

'The Dialectic of Pure Reason' (§45)

1. Constitutive and Regulative Principles

Kant mentions this distinction in §56. A *constitutive* principle is such it determines how we must represent objects, or 'bring the existence of appearances under rules *a priori*' (cf. CPR A179–80/B222). Such principles are constitutive of our representation of objects. Examples are the axioms of intuition and the anticipations of experience (see Handout 7). A *regulative* principle is such that it determines our conduct of inquiry, or a 'rule in accordance to which unity of experience is to arise from perceptions (not as a perception itself [...])' (*ibid.*). The thought is that *reason* comprises only regulative principles, which govern the use of the understanding. In light of *Prolegomena*, this means that metaphysics is possible *only if* we restrict reason to such a regulative use, and avoid regarding its principles as constitutive. (See Kant's appendix to the *Transcendental Dialectic*, A642ff./B670ff.)

2. Paralogisms, Antinomies, and Ideal

syllogism	idea (see §§43–4, esp. 4:330)		give rise to the dialectic of
categorical 'substance'	of the complete subject	psychological (§§46–9)	the paralogism of pure reason
hypothetical 'cause'	of the complete series of conditions	cosmological (§§50–4)	the antinomy of pure reason
disjunctive 'community'	of a complete sum total of the possible	theological (§55)	the ideal of pure reason

The paralogisms and antinomies are inspired by the table of categories (§21, 4:303):

1. The soul is **substance** (*quantity*)
2. In its quality, **simple** (*quality*)
3. In the different times in which it exists, numerically identical, i.e. **unity** (not plurality) (*relation*)
4. In relation to **possible** objects in space (*modality*) (cf. CPR A344/B402)

**Transcendentale Tafel
der Verstandesbegriffe.**

1. Der Quantität nach Einheit (das Maas) Vielfheit (die Größe) Allheit (das Ganze)		
2. Der Qualität Realität Negation Einschränkung		3. Der Relation Substanz Ursache Gemeinschaft
4. Der Modalität Möglichkeit Daseyn Nothwendigkeit		

3. Example: the First Paralogism

- (1) That which is represented only as the **absolute subject** of our judgements, and cannot be predicated of another thing, is substance.
- (2) I, as a thinking being, can be represented only as the **absolute subject** of all my judgements, and cannot be predicated of another thing.
- (3) Thus I, as thinking being (soul) am **substance** (CPR A348).

Kant's diagnosis. The term 'absolute subject' is ambiguous, for it confuses the constant logical subject of thinking with a real subject of inherence (see §46). The other three paralogisms follow the same pattern: the second is about the *simplicity* of the soul (A351ff.); the third about personhood (A361ff.); the fourth on the 'ideality of outer relation', i.e. scepticism concerning the existence of objects of external senses (A366ff., see also *Proleg.* §49). Kant rewrote the paralogism chapter for the second edition of the *CPR*.

4. Example: the First Antinomy (cf. Hatfield, pp. 192–3)

- (1) *Thesis.* 'The world has a beginning in time, and in space it is also enclosed in boundaries' (*CPR* A426/B454).
- (2) Assume the contrary, i.e. the world has no beginning in time.
- (3) By hypothesis, at any given time 'an eternity has elapsed, and hence an infinite series of states of things in the world ... has passed'.
- (4) The very idea of an infinite series is the idea of a succession that cannot be completed.
- (5) So, by 4, an 'infinitely elapsed world-series is impossible'.
- (6) So, by 5, the series of past states of the world in time must be finite.
- (7) Therefore, by 2, 3, and 6, 'a beginning of the world is a necessary condition for its existence'.

The rough idea. Suppose that the world is eternal. Then the current state of the world is conditioned by an infinite series of past states. Now a state of the world can only obtain given the *totality* of its previous states. But such a totality cannot be achieved if the current state is conditioned by an infinite series. So, there should not be a current *state* of the world. But there is. So, the supposition is false, and hence the world has finite beginning in time.

Since there is an equally plausible argument for the antithesis, *viz.* 'the world has no beginning and no bounds in space, but is infinite with regard to both time and space', reason is (apparently) at an impasse, or at odds with itself. So, transcendental ideas introduce disharmony and conflict, and this violates the central role of reason: 'to be a principle of systematic unity of the use of the understanding' (*Proleg.* §56, 4:350).

5. The Ideal of Pure Reason

An *idea* is a concept of pure reason; an *ideal* is even more removed from the possibility of experience, and with explicit reference to Plato. An ideal is 'an individual thing [*Ding*] which is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone' (*CPR* A568/B596). An example is *humanity*, and so similar to the Platonic Form of Humanity: a perfect item that grounds its (rather less perfect) instances. The *idea* of such an individual would be that of a superhuman, hence perhaps divine, individual. But since there is no *appearance* that satisfies this perfect notion, the idea and the ideal of humanity lacks objective content. Yet, the ideal has *regulative* force as setting a standard of evaluation and action. A short further step: the *idea* of the sum total of all possibility is therefore an *ideal* of pure reason.

