship between the grounds of synthetic *a priori* judgement, a critique of pure reason, the limits of reason, the limits of metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, see 'Letter to Herz', *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, pp. 129–32.
51 For an excellent discussion of Kant's views on illusion, see Michelle Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

2 The fact of judgement

The Kantian response to the Humean condition

Juliet Floyd

In a previously published essay I have argued that the heart of Kant's response to Hume's 'problem' of induction does not lie in the 'Second Analogy of Experience' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as has traditionally been held.[1] Kant's most sophisticated response to Hume is laid out fully only later, in the Introductions (published and unpublished) to the *Critique of Judgment* – despite the fact that Hume is nowhere mentioned in these pages. This reading of Kant's reply to Hume on induction has, I am happy to say, recently been accepted by my colleague Henry Allison, a Kant scholar of the first rank.[2] Allison's 'weak' reading of the 'Second Analogy of Experience' was instrumental in helping me to understand that the first *Critique* could not be taken to provide a reply to Hume's criticisms that would meet Hume on anything like his home ground.[3] A fuller, more complex set of considerations – including an extension of Kant's very conception of a transcendental argument – needed to be brought to bear.

Although Allison and I agree that a proper reading of the third *Critique*'s Introductions should include Hume as at least one of Kant's principal targets,[4] I am not sure that we fully agree on the sense in which Kant may be said to have offered an *a priori* transcendental 'refutation' of Hume's 'problem' of induction. Clearly Kant aimed to reply to Hume in some way. Hume had expressed scepticism about philosophy's ability to ground the practice of induction *a priori*, and with it the content of our empirical knowledge. Hume argued that any *a priori* argument – whether appealing to the past success of the practice or to a general *a priori* principle concerning the uniformity of nature – would fail to justify induction as a legitimate, even if defeasible form of reasoning in a non-circular way. Kant worried that Hume's doubts would undermine our claims to possess at least some empirical knowledge of nature; indeed, his coming to appreciate the force of Hume's arguments was, by Kant's own profession, a most important stimulus in the development of the Critical philosophy.

Allison maintains that Kant's transcendental arguments concerning the systematicity of nature in the Introductions to the *Critique of Judgment* successfully settle the question of our right to claim *a priori* that it makes sense to engage in the inductive practice of empirical generalization (the *quid juris*). I also believe that the question of right is in some sense settled in these pages, but not at the expense of Hume's arguments. I regard Hume's 'problem' as unanswerable on