

INTRODUCTION [p. 1]

I.

THE IDEA OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY.

Experience is without doubt the first product which our understanding fashions from the raw material of our sensations.¹ Experience is thus our first instruction, and in its progress so rich in tuition, that no future generation will ever suffer want of fresh fare that can be gathered on this soil. Our understanding is by no means, however, confined to this field alone. Experience tells us only *what is so*, but not that it *must needs* be so, and cannot be otherwise. It therefore furnishes no true universality; thus our reason, so hungry for knowledge of that sort, finds its curiosity roused rather than satisfied by experience. Such universal truths, [p. 2] which possess the character of internal necessity, must be clear and certain of themselves independently of experience; possession of such truths therefore is to be called knowledge *a priori*; whereas that which is derived simply from experience, or known empirically, we term *a posteriori*.

Now it is clear, and this is something that is exceedingly curious, that amongst the items of our experience themselves are immixed forms of knowledge which must have their origin *a priori* and which perhaps serve only to provide connexion to our senses' representations. For even if we remove from experience everything that belongs to the senses, there remain nevertheless certain original concepts and certain judgements derived from them, which must have arisen in a manner entirely *a priori* and independently of all experience; for it is owing to them that we can, or at least believe we can, ascribe more to the objects which appear to our senses than mere experience would teach us, and that our assertions about objects contain true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge can never furnish.

What is more extraordinary still, though, is that certain kinds of knowledge should abandon the field of [p. 3] possible experience, and seem to extend the compass of our judgements beyond the limits of experience by means of concepts to which experience can never supply any corresponding objects.

It is in this very kind of knowledge, which transcends the sphere of the senses, where experience can provide neither guidance nor correction, that our reason pursues its enquiries, which we regard as far greater in importance, and much loftier in their aspiration, than any study the understanding can undertake in the phenomenal realm; nay, we would risk anything, even at the peril of *error*, rather than forgo such important investigations, either on grounds of their uncertainty, or from neglect and indifference.

Now it would seem natural that, once we have left the *terra firma* of experience, we should be loath to erect an edifice with the knowledge which we possess—without knowing whence it came—and with principles whose origin and trustworthiness are to us unknown, until we have

¹ "Erfahrung ist ohne Zweifel das erste Produkt, welches unser Verstand hervorbringt, indem er den rohen Stoff sinnlicher Empfindungen bearbeitet". The word *indem* is instrumental, not durative, and is to be translated as "by" or "through", not "while". In this case, the translation could read "Experience is without doubt the first product which our understanding produces by working the raw material of our sensations", which can be smoothed to what is shown above. It is also strongly metaphorical, suggesting that the understanding acts upon raw materials, like a shoemaker or tailor, to fashion a product.

assured ourselves, through careful investigations, of the safety of the foundation; it would seem natural, I say, that we should first of all have asked ourselves how the understanding could arrive at all this knowledge *a priori*, and what limits, what validity, what and value [p. 4] it may have. If we take natural to mean what is proper and reasonable conduct, then indeed nothing could be more natural; but if we understand by natural what it is customary for men to do, then, on the contrary, nothing is more natural and more understandable than that this investigation should have been neglected for so long a time. For a part of this knowledge—the mathematical—has long been in possession of trustworthiness, and furnishes thereby a favourable expectation for the others, even if they be of a completely different nature. Besides, once we are beyond the sphere of experience, we are certain that experience can not contradict us, even though the allure of extending our knowledge is so great, that our progress can be checked only by meeting with a clear contradiction. This can be avoided if we exercise caution in forming our suppositions, though even so they remain nothing less than suppositions. Mathematics furnishes to us a sterling example, of how far we may advance in knowledge *a priori* independently of experience. Now 'tis true, mathematics is concerned with objects and knowledge only so far as these can be presented in intuition. This circumstance, however, is easily overlooked, because this intuition itself can be given *a priori*, and thus can scarcely be distinguished from a mere pure concept. [p. 5] Inspired by such a proof of the power of reason, the drive to expand knowledge sees no limits. Parting the soft air in flight and feeling its resistance, the light dove might imagine that her efforts would be better served in airless space. Abandoning the sphere of the senses because it posed so many hindrances to the understanding, Plato ventured beyond experience on the wings of his *ideas*³, into the empty space of the pure understanding. He did not observe, though, that even with all his efforts, nought was to be gained, for he had no resistance, no fulcrum, as it were, against which he could brace himself and apply his powers, to lift the understanding from its perch. It is, none the less, the usual fate of human reason in the thrall of speculation to finish its edifice as soon as possible, and then only to investigate whether the foundation be sound. Desperate assurances are then offered to us concerning its solidity, or such an examination is refused altogether, with the excuse that it is too dangerous and too late. What eases us from any anxiety or suspicion during the building, and seduces us into belief in its soundness, is this:—A great, perhaps the greatest concern of our reason consists in the analysis of our concepts of objects. This gives us a great deal of knowledge which, though it consists of no more than simplifications [p. 6] and explanations of what is comprehended in our concepts (though in a confused manner), is yet considered as equal, at least in form, to new insights. It only separates and arranges our concepts; it does not enlarge them in matter or contents. As by this process we are given a kind of real knowledge *a priori*, which is marked by sure progress and useful results, our reason, deceived by this, unwittingly appropriates propositions of a totally different kind; in which, to given concepts it adds entirely alien ones, *a priori* indeed, though without knowing whence they come, nay, without even troubling itself about this question. I shall therefore at the very outset treat of the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge.

³ *Idea* is used by Kant almost always in the Platonic sense. Here (in the *Introduction*) he introduces us to this usage.

Of the Distinction Between Analytical and Synthetical Judgments.

In all judgements in which the relation between subject and predicate is conceived (I speak of affirmative judgements only, for the application to negative ones is easy), that relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A as something contained (though covertly) in the concept A; or B lies outside the sphere of the concept A, though standing in connexion with it. In the former case I call the judgement analytical, in the latter synthetical. Analytical judgements (affirmative) are therefore [p. 7] those in which the connexion of the predicate with the subject is conceived through identity, while others in which that connexion is conceived without identity, shall be called synthetical. The former may be called *explicative*, the latter *augmentative* judgements, because in the former nothing is added by the predicate to the concept of the subject, for the concept is merely divided into its constituent concepts which were always conceived as existing within it, though confusedly; while the latter add to the concept of the subject a predicate not conceived as existing within it, and which could not have been derived from it by mere analysis; e.g., if I say “all bodies are extended”, this is an analytical judgement. For I do not have to go outside the concept combined with the word “body” to find “extension” connected with it, but merely to analyse it, that is, to become conscious of the manifold elements contained in it whenever I entertain that concept, to find that predicate. This is therefore an analytical judgement. Should I say, though, “All bodies are heavy”, the predicate is something quite different from what I understand as the mere concept of body in general. The addition of such a predicate gives us a synthetical judgement.

It becomes clear from this:

1. That analytical judgements can not extend our knowledge, but merely [p. 8] articulate the concepts which we possess and render them more intelligible.
2. That in synthetical judgements I must have something else (*x*) external to the concept of the subject upon which the understanding relies to recognise that a predicate, though not lying within in the concept, yet belongs to it.

In empirical judgements, or judgements of experience, this causes no difficulty, because this *x* is here simply the complete experience of an object which I understand by the concept A, which constitutes one part only of my experience. For though I do not at all include the predicate *weight* in the concept of body in general, that concept nevertheless indicates the complete experience through one of its parts, to which I may add other parts of the same experience, as belonging to that concept. I can recognise by analysis the concept of body through the attributes of extension, impenetrability, shape, etc., all of which are comprehended in this concept. Now I extend my knowledge, and, when I look back at the experience from which I had derived this concept of body, I always find weight connected with these attributes. Experience is therefore the *x* which lies beyond the concept A, and upon which rests the possibility of a synthesis of the predicate of weight B with the concept A.

In synthetical judgements *a priori*, however, [p. 9] that help is entirely wanting. If I want to go outside the concept A to recognise another concept B as connected with it, what is there upon which I may rely and through which a synthesis is made possible, considering that here I lack the advantage of searching about in the field of experience? Consider the proposition: “Everything

that happens has a cause". In the concept of "something that happens", I doubtless conceive something existing before which a lapse of time occurred, and from which analytic judgements can be derived. The concept of cause, however, indicates something different from "that which happens", and is not at all contained in that concept. How then do I come to predicate of "that which happens" in general something completely different from it, and to recognise the concept of causes, though not contained in it, as nevertheless belonging to it? What *x* is there here upon which the understanding may rely when it believes it can find outside the concept of A another predicate, B, foreign to it, though connected with it? *Experience* this cannot be, because the principle educed subjoins these two notions to the first not only with greater universality than experience can furnish, but also with the force of necessity, thus completely *a priori* and from mere concepts. All our speculative knowledge *a priori* aims at and rests on such synthetical, that is, augmentative propositions; [p. 10] for analytic propositions are doubtless most important and necessary, though only to arrive at the clarity of concepts which is demanded for a certain and comprehensive synthesis, and this alone represents a new acquisition.

We have here before us a certain mystery, whose unlocking alone can make any advance into the unlimited field of a pure knowledge of the understanding sure and true, namely, to expose in a grand sweep the ground of possibility of synthetic judgements *a priori*; to understand the conditions which make every kind of synthetic judgements possible; and to endeavour to define the whole of that knowledge (which is *sui generis*), systematically arranged according to its original sources, divisions, compass, and limits, not in a vague way, but rather in a manner complete and sufficient for any use. So much for the present with regard to the peculiar character of synthetical judgements. From all this the idea of a special science that can serve as a critique of pure reason suggests itself. Pure knowledge, properly so called, is that in which nothing foreign is mixed. [p. 11] But more particularly is that knowledge to be called absolutely pure, in which no admixture of experience or sensation occurs; such knowledge is therefore possible entirely *a priori*. Now reason is that faculty which furnishes the principles of knowledge *a priori*. Pure reason is therefore that which contains the principles whereby something can be known absolutely *a priori*. An Organon of pure reason ought to comprehend all of those principles according to which any pure knowledge *a priori* can be acquired and brought into being. The application of such an Organon *in extenso* would provide a system of pure reason. Since, however, this is very difficult demand to fulfil, and as at present it is still doubtful whether and where such an extension of our knowledge is even possible, we can regard a science limited merely to the criticism of pure reason, its sources and limits, as a propaedeutic for a full system of pure reason.

It should be called a critique, not a doctrine, of pure reason, and its true benefit would be negative, serving not to expand, but rather to refine our reason, and to keep it free from errors, which after all is a considerable gain. I call transcendental all knowledge which is concerned not with objects, but rather with our concepts of objects *a priori*. A system of such concepts [p. 12] might be called Transcendental Philosophy. But for the present this is again too great an undertaking. Since such a science would have to contain analytic knowledge as well as synthetic *a priori*, its

Had this question ever occurred to any of the ancients, this alone would have provided a formidable hindrance to the construction of any systems of pure reason, even to the present day, and would have spared us of so many vain attempts undertaken blindly and without a true knowledge of the subject in hand.

compass is too great, for our intent is to carry on our analysis only so far as is necessary to gain an insight into the principles of synthesis *a priori* in their entirety, and it is this alone which concerns us. This examination—which is to be called a transcendental critique rather than a systematic doctrine, because its intent is not to expand of our knowledge but rather to refine it, as well as to provide a test of the value of any knowledge *a priori*—is our present concern. Such a critique is therefore a preparation for an Organon, and, if we should fail in this, at least for a Canon of pure reason, according to which hereafter a complete system of philosophy of pure reason, whether serving to extend or merely to limit our knowledge, could be presented analytically as well as synthetically. That such a system is possible, nay, that such a system could not be so great in compass as to elude our grasp, may be gathered from the fact that it would have to deal, not with the nature of things, which is unfathomable, but with the understanding, which [p. 13] judges of the nature of things, and this again so far only as knowledge *a priori* forms its matter. Whatever the understanding possesses can be found entirely within it, and thus can hardly remain concealed from us; nor is there any reason to suppose that it will prove too extensive for a complete inventory, or for such an appraisal as shall assign to it its fair value.

DIVISION OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY.

TRANSCENDENTAL philosophy is here an idea only, for which the critique of pure reason is supposed to formulate an entire plan by the architectonic method, that is, from principles, with full confidence in the perfection and integrity of all the pieces that make up this edifice. This critique itself should not be called Transcendental Philosophy, simply because to be a complete system, it must contain as well a thorough analysis of the whole of human knowledge *a priori*. Now our critique must by all means present for inspection a complete account of all the stem concepts which constitute this pure knowledge. It reasonably abstains, however, from an exhaustive analysis of these concepts themselves, or any complete listing of concepts derived from them; partly because it would not be to the purpose, [p. 14] as such a dissection does not suffer the uncertainty met with in synthesis, and which alone necessitates a critique of pure reason; and partly because it would interfere with the unity of its plan to take on the responsibility for the completeness of such an analysis and genealogy, from which we could be excused in view of our intent. The completeness of the analysis, however, as well as the derivation from concepts *a priori* yet to be furnished, is easy to achieve if only they have first been laid down as exhaustive principles of synthesis, and to them nothing is wanting to them in respect of this essential aim.

To the critique of pure reason then belongs everything that comprises Transcendental Philosophy, nay, it is the perfect idea of Transcendental Philosophy, but not yet this science itself, because it goes so far only into the analysis as is demanded for a thorough appraisal of synthetic knowledge *a priori*.

The foremost consideration in the derivation of such a science is that no concepts whatsoever shall be admitted which contain in themselves anything empirical, so that knowledge *a priori* may be perfectly pure. Although the basic principles of morality and the fundamental principles themselves are therefore kinds of knowledge [p. 15] *a priori*, neither forms part of Transcendental Philosophy; for the concepts of pleasure and displeasure, desire and inclination, freedom of the

will, etc., all of which are of empirical origin, must here be presupposed. Transcendental philosophy is therefore a philosophy of pure speculative reason. For everything in the practical realm, in so far as it involves motives, has reference to feelings, which are classed among empirical sources of knowledge. If we wish to carry out a proper division of our science systematically, it must contain first a *Rudiments*³ and secondly a *Methodology*. Each of these principal divisions will have its subdivisions, the grounds of which cannot however be explained here. What seems sufficient for an introduction or preliminary remark, though, is that there are two stems of human knowledge, namely the *Sensory* and the *Understanding*, which perhaps may spring from a common root, unknown to us, objects being given by the former and thought by the latter. If the sensory should contain representations *a priori*, which constitute the conditions under which objects are given to us, then it belongs to Transcendental Philosophy. The transcendental doctrine of [p. 16] sense must form the first part of the *Rudiments*, because the conditions under which alone objects of human knowledge can be given must precede those under which they are thought.

³ Elementar-Lehre has been translated as “Doctrine of Elements” by earlier translators. This is incorrect. “Elementar“ means elementary, rudimentary.