

Critique of Pure Reason the Dialectic

Immanuel Kant

1781

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Each four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions will be reported between square brackets in normal-sized type. This version follows (B) the second edition of the *Critique*, though it also includes the (A) first-edition version of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason. Undecorated marginal numerals refer to page-numbers in B; ones with an 'A' in front refer to A, and are given only for passages that don't also occur in B. The likes of ..356 in the margin mean that B356 (or whatever) started during the immediately preceding passage that has been omitted or only described between square brackets. These marginal numerals can help you to connect this version with other translations, with the original German, and with references in the secondary literature. Cross-references to other parts of this work include the word 'page(s)', and refer to numbers at the top-right corner of each page.—The Transcendental logic divides into the Transcendental analytic, which started on page 45, and the Transcendental dialectic, which starts here.

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·A two-part· appendix to the transcendental dialectic

1. The regulative use of the ideas of pure reason

Pure reason's dialectical endeavours •confirm what I showed in the Transcendental Analytic, namely that all the inferences that claim to lead us beyond the domain of possible experience are deceptive and ungrounded; and they also •teach us something else. This further lesson is that human reason has a natural tendency to overstep these boundaries, and that •transcendental ideas are just as natural to •reason as the •categories are to •understanding, though with this difference: whereas the categories lead to •truth, i.e. to our concepts' fitting the object, the ideas create mere •illusion—an irresistible illusion that we can hardly cure ourselves of even by means of the severest critique.

671 Everything that is grounded in the nature of our faculties must be appropriate to and consistent with the faculties' proper use—as long as we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and so discover the direction these faculties ought to take. So the transcendental ideas presumably have their own good, proper, and therefore *immanent* use, though when their meaning is misunderstood and they are taken for concepts of real things, they get used in a transcendent way which makes them delusive. What we have here are not two sorts of *ideas* but only two ways of (mis)using ideas:

- the roaming or transcendent use, in which the idea is taken beyond the range of possible experience and taken to apply directly to some object that is supposed to correspond to it;
- the homebody or immanent use, in which the idea is aimed solely toward the use of understanding as such,

and has to do only with objects that fall within the understanding's compass.

[Note the contrast between 'apply directly to' and 'have [something] to do with'.] All errors of subreption [see note on page 242] are due to a failure of judgment, never of understanding or reason.

Reason never relates directly to an object. All that it immediately relates to is the understanding; and it's through the understanding that it gets its own empirical use. So it doesn't •create concepts of objects, but only •organizes them, giving them the unity that they can have when used in their widest possible application, i.e. in connection with the *totality* of this or that series ·of conditions·. The understanding pays no attention to this totality; all it cares about is the connecting-up by which such series of conditions come into existence and are held together by concepts. So reason's only 'object' is the understanding and the right way to use it. 672
Just as

the understanding uses concepts to pull the manifold ·of sensibility· together in the object,

so also

reason uses ideas to pull the manifold of concepts together by presenting a certain collective unity as the goal of the understanding's activities, which would otherwise be concerned solely with distributive unity.

[This language of 'collective/distributive unity' occurs in only one other place in the work, namely on page 269. Neither there nor here does Kant say clearly how 'distributive unity' differs from 'disunity', but we can perhaps gather what 'collective unity' is meant to be. Making the understanding aim at collective unity, it seems, is making it aim at constructing some *single unified* intellectual item; in the earlier passage Kant focuses on reason's error in taking that item to be an *object* such as •the being that has all reality, or •the whole of past time. In our present passage he evidently holds that there's nothing wrong with the urge-towards-constructing-a-grand-single-something, as long as we

don't perform a bait-and-switch act and convince ourselves that we are talking about a grand non-empirical object.]

So my view is this: transcendental ideas are never to be used •constitutively, posing as concepts of certain objects. When they *are* so used, they're merely sophisticated (dialectical) concepts. On the other hand, they have an excellent •regulative use, and we *need* them in that role, in which they direct the understanding towards a certain goal, setting directional lines along which all its rules converge as though on their point of intersection. Of course this point •isn't anything real; it• is a mere idea, a *focus imaginarius* [= 'imaginary focus'. Kant has just spoken of reason's ideas as directing the understanding **towards** (*zu*) this focal point; that's the direction indicated by several things in this paragraph up to here. But he immediately goes on to write as though it were something the understanding might be thought of as moving **from**. Thus:] Because this •focal point• lies quite outside the bounds of possible experience, the concepts of the understanding don't really emanate from it; yet it serves to give to these concepts maximal unity combined with the maximal scope. This is the source of the illusion that the directional lines radiated out from a real object lying outside the field of empirically possible knowledge—just as objects reflected in a mirror are seen as behind it. [*That's* why Kant replaced 'towards' by 'from'! He wanted to bring in that neat comparison with the apparent position of something seen in a mirror. Kant will mention that comparison once more, but from now on reason's role will always be described in terms of what it directs the understanding towards.] We don't have to let this illusion actually deceive us, •but we can't get rid of it, because• it is indispensably necessary if we are to direct our understanding to keep extending its range as far as it possibly can. Analogously, the object-behind-the-mirror illusion doesn't have to deceive us, but it can't be got rid of as long as we are using a mirror to see things that are behind us.

If we survey the entire range of knowledge that our understanding brings to us, we find that reason's special concern with this range is •to demand that this knowledge be *systematic*, hanging together under a single principle, and •to try to bring this about. This unity demanded by reason always presupposes an idea, namely the idea of the form of a knowledge-whole that •precedes the specific items of knowledge of the parts and •contains the conditions that settle in advance the place of each part within the whole. [Kant doesn't mean that the knowledge-whole is achieved *before* we know any of the details. The 'preceding' of which he speaks is logical rather than temporal.] So this idea postulates a complete unity in the understanding's knowledge, a unity in which this knowledge isn't a mere contingent heap of items but is a system held together in accordance with necessary laws. This idea is a concept—what's it a concept *of*? Not of any object! Rather, it is the concept of the thoroughgoing unity of concepts of objects, with this unity serving as a rule for the understanding. These concepts of reason aren't derived from nature; on the contrary, we interrogate nature in accordance with them, and regard our knowledge as defective so long as it isn't adequate to them. •Here is an example•. It is agreed that *pure earth, pure water, pure air* etc., are scarcely to be found; but we need the concepts of them in order properly to determine the share that each of these natural causes has in producing appearances. •Why does the fluid in this flask behave as it does? What is the effect of its including bromine? of its containing common salt? of its component of *pure water*? So the concept of *pure water* is empirically serviceable, despite the fact that• its *pure* element comes solely from reason. . . .

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Taking reason as a faculty for deducing the particular from the universal, •its work falls into two classes•. (1) In one, the universal proposition is already *certain in itself* and

given, so that only *judgment* is needed to bring the particular under it, and this inference reveals the particular as also being necessary. I call this the ‘apodeictic’ use of reason. (2) In the other, the particular is certain, but the universal proposition from which it is derived is being accepted only as *problematic*, so that the universality of the rule from which the particular is inferred is still a problem. Several particular instances, each of them independently certain, are tried out on the rule to see whether they follow from it. If it turns out that all the particular instances we can come up with do follow from the rule, we infer ·upwards· from this to the universality of the rule, and then from the rule ·downwards· again to the particular instances—all of them, even those that are not themselves given. I call this the hypothetical use of reason.

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The hypothetical use of reason, based on ideas viewed as problematic concepts, isn’t really *constitutive*, because in following it we don’t strictly prove the truth of the universal rule that we have adopted as an hypothesis. If every possible consequence of it really did follow from it, that would indeed *prove* its universality, but how are we to know them all? The hypothetical use of reason is only regulative; its aim is to unify our items of knowledge as much as possible, thereby approaching universality for the rule.

So the hypothetical use of reason aims for the systematic unity of the understanding’s items of knowledge, and this unity is the *criterion of the truth* of reason’s rules. On the other hand, this systematic unity (as a mere idea) is only a *projected* unity, to be regarded only as a problem and not as something given. This unity—i.e. this *idea of* unity—aids us in discovering a principle governing the various special doings of the understanding, a principle that will lead the understanding to cases that are not given, thereby making it

676 more coherent.

But you can see from this that the systematic or reason-demanded unity of the manifold knowledge of understanding is a *logical* principle. Its role is to •deploy ideas to help the understanding in cases where it can’t establish rules on its own, while also •giving to the many different rules of the understanding a systematic unity under a single principle, thereby doing all it can to produce coherence. Should we accept this?—

Systematic unity is *right*, given **how objects are constituted**. We can confidently postulate this unity *a priori*, irrespective of any special interest of reason; so we’re in a position to maintain with certainty that all the understanding’s items of knowledge (empirical knowledge included) *have* the unity required by reason, and fall under common principles from which, despite their variety, they can all be derived.

No! That asserts a *transcendental* principle of reason, something claiming to be an objectively valid truth, not merely a logical, subjective rule of method. And that holds not only for the position as stated above, but also a different version of it that says:

Systematic unity is *right*, given **the nature of the understanding** that knows objects as objects . . . and so on.

I’ll illustrate this with an example of the use of reason. Among the various kinds of conceptual unity that the understanding has dealings with is the unity of the different causal powers of a single substance. The many appearances of a single substance look at first sight to be so unlike that we start out with the assumption that they are effects of correspondingly many different powers of the substance; as with sensation, consciousness, imagination, memory, ingenuity, discrimination, pleasure, desire, and so on ·as supposedly different powers or faculties· of the

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human mind. Now there's a logical [here = 'methodological'] maxim telling us what to do right from the start, namely to reduce this seeming diversity as much as possible, by comparing these ·effects or these supposed powers· and detecting their hidden identity—for example investigating whether imagination combined with consciousness may not be the same thing as memory. . . .and so on·. Though logic can't decide whether a *basic power* actually exists, the idea of such a power is the problem posed for [here = 'the challenge to be met in'] a systematic treatment of the multiplicity of powers. The logical principle of reason demands that we bring about this unity as completely as we can; and the more the appearances of power x and power y are found to be exactly alike [Kant writes *identisch*], the more probable it becomes that they are merely different expressions of a single power; and we could call this a relatively basic power, the one that is the basis of powers x and y. And similarly with the other powers.

678 The relatively basic powers must in turn be compared with one another, with a view to discovering their harmony and so bringing them nearer to a single absolutely basic power. But this reason-demanded unity is purely hypothetical. The claim is not •that such a power must be there, but only •that we have to *look for it* in the interests of reason, i.e. for the setting up of certain principles for the various rules that experience may supply to us, trying in this way to bring as much systematic unity as possible into our knowledge.

When we look at the transcendental use of understanding, we find that this idea of a basic power is not •treated merely as a problem ·or task· that is to be used hypothetically, but •claimed to have objective reality, as declaring that the various powers of a substance are systematically unified and yielding an absolutely necessary principle of reason. For without having tried to show the harmony of these various

powers, or even having tried and always failed, we still take it that such a unity does actually exist. And we take this line in connection not only •with the different powers of **a single substance** (as in the cited case ·of the human mind·) but •with the powers of **a kind of stuff**—such as *matter*—where we find ·in different samples of the kind· powers that are different from one another though they have a certain amount in common. [Kant doesn't have a phrase corresponding to 'a kind of stuff', but his example of *matter* shows that what he has in mind is the distinction between countable substances and undifferentiated kinds of stuff.] In all those cases reason says that the various powers ·under investigation· *are* systematically unified because special natural laws *do* fall under more general laws. Parsimony in principles is one of nature's own laws; it's not merely something that reason requires in the interests of good management.

Actually, one can't see how there *can* be •a logical [= 'methodological'] principle of unity-of-rules unless there is also •a transcendental principle whereby such a systematic unity is *a priori* assumed to be something that the objects necessarily *have*. 679 Reason in its logical use calls on us to treat the variety of powers exhibited in nature as a disguised unity and to derive this unity, as far as possible, from a basic power. How could reason be entitled to make this demand if it were free to admit that in fact all the powers are different and that nature doesn't permit them to be systematically unified? If reason made that admission, it would be opposing its own vocation, striving for an idea that was inconsistent with the constitution of nature. You might say:

·Perhaps reason doesn't have to *presuppose* this unity in nature·. Perhaps while proceeding in accordance with its own ·methodological· principles reason *learns about* this unity from the facts about how nature *happens to be* constituted.

No! The law of reason that tells us to look for this unity is a *necessary* one, because

- without it we wouldn't have reason, and
- without reason we wouldn't have any coherent use of the understanding, and
- without that we wouldn't have any adequate criterion of empirical truth.

Conclusion: if we are to have such a criterion we have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary, which means that we have to accept this as a transcendental principle.

Although philosophers haven't always acknowledged this transcendental principle, even to themselves, or indeed been conscious of using it, we still find it wonderfully *buried* in the principles on which they proceed:

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The multitude of ways in which individual things differ don't rule out identity of species; the various species must be regarded as merely different special cases of a few genera, and these in turn of still higher genera, and so on; in short, we must seek for a certain systematic unity of all possible empirical concepts by deriving them from higher and more general concepts—this is a logical principle, an academic rule, without which there couldn't be any use of reason. Why not? Because we can't infer particulars from universals—which is reason's basic activity—except where we credit things with having universal properties that are the foundation of the particular properties.

Philosophers presuppose that such unity is to be found in nature when they accept the familiar academic rule that rudiments or principles mustn't be needlessly multiplied (*entia praeter necessitatem non esse multiplicanda*). [The Latin sentence means that *entities* aren't to be multiplied beyond necessity. This is famous under the title 'Occam's Razor'.] This says that the

nature of things provides reason with what it needs for its purposes, and that the seemingly infinite variety in phenomena shouldn't dissuade us from assuming that behind this variety there's a unity of basic properties from which all the variety can be reached as a multitude of special cases. Although this unity is a mere idea, it has always been so eagerly pursued that there has been a need to moderate rather than to encourage the desire for it. It was a big step when chemists succeeded in reducing all **salts** to two main genera, namely acids and alkalis; and now they're trying to show that there's just one basic material of which acids and alkalis are merely special cases. They have worked at gradually bringing the number of basic kinds of **earths** (the material of stones and even of metals) down to •three, and eventually to •two; but, not content with this, the chemists can't get rid of the thought that these two are just special cases of •one genus, a single basic kind of earth; and that even basic salt and basic earth may be special cases of something lying still deeper. You might think that this is merely reason being economical, saving itself from trouble—adopting an hypothesis that will gain probability by any success that it achieves. But that is not so; it's easy to distinguish the •idea from •a procedure in which reason is merely catering to its own interests. Anyone working with the idea presupposes that the unity demanded by reason squares with nature itself, though admittedly it can't say *how far* this unity goes. Reason isn't *asking*—it's *commanding*.

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If among the appearances that we encounter there was so much variety. . . in content that even the acutest human understanding couldn't see the slightest similarity among them (which is perfectly conceivable), the logical law of genera would have no sort of standing; we wouldn't even have the concept of a genus, or indeed any other universal concept; and there would be no such thing as the understanding,

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because it deals only with such concepts. Thus, if the logical principle of genera is to be applied to nature. . . ., it presupposes a transcendental principle. And according to that principle there has to be sameness of kind in the manifold of experience (though we can't tell *a priori* how much of it there is), because if there weren't any samenesses of kind there couldn't be any empirical concepts, and so there couldn't be any experience.

The logical principle of genera, which demands identity, is balanced by the principle of species. This •calls for complexity and variousness in things (despite their sharing the same genus), •tells the understanding to attend to the diversity as much as to the identity. This principle of species (of discrimination and acuteness) stops the principle of genera (of breadth of thought) from going too far. So reason turns out to have two interests that are in tension with one another. **(1)** On the one hand there's an interest in *extent* (universality) in respect of genera, leading the understanding to get more *under* its concepts. **(2)** On the other hand, there's an interest in *content* (determinateness) in respect of the multiplicity of the species, leading the understanding to get more *into* its concepts. This twofold interest shows up in scientists' different patterns of thought. Those who are most given to general theories are hostile (as it were) to qualitative differences and are always on the look-out for the unity of the genus; while those who are most empirical in their approach keep busily trying to split nature into so much variety that one might almost despair of ever being able to bring its appearances under universal principles!

This diversity-seeking mode of thought is evidently based on a logical principle that aims at the systematic completeness of all knowledge, telling us that if we start with the genus we should come down to the level of the manifold that falls under it, thus ensuring the system's •scope; just

as the other principle has us going up to the level of the genus, trying to secure the system's •unity. No amount of knowledge about the range of the concept that marks out a genus will tell us how far we could go in dividing it up into species, just as our knowledge of the space that a body occupies won't tell us how far we could go in dividing it up into parts. Consequently, every genus requires diversity of species, and these in turn require diversity of subspecies; and since each of these subspecies has a domain that is covered by a general concept, reason. . . .demands that no species be regarded as being intrinsically a lowest species, .i.e. one that can't be split up any further. That is because any species—even a sub-sub-...species with as many subs as you like—is always a concept, containing only what is common to different things, so that it isn't completely specified. So it can't be directly related to an individual, and other concepts must always be contained under it. . . .

But it is easily seen that this •logical law would be senseless and useless if it didn't rest on a •transcendental law of specification, not one demanding an actual *infinity* of differences in the things that can be objects to us. . . .but one requiring the understanding when it has found a species to look for subspecies under it. . . . For if there were no *lower* concepts, there couldn't be *higher* ones. Now, the understanding deals only in concepts; so this process of division, however far it goes, never divides anything through intuition but always only through lower and lower concepts. The knowledge of appearances in all their detail, which is possible only through the understanding, demands an *endless* process of fine-graining our concepts. . . .

This law of specification can't be derived from experience, which can't reveal to us any such discovery as that *every* species has sub-species! The empirical process of identifying smaller and smaller species soon comes to a stop. . . .if it

isn't guided by the above-mentioned transcendental law of specification which, as a principle of reason, leads us always to look for further differences and to suspect that they are there even when the senses can't find them. [Kant then gives an example of species-division from the history of chemistry, saying that it wouldn't have happened if the law of specification hadn't been at work. He repeats that the possibility of concept-use, and thus the possibility of employing the understanding, depends on the assumption of differences and likenesses in nature. Then:]

Thus, reason prepares the ground for the understanding: **(1)** through a principle of the *homogeneity* of the manifold under higher genera; **(2)** through a principle of the *variety* of the homogeneous under sub-species; and **(3)** in order to round out the systematic unity, the further law of the *kinship* of all concepts—a law that prescribes that we proceed from each species to every other through a gradual increase of the diversity. We can call these the principles of **(1)** *homogeneity* **(2)** *specification*, and **(3)** *continuity* of forms. You get **(3)** by combining **(1)** and **(2)**, because the idea of **(3)** complete systematic connection involves the thought of **(1)** ascending to higher genera and **(2)** descending to lower species [e.g. ascending from *man* to *vertebrate* and then down from there to *vertebrate*]. That gets all the manifold differences to be related to one another because they all descend from one highest genus down through all degrees of specification.

[Kant now offers a spatial model to illustrate 'the systematic unity prescribed by the three logical principles'. The notion of a *space* of concepts, a logical space, is one that he used effectively back in the *Analytic* [pages 49–50], but his present use of it is an obstacle to understanding. The model is intrinsically clumsy; and to grasp how it works (insofar as it *does* work) you have *first* to grasp firmly the 'principles' that it's supposed to model—so that the model

doesn't help. In expounding it, Kant repeats and emphasizes the three logical principles: **(1)** The 'law of homogeneity', which says that there is one concept (that of the 'highest genus') which is an ingredient in *every* other concept. **(2)** The 'law of specification', which says that *every* general concept is an ingredient in some other concepts, ones that are more specific than it is. **(3)** The 'law of the continuity of forms', which says: Given any two concepts, there is some conceptual ingredient that they both have. (In his handling of this in the context of the model, Kant does rightly say that the journey—as it were—from one concept to another may involve going up before going down.) Here is the story again, as given by Kant after the model:]

So **(1)** keeps us from extravagantly allowing many different basic genera, and points us towards homogeneity; **(2)** restrains this tendency towards unity, and commands us not to apply any universal concept to individuals until we have distinguished subspecies within it. **(3)** combines these two laws by prescribing that even amidst the utmost manifoldness there is homogeneity that allows stepwise transition from one species to another, thus recognizing the kinship of the different branches that all spring from the same stem.

[That paragraph was reached by skipping over something that should now be mentioned, namely Kant's taking **(3)** to imply that

- Between any two concepts there is at least one intervening concept,

from which of course it follows that

- Between any two concepts there are infinitely many intervening concepts.

In his words: 'There is a continuity of forms. . . . You never get from one species to another by a •jump, but only •by gliding through• all the smaller degrees of difference that

688 come between them. In short, reason doesn't allow that any two species or subspecies x and y are the nearest possible to each other; there can always be still other intermediate species that are less different from x and from y than x and y are from one another.' Kant announces this thesis abruptly and without argument; he seems to have been seduced into it by a couple of suspect features of his spatial model. But we needn't go into that, and can now let Kant continue:]

This **(3)** logical law of the •continuity of species presupposes the **(3t)** transcendental law of •continuity in nature [both phrases are given in Latin]. Without **(3t)**, the logical law **(3)** would only lead the understanding astray, sending it along a path that may be quite contrary to the path that nature itself prescribes. So the grounds for **(3)** must be purely transcendental, not empirical. If the grounds for **(3)** were empirical, this law would come later than the systems •through which the empirical materials were made available; whereas in actual fact •it's the other way around: **(3)** has given rise to all that is systematic in our knowledge of nature. Something we can do with an hypothesis that we think up is to test it experimentally; if it survives the tests, that's evidence for its truth; and our present three laws *can* be handled in that way, and do perform some service in that role. But that's not what they are *for*. It is *not* the case that we have formulated them, thinking them up out of our own heads, as hypotheses to be tentatively put forward to be experimentally tested. It's obvious from looking at these laws that they regard **(1)** the parsimony of basic causes, **(2)** the manifoldness of effects, and **(3)** the consequent kinship of the parts of nature as being in agreement with reason and with nature. So these principles carry their credentials with them; they are not to be valued merely as procedural rules. [Notice that in this paragraph our three laws concern the •causal structure of the world, not its •qualitative structure which is how Kant

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first introduced them. He returns to qualitative structure in the next paragraph.]

But it's easy to see that **(3)** this continuity of forms is a mere idea, and can't be cashed out by anything discovered in experience. •There are two reasons for this. **(a)** The species in nature are actually separated from one another—they are discrete, not smoothly continuous. If the tracing out of the kinship between two species—•man and fish, say—were truly *continuous*, there would be a true infinity of intermediate species between any two given species, which is impossible. [Kant isn't contradicting himself here. His continuity thesis is about concepts, corresponding to *possible* species, whereas the point he makes here concerns *actual* species.] **(b)** We couldn't make any determinate empirical use of this law, because all it does is to tell us in broad terms to *seek kinship* •among species; it says nothing about how we are to recognize kinship, about how far it goes, or about how to look for it.

. . . Reason starts from the understanding's items of knowl- .690
edge, which are immediately related to experience, and engages in an idea-guided search for the unity of this knowledge—a unity that goes far beyond possible experience. The kinship of the manifold. . . has to do with •things, but it has still more to do with their •properties and •powers. Here's an example •in which, you'll notice, what is at stake is the affinity not of the •planets but of their possible •orbits:

Our imperfect experience presents the orbits of the planets to us as circular. Then we find deviations from that. We suppose that these non-circular orbits approximate more or less closely to a circle, and that there's a fixed law [here = 'mathematical formula'] that covers the circle, these non-circular figures, and all the infinity of figures that come between them. And so we come on the *ellipse*.

•And then a further application of the same procedure:

691 So far as we can see, *comets* follow paths that are even more divergent from circles, because they seem not to return, i.e. not to have paths that are closed loops. We handle that by looking for something that ·mathematically· unites those paths with ellipses, and so we come upon the *parabola*. This is akin to the ellipse; indeed, an ellipse with a long enough major axis can't be observationally distinguished from a parabola.

Thus, under the guidance of these principles we discover •a unity in the generic shapes of these paths ·of the planets and comets·, and through that •a unitary cause of all the laws of planetary motion, namely •gravitation. From there we extend our conquests still further, trying to explain by the same principle all variations and seeming deviations from these rules. Eventually we make additions that experience can never confirm: the rules of kinship lead us to conceive of comets as following hyperbolic paths, in the course of which they entirely leave our solar system and—passing from sun to sun—unite the most distant parts of the universe, a universe that is unlimited so far as we can tell but is held together by a single moving force.

692 The only feature of these principles that concerns us here is a remarkable one, namely: *they seem to be transcendental*. All they contain are mere ideas to guide the empirical use of reason—ideas that reason follows only asymptotically, i.e. ever more closely without ever reaching them—and yet •they are synthetic *a priori* propositions that have objective but indeterminate validity, •they serve as rules for possible experience, and •they can also be very useful as guides to procedure in the advance of science; but •they can't be ·legitimised by being· given a transcendental deduction—I showed earlier [page 172] that such a deduction can never be given for any ideas ·of reason·.

[The next short paragraph is tiresomely difficult. In it Kant takes us back to Analytic and then forward again through some flourishes that aren't essential to what follows. The upshot of all this is the firm assertion that the principles of pure reason can't possibly be brought to bear directly on experience; which prompts Kant to ask:] If we thus disallow such empirical use of the principles of reason as constitutive principles, how can we secure for them a regulative use and thereby some sort of objective validity? And what would such a regulative use *be*?

[This paragraph will considerably amplify what Kant wrote, in ways that the small-dots convention can't easily indicate. But the core of the paragraph is there in Kant's words.] **(a)** Just as sensibility is an object for the understanding, so also **(b)** the understanding is an object for reason, It's the understanding's job to

(a) work on the manifold of the appearances by means of concepts, and to bring it under empirical laws, and it's reason's job to

(b) work on all possible empirical acts of the understanding, bringing systematic unity to them.

It's to be expected that there will be some analogy between **(a)** how the understanding works on appearances and **(b)** how reason works on the doings of the understanding; and one part of that analogy comes to our attention now. Back in the Analytic [see pages 93–4] we saw that

(a) Thoughts by the understanding were transformed from such indeterminate (vague) items as

•if-then propositions

•subject-predicate propositions

to the determinate items

•causal propositions

•propositions about substances;

this change being produced by adding to each basic concept of the understanding *a sensible schema*,

which was tantamount to building the notion of *time* into it.

693 Now, the concepts that reason deals with are also indeterminate; this can't be cured by adding anything *sensible* to them, but something analogous to that does happen, namely:

(b) Commands by reason are transformed from such indeterminate (vague) items as

- look for causal explanations
- look for common features

to the determinate items

- look for *complete* causal explanations
- look for *the greatest possible* qualitative unity among things.

Thus, reason's analogue of the understanding's sensible schema is just the notion of a *maximum*.

The notion of *greatest* or of *absolutely complete* is perfectly determinate; when it is built into reason's commands, they tell us *exactly* what we should do. (If the commands were less stringent—'Look for as much causal explanation as meets this or that qualification'—indeterminacy will come in via the qualification.) There is also a disanalogy: **(a)** when you amplify a category by adding its sensible schema, you add to the content of what's said about the object; the statement

•The water's freezing *causes* it to harden

says *more* than does the statement

•The water's freezing *is if-then related in some way* to its hardening.

But **(b)** the notion of a *maximum* doesn't add anything to what reason implies about the world. Reason's output does have *some* implications for the experienced world: any principle that *a priori* •prescribes to the understanding that it should produce thoroughgoing unity in its use also indirectly •says something about the object of experience; so the principles of pure reason must have objective reality in respect

of that object. But it doesn't imply anything *determinate* about its object, because the element that makes reason's principles determinate—the element that is analogous to the schematism of the categories—is the notion of *maximum* or *greatest possible*, which has to do not with •what the world is like but with •how our understanding ought to behave. 694

I use the label '*maxim* of pure reason' for any subjective principle that comes not from •the constitution of an object but from •reason's interest in achieving a certain possible completeness in its knowledge of the object. Using this label, then: there are maxims of speculative reason, which rest entirely on its speculative interest though they may seem to be objective principles.

When merely regulative principles are regarded as constitutive, then as objective principles they can conflict with one another. But when they are regarded merely as *maxims*, there's no real •conflict but merely. . . •different methods of trying to satisfy reason's one and only interest; and •we get an impression of conflict because •these methods can get in one another's' way.

So it may happen that one incompetent thinker is especially interested in *manifoldness* (in accordance with the principle of specification), while another cares more about *unity* (in accordance with the principle of homogeneity); they think they are disagreeing about the nature of the object, 695 whereas really it's a difference in which of the two principles each puts uppermost. And since neither of these principles is based on objective grounds, but solely on the interest of reason, it would really be better to call them 'maxims' rather than 'principles'. When I see intelligent people disputing about the characteristic properties of human beings—

for example, with some assuming •that there are certain special hereditary characteristics in each nation, or certain well-defined inherited differences in

families, races, etc., while others insist •that nature has made the same provision for everyone, and that the differences are due to external accidental conditions

—I have only to consider what sort of object they are talking about (•namely, *human nature*•) to realise that it's hidden far too deeply for them to be in any position to base their dispute on insights into its nature. What we see here is just the twofold interest of reason, with one party •to the dispute• embracing or at least going along with one of the interests, and the other party the other; and it's easy to •bring peace to the dispute when it is understood in *that* way, because it's easy to• reconcile the maxims of manifoldness and of unity in nature. But as long as the maxims are taken to be objective propositions about nature, we'll have disputes that will be impede science because research will be held up until they can be settled. (I stated this in terms of a fight about human nature; but it could as well have been a dispute about animals or plants—or even minerals.)

Another example of the same thing is the dispute over Leibniz's widely discussed law of the *continuous gradation* of created beings. . . . This law is simply the following out of the principle of kinship that rests on the interest of reason; it couldn't possibly be based on observation and insight into the constitution of nature. The differences between things that we encounter in our experience are much too big •to suggest that there's a continuous difference-bridge across the gap•; and even when we encounter differences that seem tiny to us, they won't be tiny from nature's point of view. There's no chance at all of our reaching a decision about the law of continuity by the empirical study of nature. . . . On the other hand,

•the method of looking for order in nature in accordance with such a principle,

and the

•maxim that prescribes that we regard such order as grounded in nature as such (without specifying where and how far it goes)

is certainly a legitimate and excellent regulative principle of reason. In its regulative role it goes far beyond anything that experience or observation could verify, but not by •stating facts that are inaccessible to experience. What it does is to •mark out the path towards systematic unity.

2. The final purpose of the natural dialectic of human reason

The ideas of pure reason can't ever be dialectical [= 'illusion-creating'] in themselves; any deceptive illusion involving them must be due solely to their misuse. Why? Because we get them from the very nature of •our reason; and it's impossible that that •supreme court for the rights and claims of speculation should itself generate deceptions and illusions. It's to be expected, then, that the ideas have their own good and appropriate role in the natural conduct of our reason. But the rabble of sophists are up to their old tricks: they scream 'Absurdity!' and 'Contradiction!' against reason; they can't penetrate to its innermost designs, but that doesn't stop them from judging and condemning it. What makes it possible for them to stand on their own feet and assertively blame and condemn what reason requires of them? It is a culture that comes from the beneficent influences of reason!

We can't confidently use an *a priori* concept unless we have first given a transcendental deduction of it, •i.e. a demonstration that the concept is a legitimate one to use. The transcendental deduction of the •categories (**concepts of pure understanding**) legitimised them by showing that they *must* fit the items they are meant to fit. The •ideas (**concepts**

698 **of pure reason**) can't be legitimised in *that* way. But *some* deduction of them must be possible, even if it's very different from the transcendental deduction of the categories. If we can't provide that, then the ideas won't have any objective validity—not even a small degree of very vague objective validity—and they'll have to be written off as mere empty thought-entities. I am now going to present the needed deduction; that will complete the critical work of pure reason.

There's a big difference between something's being given to my reason •as an object *period* and something's being given to my reason merely •as an object *in the idea*. In the former case my concepts serve to determine •= specify• the object; in the latter case there's actually only a schema, and no object for it is directly given, even in a hypothetical manner. All it does is to represent other objects indirectly, through how they are unified by means of their relation to this idea. Thus I say that the concept of a highest intelligence is a mere idea; i.e. its objective reality doesn't consist in its referring point-blank to an object (if it did, we could never show that it *is* objectively valid). It's only a schema constructed in accordance with the conditions of the greatest unity of reason—the schema of the concept of *thing*, the concept of a thing as such. And its role is just to secure the greatest systematic unity in the empirical use of our reason, which it does through our regarding the object of experience as being based on, or having been caused by, the imaginary object of this idea. We say, for instance, that the things of

699 the world must be viewed *as if* they got their existence from a highest intelligence. The idea is thus really only a heuristic concept, not an ostensive one [= 'a concept that guides discovery, not one that shows anything']: it doesn't show us how an object is constituted, but how, under the guidance of this idea, we should *try to discover* how the objects of experience are constituted and inter-connected. So if it can be shown that

the three transcendental ideas (psychological, cosmological, and theological), although they *don't* directly latch onto and specify any corresponding object, nevertheless *do*—in their role as rules for the empirical use of reason—lead us towards systematic unity by presupposing such an *object in the idea*; and in this way broaden our empirical knowledge without ever being able to run counter to it,

then •we can conclude that• it's a necessary maxim of reason to proceed always in accordance with such ideas. And *that* is the transcendental deduction of all ideas of speculative reason—not as *constitutive* principles for the broadening our knowledge to more objects than experience can give, but as *regulative* principles for bringing into the manifold of empirical knowledge a systematic unity that it couldn't achieve without the aid of these principles.

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I'll clarify that. When we follow the above three ideas as principles we'll do three things. **(1)** In psychology, under the guidance of inner experience, we'll connect up all the appearances—all the inputs and outputs of our mind— *as if* the mind were a simple substance that stays in existence with personal identity (in this life at least), while its states. . . .continually change. **(2)** In cosmology, we must track the conditions of both inner and outer natural appearances in a never-completed enquiry—*as if* the series of appearances were itself endless, having no first or top member. (This needn't involve us in denying that the series of appearances has •purely intelligible causes—i.e. ones that don't themselves belong to the series—but we mustn't bring •these into any of our explanations of nature, because we don't know a thing about •them.) **(3)** In the field of theology, we must view everything that can belong to the fabric of

possible experience

as if this experience constituted an absolute unity, but one that is dependent through and through, and conditioned within the world of sense;

and yet also at the same time

as if the sum of all appearances (the sensible world itself) had a single, highest and all-sufficient basis lying outside its own territory, namely a self-subsistent, primordial, creative •reason;

701 in the light of which we guide the empirical use of *our* •reason to give it the broadest extent, by viewing all objects

as if they drew their origin from such an archetype.

In other words, **(1)** we oughtn't to derive the inner appearances of the soul from a simple thinking substance, but should derive them from one another under the guidance of **the idea of** a simple being. **(3)** We oughtn't to derive the order and systematic unity of the world from a supreme intelligence, but to get from **the idea of** a supremely wise cause the rule that guides our reason in making the best possible job of connecting empirical causes and effects in the world. . . .

Now there's not the slightest obstacle to our *assuming* that the **(1)** psychological and **(3)** theological ideas are objective, i.e. to our hypostatizing them. (Not so with **(2)** the cosmological ideas: if reason treats *them* as objective it falls into antinomy, which the other two don't.) So how can anyone quarrel with us about their objective reality? Anyone who denies that they are possible has no more *knowledge* to back up his denial than we have to back up our affirmation! But there not being 'the slightest obstacle' to assuming something doesn't automatically make it all right for us to assume it; and it's *not* all right for us to introduce thought-entities that transcend all our concepts (without contradicting them) as being real and determinate

objects, merely on the say-so of a speculative reason that wants to complete its work. They oughtn't to be assumed as existing in themselves; the only reality they are entitled to is the reality of a *schema* for the regulative principle of the systematic unity of all knowledge of nature; their legitimate status is: •analogues of real things, not: •real things. We strip from the object of the idea the conditions that •constrain the concept-of-the-understanding of it, and also •are needed for us to have a determinate concept of anything. What that leaves us with is the thought of a Something of whose intrinsic nature we have no concept whatsoever, but which we represent to ourselves as relating to the totality of appearances in a way analogous to how appearances relate to one another.

When we accept ideal beings in this way, we aren't stretching our knowledge out beyond the objects of possible experience. What we're doing is to increase the empirical unity of our experience through the systematic unity for which the idea provides the schema—so that the idea's legitimate status is that of a regulative principle, not a constitutive one. In positing a thing (a Something, a real Being) corresponding to the idea, we aren't claiming to use transcendental concepts to extend our knowledge of things; because this Being is posited only •in the idea and not •in itself, so that all it does is to express the systematic unity that is to guide the empirical use of reason. It doesn't say what this unity is based on, i.e. what the intrinsic nature is of the Being that causes the unity.

So the transcendental concept—the only determinate concept—that purely speculative reason gives us of God is in the strictest sense *deistic* [see pages 288 etc.]; i.e. reason doesn't guarantee the objective validity of this concept, but only gives us the idea of something that is the basis for the supreme and necessary unity of all empirical reality.

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The only way we can think about this ‘something’ is on the analogy with

- a real substance that causes everything, in accordance with laws of reason.

·Contrast that with this—

- a real substance that causes a change in another substance, in accordance with the laws of the understanding

—which we can think of directly, and not only by analogy·. If we want to think of it as a special object, we have to think of it in this ·analogical· manner. ·*Must* we think of it as a special object? No·; the alternative is to settle for the mere idea of the regulative principle of reason, setting aside ‘the completion of all conditions of thought’ as going beyond the limits of the human understanding. This alternative, however, doesn’t square with the pursuit of complete systematic unity in our knowledge to which reason at least sets no limits.

704 This, then, is how matters stand: When I posit a divine Being, I haven’t the slightest conception of its supreme perfection as intrinsically possible, or of the necessity of its existence; but I *am* in a position to answer satisfactorily all those questions that relate to contingent matters, and to give reason the most complete satisfaction regarding •the highest unity that it pursues in its empirical use, but not regarding •the posited Being itself. This shows that what justifies reason in thus setting off from a point that lies so far above its sphere, and trying in this way to survey its objects as constituting a complete whole, is the speculative •interest of reason, not any •insight.

We now meet a difference between two ways of viewing a single assumption; it’s rather subtle, but is important in transcendental philosophy. I may have sufficient ground to assume something •in a **relative** way without being entitled to assume it •**outright**. [To mark Kant’s stress on this distinction,

from here on ‘relative’ etc., when they are translations of Kant’s *relativ* etc., will always appear in bold type.] This distinction comes into play when we’re dealing with a merely regulative principle, knowing that it is necessary but not knowing why; in assuming that it has a supreme ground—e.g. thinking of a mere idea, and a transcendental one at that, as having •an existing being corresponding to it—we’re doing this only so as to give ourselves a more *definite* notion of the principle’s universality. I can’t suppose that •this thing exists in itself, because it can’t be reached by any of the concepts through which I can have a definite thought about any object. That is because 705 the idea itself slams the door on all the conditions that are required for any of my concepts to be objectively valid. The only way concepts of •reality, •substance, •causality, and even •necessary existence can have a meaning that lets them say something definite about an object is through their work in making empirical knowledge of an object possible. So they can be used to explain the possibility of *things in the world of sense*, but not to explain the possibility of *the world as a whole*. To explain *that* you’d need the item that did the explaining to be outside the world, meaning that it couldn’t be an object of a possible experience. Still, I can assume such an inconceivable being—the object of a mere idea, ·not of a concept of the understanding·—**relatively** to the world of sense though not in itself. ·I’ll explain why·. If

- the greatest possible empirical use of my reason rests on an idea. . . .that can’t itself be adequately exhibited in experience but is inescapably necessary if I’m to approximate to the highest possible degree of empirical unity,

then

- I’m not only entitled but compelled to realise this idea, i.e. to posit for it a real object.

[Here, as in some other contexts, ‘realise’ = ‘real-ise’ = ‘thing-ise’ = ‘treat

707 as standing for a thing'.] But I'm to posit this 'real object' only as a Something that I don't at all know in itself, positing it as a basis for that systematic unity, relating it to this unity in a manner analogous to how things are related in the empirical domain by the concepts used by the understanding. Accordingly, by analogy with realities in the world—i.e. with substances, with causality and with necessity—I think a Being that possesses all this in the highest perfection; and because this idea depends merely on my reason—and isn't answerable to any factual constraints from experience.—I can think this Being as *self-subsistent Reason*, which through ideas of the greatest harmony and unity is the cause of the universe. [The phrase 'self-subsistent Reason' means something like 'Reason existing as a thing, not as a power or property of a thing'. The thought is of God as Reason rather than of God as having reason.] So I leave out all conditions that would limit the idea, because what I want it for is this:

To make possible, under the shelter of this ·thought of the· primordial Basis ·for the world as a whole·, the systematic unity of the manifold in the universe, and in that way providing for the greatest possible empirical use of reason.

I do this by representing all connections *as if* they were laid down by a supreme Reason of which our reason is merely a faint copy. I go on to think about this supreme Being solely through concepts that strictly apply only in the world of sense; but all I am using this transcendental assumption ·of a supreme Being· *for* is the **relating** task of providing the substratum, ·the ground, the basis·, for the greatest possible unity of experience; and that makes it all right for me to think of a Being that I put outside of the world of sense through properties that belong solely inside world. It's all right for me to do this because I'm not claiming to know this object of my idea according to what it may be in itself; and I had *better*

not be doing that, because I have no concepts for it; even 707 the concepts of reality, substance, causality—and indeed the concept of necessary existence—lose all significance and become empty concept-*labels* when I take them outside the domain of the senses. All I am doing is to give myself the thought of the **relation** of a completely unknown Being to the greatest possible systematic unity of the universe, wanting this Being solely in the role of a schema of the regulative principle of the greatest possible empirical use of my reason.

We can see at a glance that the transcendental object of our idea can't be thought of as having an intrinsic nature to which the concepts of reality, substance, causality etc. are applicable, because these concepts haven't the least bearing on anything that lies outside the world of sense. When reason supposes a supreme being as the highest cause, this is a merely **relative** supposition, devised solely for the sake of systematic unity in the world of sense—a mere ideal Something of whose intrinsic nature we have no conception. . . .

Now we can command a clear view of the upshot of the whole Transcendental Dialectic, and give a precise account of 708 what the ideas of pure reason are ultimately *for*—ideas that become dialectical only through careless misunderstandings. Actually, pure reason is busy only with itself—that's the only business it *can* do! [Kant now says it all again, through three paragraphs: Reason is concerned with bringing systematic unity to our scientific knowledge, not in carving out a branch of knowledge of its own. In doing this subjective work it has to be thought of as 'objective', but only in a vague *as-if*-ish way that doesn't transform its principles from regulative to constitutive.]

The first object of such an idea is the *I* itself, viewed simply as thinking nature or soul. If I want to know what the intrinsic properties are of a thinking being, I must put

the question to experience; the only categories I can apply to this object—i.e. to any thinking being in the world—are ones whose schema is given in sensible intuition; and I'll never get a systematic unity of all the appearances of inner sense in *that* way. What the soul actually *is* is captured by the empirical concept of the soul; but that won't take us far in our pursuit of systematic unity; so what reason does is this:

- It takes the concept of the *empirical* unity of all thought and, by thinking of this unity as unconditioned and basic, it makes out of the empirical concept a concept of reason (an *idea*) of a simple substance that is always the identically same thing through time, but is in ·changing· interactions with real things outside it—in short, the idea of a simple self-subsistent intelligence [See the 'self-subsistent Reason' note on the preceding page.]

711 What reason is *up to* in doing this is just to get principles of systematic unity in the explanation of the appearances of the soul—a way of seeing •all states as ·united in· a single subject, •all powers (so far as possible) as derived from a single basic power, •all change as alterations in the states of one and the same permanent being, and all appearances in space as completely different from the actions of thought. The simplicity etc. of the substance is intended to be only the schema of this regulative principle, and isn't being presupposed as being the actual basis for the properties of the soul. For these properties may have some altogether different source that we don't know about. Even if we allowed these predicates of simplicity etc. that we have taken on board to count as plainly valid for the soul in itself, the soul still couldn't be known through them, because they constitute a mere *idea* that can't be cashed in by concrete examples. Such a psychological idea can do nothing but good, *provided*

that we are careful to see it only as a mere idea, regarding it as valid only **relative** to the systematic use of reason in thinking about the appearances of our soul. ·By sticking to its status as an *idea*· we'll

- prevent any empirical laws of bodily appearance (which are of a totally different kind) from getting mixed into the explanation of what belongs exclusively to *inner sense*;
- keep out all windy hypotheses about the generation, extinction, and transmigration of souls;
- keep our thinking about this object of inner sense completely pure, not mixed in with properties that don't belong here;
- direct reason's investigations towards reducing the grounds of explanation on this topic to (as far as possible) a single source.

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The best way—actually it's the *only way*—to achieve all this is by treating such a schema *as if* it were a real being. . . .

The second regulative idea of merely speculative reason is the concept of *the world as such*. [Kant's paragraph about this is notably ill-written and hard to understand. In it he says that nature—the world—is 'the only given object in regard to which reason needs regulative principles', and then he proceeds to explain what that need is. He remarks that nature is a two-fold affair, comprising **(1)** the world of thought and **(2)** the world of bodies. Kant has just finished with **(1)** under the label of 'the first regulative idea', and he doesn't mean to get back into that topic here; but he wants to distinguish *its* use of regulative principles from **(2)**'s. In the case of **(1)**, he says, the basic psychological concept (*I*) plays an *a priori* role in all our thinking; but in our everyday intellectual management of **(2)** the corporeal world—in our applying the categories to it, and so on—we don't need help from any *idea*, i.e. any 'representation that

713 transcends experience'. Don't need it and couldn't use it, because in dealing with **(2)** corporeal nature we're guided solely by sensible intuition. Kant continues:] So what's left for pure reason 'to work on in the territory of **(2)**' is just nature as such, and the completeness of the conditions in nature in accordance with some principle. (Obviously, this is *not* routine everyday thinking about parts and aspects of the world of bodies.) This does provide work for the idea of *the absolute totality of the series of these conditions. . . .*: we can't ever encounter such a totality in our empirical use of reason, but the idea works for us as a rule that prescribes how we ought to conduct ourselves when dealing with such series. The rule tells us that in explaining appearances by working back up the causal chain, earlier and earlier, we ought to

•treat the series *as if* it were in itself infinite, i.e. *as if* it went on indefinitely.

And it tells us that when in the context of practical principles we are regarding reason itself as the determining cause, this being an exercise of freedom, we ought to

•proceed *as if* we were dealing with an object not of the senses but of the pure under-standing, so that there are conditions *of* the series of appearances that themselves lie outside the series, which can therefore be regarded *as if* it had an absolute beginning through an intelligible cause.

All this shows that the cosmological ideas are nothing but regulative principles, and are far from positing—in the manner of constitutive principles—an actual totality of such series. This is all dealt with in more detail in the chapter on the antinomy of pure reason.

The third idea of pure reason, which contains a merely **relative** supposition of a Being that is the sole and all-sufficient cause of all cosmological series, is the idea of *God*. The

object of this idea is something that we haven't the slightest reason to assume outright (·as distinct from assuming it in a **relative way**·); for what makes it possible—let alone legitimate!—to believe in a Being of the highest perfection, existing necessarily by its very nature, merely on the basis of its concept? It's only in relation to the world that this supposition can be necessary; which clearly shows that the idea of such a being, like all speculative ideas, merely expresses reason's command that we look at all connection in the world. . . .*as if* it had its source in one single all-embracing Being, as the supreme and all-sufficient cause. So it's obvious that reason's only purpose here is to prescribe its own formal rule for •extending its empirical use, not for extending itself •beyond all limits of empirical use; so that this idea is not a disguised vehicle for some principle that tries to apply to possible experience in a constitutive way.

This highest formal unity, which rests solely on concepts of reason, is the *purposive* unity of things. Reason's speculative concerns require us to regard all order in the world *as if* it had arisen from the purpose of a supreme Reason. When our reason is at work in in the field of experience, this principle •gives it entirely new prospects for connecting up the things of the world according to teleological laws, and through that •enables it to arrive at their greatest systematic unity. In this way the assumption of a supreme intelligence as the exclusive cause of the universe—though in the idea alone—can always benefit reason and can never harm it. ·Here's an example·. If in studying the shape of the earth or of the mountains or the oceans or the like, we view it as the outcome of the wise purposes of an Author of the world, this enables us to make a good many discoveries.²²

²² The advantage of the earth's ·approximately· spherical shape is well known. But not many people realize that its being ·more exactly· a slightly flattened sphere ·brings further advantages. Such as

716 Provided we restrict ourselves to a merely regulative use of this principle, even *error* that it leads us into can't do us any serious harm. The worst that can happen is to expect a teleological connection but find only a mechanical or physical one. In such a case, we merely fail to find the additional unity; we don't destroy the unity on which reason insists in its empirical use. And even a disappointment of this sort doesn't do any harm to the generally teleological approach. Suppose an anatomist assigns to some organ of an animal body an end that it can be clearly shown not to have—what of it? Well, he was wrong; it was an error; but it's perfectly impossible to prove in any given case that an arrangement of nature, whatever it is, has no end at all. So medical physiology isn't running any risks when it extends its very limited empirical knowledge of the functions of the parts of organisms by resorting to a principle handed to it by mere pure reason; and it carries this principle so far as to assume—confidently and with the approval of the experts—that everything in an animal has a function, a good purpose. If this assumption is taken as •constitutive, it goes far beyond anything supported by observations that have so far been made; which shows that it's nothing but a •regulative principle of reason that is meant to help us to get the greatest possible systematic unity by means of the idea of the purposive causality of the supreme cause of the world—as if this Being, as supreme intelligence with the wisest purposes, were the cause of all things.

717 what? Well, it's only because of the flattening that the earth's axis stays steady through all the movements of material caused by earthquakes. The bulge around the equator forms so vast a mountain that the impetus of all the other mountains thrown up by earthquakes can't have any observable effect in changing the position of the earth's axis. And yet, wise as this arrangement is, we unhesitatingly explain the shape of the earth non-teleologically, in terms of the equilibrium of the formerly fluid mass of the earth.

But if we deviate from this restriction of the idea to a merely regulative use, our reason will be thoroughly led astray. That's because it will be •leaving the ground of experience, which is the only territory with legible route-markers, and •venturing out into the realm of the incomprehensible and inscrutable, and up in those heights it is bound to become dizzy because it will have cut itself off from any experience-related way of steadying itself.

The first error that arises from misusing the idea of a supreme being by using it constitutively rather than merely regulatively is the error of **lazy reason**.²³ That's a fair label [Kant gives it also in Latin] for *any* principle that makes us regard all our investigations into nature as utterly complete, laying reason to rest as if it had entirely succeeded in its tasks. When the **psychological** idea is used as a constitutive principle to explain the appearances of our soul, and thereby to extend our knowledge of the soul beyond the limits of experience (i.e. to its state after death), it does indeed make things very comfortable for reason; but it wreaks havoc with our use of reason in dealing with nature under the guidance of our experiences. [In the next sentence a •dogmatic •spiritualist' is someone who believes that minds are non-corporeal substances or •spirits', and regards this as straightforward doctrine that can be maintained without any 'critical' (opposite of •dogmatic) concern with what is needed for such knowledge to be possible.] That's what happens when the dogmatic spiritualist •explains the abiding and unchanging unity of a person throughout all changes

²³ This was the title that the ancient dialecticians gave to a sophistical line of thought which ran thus: 'If it is your fate to recover from this illness, you will recover, whether you employ a physician or not.' Cicero says that this was called 'lazy reason' because if we went along with it we would have no work for our reason to do in life; which is just why I give the title 'lazy reason' to the sophistical argument of pure reason.

of state in terms of the unity of the thinking substance that he thinks he directly encounters in the *I*; or •explains our concern with things that can't happen until after we are dead in terms of our •supposed• consciousness of the immaterial nature of the thinking subject; and thus •dispenses with all empirical investigation of the actual working causes of these inner appearances. . . . This kind of bad upshot is even more obvious in the dogmatic treatment of our idea of a supreme intelligence, and in the **theological** system of nature that is falsely based on it. The dogmatist in this field of enquiry

719 •fastens on all the examples of purpose that show up in nature (many of them involving 'purposes' that we invented so as to make our explanatory work easier), and, instead of looking for causes in the universal laws of the mechanism of matter,

•attributes all those purposes directly to the inscrutable decree of supreme wisdom.

and thus

•regards as *completed* the work of reason that hasn't even *begun*.

•Why do I say that this dogmatist hasn't been using reason here? Because• the use of reason has to be guided by the order of nature and the causal chains that occur in accordance with the universal laws of nature; •and this dogmatist has ignored all that in favour of sweeping theological 'explanations' of purposes in nature•. The way for us to avoid this •dogmatic• error is to bring the idea of a supreme purposeful intelligence to bear not merely on •certain *parts* of nature (the distribution and structure of dry land, the make-up and location of the mountains, the organisation of the vegetable and animal kingdoms) but on •the systematic unity of nature *as a whole*. For then •we'll be treating •all of• nature as resting on a law-governed purposiveness from which no special subsystem is exempt, though for many of

them it may be hard to us to discover what the purpose is; •we'll have a regulative principle of the systematic unity of teleological [= 'purposive'] connection. Without being able to say in advance what any of the •teleological connections are, we'll be able to wait for them to emerge from the work we'll be doing when we track down the •physico-mechanical connections in accordance with universal laws. That's the only way in which the principle of purposive unity can help us to extend the use of reason in reference to experience without ever doing any intellectual harm. 720

The second error arising from the misinterpretation of the principle of systematic teleological unity is that of **back-to-front reason** [Kant gives this also in Greek as well as Latin]. The procedure done •in the correct order goes like this:

•We use the idea of systematic unity as a regulative principle to guide us in seeking for such unity in the connection of things, according to universal laws of nature; and •how far we have come along the empirical path will be our measure of how near we are to completeness in our use of the idea (of course we'll never get the whole way there).

And this is what people do when they get it •back to front:

•They start by presupposing the reality of a principle of purposive unity, and they hypostatise it, •i.e. think of it as being some kind of *thing*•; but since they haven't the faintest conception of what a supreme intelligence (•the *thing* in question•) would be like in itself, they characterize it in an anthropomorphic manner; •crediting it with the sorts of purposes humans have•. That leads to their imposing ends on nature, forcibly and dictatorially, instead of pursuing the more reasonable course of searching for them by investigating what actually goes on in the world.

•This makes thing go wrong for teleological thinking, in two

ways. •Teleology was supposed to *widen the scope of* our unified explanations nature in accordance with universal laws; but the back-to-front approach *suppresses* such explanations. •And this approach prevents reason from doing what it set out to do, namely to prove from nature, in conformity with universal laws, the existence of a supreme intelligent Cause. [The rest of this paragraph expands what Kant wrote—not grossly, but in ways that can't easily be handled through the ·small dots· convention.] That proof is supposed to lead stepwise to something close to the supreme perfection of an Author of all things, who is supposed to be absolutely necessarily perfect, and therefore knowable *a priori* as perfect. But that conclusion can't be reached from a premise about purposiveness in nature unless the premise is an *a priori* statement of purposiveness in nature, meaning that purposiveness is part of the *essence* of nature. That need is met by the regulative principle about purposiveness, because it requires nature to have a systematic ·teleological· unity that is not merely empirically known but is presupposed *a priori*. . . .and consequently as following from the essence of things. But the back-to-front approach doesn't have such a premise. If I follow *it*, I'll think I have a constitutive thesis that nature is in fact purposive, and I'll hold that the source of this purposiveness is not nature's essence but the will of a supreme purposive Being; which means that I'll have to regard nature's teleological unity as contingent, ·as something *added* to nature from the outside·, and therefore as not knowable from its own universal laws. So I'll be reasoning in a vicious circle, assuming the very thing that is supposed to be proved.

The regulative principle of the systematic unity of nature serves, merely in idea, as the underlay of a consistent use of reason. If you take it as being constitutive, and as asserting the existence of a *thing* that causes this unity, all you do

is to confuse reason ·by running it backwards. When it is used the right way around·, the investigation of nature takes its own independent course, tracking the chain of natural causes in accordance with their universal laws. Admittedly it does this also in accordance with the idea of an Author of the universe, but not

•to see this Author as the source of the purposiveness that reason is constantly on the watch for,

but rather

•to obtain knowledge of the existence of such an Author from this purposiveness that reason looks for in the essence of the things of nature (and as far as possible in the essence of things as such), which will involve knowing the existence of this supreme being as absolutely necessary.

This right-way-around project may fail; but anyway, success or failure, it lets the idea remain always true in itself, and justified in its use, by restricting it to the conditions of a merely regulative principle.

Complete purposive unity is *perfection*. . . . If we don't find this perfection in the essence of the things that make up the entire object •of experience, i.e. •of all our objectively valid knowledge, and therefore don't find it in the universal and necessary laws of nature, how can we extract from it the idea of a primordial being who is supreme and absolutely necessary and the source of all causality? . . .

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In discussing the antinomy of pure reason I said that *all* the questions raised by pure reason must be answerable, and that we can't shrug them off by pleading the limits of our knowledge. With many questions arising in natural science that plea is as •unavoidable as it is •relevant; but ·not here (I said), because· our present questions aren't about the nature of things; rather, they arise from the very nature of reason, and concern solely its own inner constitution. I'm

now in a position to confirm this seemingly bold assertion in connection with the two questions that are of most concern to pure reason; and that will complete my discussion of the dialectic of pure reason. [The ‘two questions’ are **(a)** the cluster of questions about the significance of the transcendental *I* and **(b)** the cluster concerning the idea of God. As Kant explains in the next footnote, he will make his points only regarding **(b)** theology, leaving the reader to work out what the corresponding discussion of **(a)** psychology would look like. Thus:]

With regard to a transcendental theology,²⁴ three questions can arise, and they are all answerable.

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(1) Is there anything distinct from the world that contains the ground of the world’s order and of its hanging together in accordance with universal laws?

Yes, certainly! For the world is a sum of appearances, i.e. of *all* appearances; so it must have a ground that is transcendental, i.e. thinkable only by the pure understanding.

(2) Is this being a substance, does it have the greatest reality, is it necessary (and so on)?

This question is entirely without significance. That’s because all the categories through which we might try to formulate answers can be used only empirically, and have no sense except when applied to objects of possible experience, i.e. to the world of sense. Outside this domain they are merely labels for concepts; we may allow them, but we can’t understand anything through them.

²⁴ Given what I have already said about the psychological idea and its proper status as a principle for the merely regulative employment of reason, I needn’t dwell at any length on the transcendental illusion through which •the systematic unity of all the manifoldness of inner sense •is hypostatized—i.e. through which •the way in which my inner states are unified by the fact that they can all be accompanied by ‘I think’ is •understood as showing that ‘I’ stands for a spiritual substance that possesses all those states. The procedure is very similar to the one involved in my critique of the theological ideal.

(3) Is it all right for us at least to think of this being, distinct as it is from the world, as an object on an *analogy* with the objects of experience?

Certainly, but not as an object •in reality. We may think of it as an object •in the idea, i.e. as an unknown substratum of the systematic unity, order, and purposiveness of the arrangement of the world—an idea that reason has to form as the regulative principle of its investigation of nature. And we can go further: we won’t get into trouble if we allow this idea to have certain touches of anthropomorphism that will help the principle to do its regulative work. For it will still be only an idea, which isn’t related directly to a being distinct from the world. It does relate directly to the regulative principle of the systematic unity of the world, but only by means of a schema of this unity—namely, a supreme Intelligence which acts wisely in originating the world. That tells us nothing about what this primordial ground of the unity of the world is in itself; all it does is to tell us how we should use our idea of this Being in **relation** to the systematic use of reason in respect of the things of the world.

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But you may want to ask: ‘Can we, on those grounds, assume a wise and omnipotent Author of the world?’ There’s no doubt about it—we may and indeed we *must*. ‘Will that have us extending our knowledge beyond the field of possible experience?’ *No way!* All we’ll have done is to presuppose a Something, a merely transcendental object, of whose intrinsic nature we have no concept whatsoever. (We call it an *Intelligence*, but that’s an empirical concept and doesn’t strictly apply.) It’s only in relation to the systematic and purposive ordering of the world (which we have to presuppose if we are to study nature) that we have thought this unknown being, *by analogy* with an intelligence properly so-called. We have done this by noting the purpose and perfection that are to be based on it, and attributing to it just the properties

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that our reason says can be regarded as containing the basis for such systematic unity, i.e. the basis for that purpose and perfection. So this idea is valid in respect of the *use* of our reason *in reference to the world*. If we credited it with being just plain absolutely and objectively valid, we would be forgetting that what we are thinking is only a *Being in our idea*. . . .

727 You will have another question: 'Can I make any such use of the concept and of the presupposition of a supreme Being in rationally considering the world?' Yes, that's just what reason has resorted to this idea *for*. 'Then is it all right for me to regard •seemingly purposive arrangements as •purposes, and so derive them from the divine will. . . .?' Yes, you can do that, as long as you regard it as a matter of indifference whether we say

•Divine Wisdom has arranged everything to conform to its supreme purposes

or rather

•The idea of supreme Wisdom has a regulative role in the investigation of nature; it's a principle of nature's systematic and purposive unity. . . .

That is, when you encounter such purposive unity you must see yourself as having a choice between

'That's what God in his wisdom has willed' and 'That's what nature in its wisdom has arranged',

and you must think that it doesn't matter in the slightest which you choose to say. For what entitled you to adopt the idea of a supreme Intelligence as a schema of a regulative principle in all your natural science was just precisely this greatest possible systematic and purposive unity. So the more purposiveness it guides you to find in the world, the more fully is the legitimacy of your idea confirmed. But the sole aim of that •regulative• principle was to guide our search for the necessary and greatest possible unity of nature; and

whenever we find such unity we'll owe that to our idea of a supreme being; but we mustn't

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ignore the universal •non-teleological• laws of nature, and look on this purposiveness of nature as contingent and supernatural, •imposed on nature from outside the world by a divine Intelligence•.

If we do that, we'll be contradicting ourselves, because the theological idea was adopted in the first place as an aid to discovering the laws of nature. We are entitled to •assume that above nature there is a Being with those qualities •of wisdom, power, etc.• but only •to adopt the *idea* of such a being as an aid to viewing appearances as systematically connected with one another. •We don't think of the supreme Being as *causing* the orderliness of nature, but only as relating to it in a manner that is *analogous to* causation.

For the same reasons, in our thoughts about the world's cause we're entitled not only to

•represent it in our idea in terms of a certain subtle anthropomorphism (which we *have to* have if we're to think about it at all), namely as a Being that has understanding, feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and desires and volitions corresponding to these,

but also to

•ascribe to it an *infinite* perfection that goes far beyond any perfection that our empirical knowledge of the order of the world can justify us in attributing to it.

That's because the regulative law of systematic unity tells us to study nature *as if* systematic and purposive unity along with the greatest possible complex variety were to be met with everywhere, *in infinitum*. We won't succeed in actually finding much of this world-perfection, but our reason lays down the law that we must go on looking for it and expecting to find it; and it must always be beneficial and never harmful for us to direct our investigations into nature in accordance

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with this principle. But it's obvious that in this way of representing the basic idea of a supreme Author, I'm not basing anything on the existence and knowledge of such a Being, but only on the idea of it; and that I don't really derive anything •from this Being, but only •from the idea of it—i.e. •from the nature of the things of the world in accordance with such an idea. A certain undeveloped consciousness of the true use of this concept of reason seems indeed to have inspired the modest and reasonable language of the philosophers of all times, when they have spoken of 'the wisdom and providence of nature' and of 'divine wisdom' as though these were equivalent expressions. Indeed, while they have been dealing solely with speculative reason, they have given preference to 'the wisdom etc. of nature', because it •lets us stop short of saying something stronger than we are justified in saying, and •directs our reason to its own proper domain, namely nature.

730 And so it is that pure reason, which at first seemed to promise nothing less than to extend our knowledge beyond all limits of experience, contains (when properly understood) nothing but regulative principles. Admittedly, the degree of unity that these principles tell us to aim for is greater than any that could be reached through the empirical use of the understanding; yet just because they have placed the goal so far away they give to the understanding a high degree of internal consistency through systematic unity. But if they are misunderstood, and treated as constitutive principles of transcendent knowledge, they give rise through a dazzling and deceptive illusion to imaginary 'knowledge' leading to contradictions and never-ending disputes.

• • •

Thus all human knowledge starts with •intuitions, goes from them to •concepts, and ends with •ideas. Although

in respect of all three elements we have *a priori* sources of knowledge that seem at first blush to scorn the limits of all experience, a thoroughgoing critique convinces us that •reason in its speculative use can't ever get beyond the domain of possible experience with any of these three elements, and that •the proper role of this supreme faculty of knowledge is to use all methods, and the principles behind them, solely for the purpose of penetrating to the innermost secrets of nature by tracking every possible sort of unity—with purposive unity being the most important of them—but never to soar beyond nature's limits, out where for us there is nothing but empty space. •Strictly speaking, the Analytic sufficed to show this, without bringing in the Dialectic. The Transcendental Analytic's critique of all •propositions that can extend our knowledge beyond *actual experience* shows well enough that •they can never lead to anything more than a *possible experience*. If people weren't so suspicious of even the clearest abstract and general doctrines, and if plausible and alluring prospects didn't tempt them to resist the force of those doctrines, we could have spared ourselves the laborious interrogation of all those dialectical witnesses that a transcendent reason brings forward in support of its inflated claims; because then it would have been known with complete certainty right from the start that all such claims, even if honestly meant, must be utterly empty because they relate to a kind of knowledge that men can't ever have. As things stand, however, the *talk* will go on and on unless and until people get through to the true cause of the illusion by which even the wisest are deceived. Also, analysing all our transcendent knowledge into its elements is a worthwhile contribution to the study of our inner nature, as well as being something the philosopher is obliged to do. So we *had to* track all these attempts of speculative reason, fruitless as they are, back to their sources. And because dialectical

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732 illusion doesn't merely deceive us in our judgments, but also—because of how some of these judgments connect with our interests—the illusion *attracts* us and will always do so. That's why I thought it advisable, with a view to heading off such errors in the future, to draw up in full detail the court transcript of the trial, and to deposit it in the archives of human reason.

[That concludes the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. The remaining one-sixth of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—namely the Transcendental Doctrine of Method—will not be offered on the website from which the present text came.]