

## The Main Transcendental Question III, §§40–60

The *first* part of the main transcendental question deals with the senses and intuition, and the *second* part with the understanding and experience. In the *third* part on the main question, Kant explores *reason*. The chapter falls into three parts. (1) §§40–5 is a criticism of traditional metaphysics: its results are illusory. The key to this criticism is the distinction between understanding [*Verstand*] and reason [*Vernunft*]. (2) The §§46–56 match the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *CPR*, which is, for Kant (with a hint at Aristotle) the ‘logic of illusion’. (3) §§57–60 answer the main question and prepare the next chapter (‘Solution’, 4:365ff.), which is about the possibility of metaphysics as a science.

1. What is the difference between pure concepts of the understanding and the pure concepts of reason? (§§40–2, 4:327–9)
- 2.★ How does this distinction matter for metaphysics?
- 3.★ Try to analyse the argument for the need to investigate reason itself, as Kant presents it in §42 (4:329).
- 4.★ In §43 (4:330), Kant connects the pure concepts of reason (ideas) to the tables in §21. How does he do this?
5. In *Psychological ideas* (§§46–9), Kant defends *three* main claims. Ignoring details, try to identify them. (Hint: one is in §46, one in §§47–8, and one in §49.)
6. The first two antinomies (§52c) are driven by self-contradictory, and hence impossible, concepts (cf. §52b, 4:341). What is Kant’s central thought that resolves these two antinomies?
7. The third antinomy (§53) concerns the tension between freedom and determinism. Sketch Kant’s solution (a key paragraph can be found at 4:345–6, Hatfield p. 97).
8. What is the relation between reason and understanding as Kant’s suggest in §56 (4:349–50)?
- 9.★ At the beginning, Kant suggests that the core characteristic of metaphysics is the ‘preoccupation of reason simply with itself’ (§40, 4:327). Looking back to this at the end of §56, what does Kant mean?

*Background.* (a) In using the term ‘idea’, Kant explicitly refers to Plato (*CPR* A313/B370; cf. the passage on Handout 6): ideas could not derive from the senses, and they transcend the understanding too, since nothing in experience *could* correspond to them. But for Plato, ideas are mind-independent, maximally real, entities, which we can nonetheless grasp by an act of intellectual apprehension. For Kant, ideas are not objects at all; in §45, he calls them ‘mere beings of thought’ [*blosse Gedankenwesen*], which is what the phrase ‘noumena’ means, or ‘hyperbolic objects’ [*hyperbolische Objekte*], which suggests they are not objects of possible experience and thus, strictly speaking, not objects at all. Most importantly, for Kant, ideas are mind-dependent, for they are produced by reason. While the understanding deals with objects, reason deals with principles. So the *content* of

ideas are not objects of possible experience, but most general rules of inference (used by the understanding). This makes reason a dynamical faculty: ideas are found in the ‘act of reason’ [*Vernunftthandlung*] (4:330), and pure reason requires ‘completeness in the use of the understanding’ [*Verstandesgebrauch*] (4:332). (b) The *logical table of judgements* (§21, 4:302–3) lists the three types of syllogisms mentioned in §43 (4:330); they all concern relational aspects of thought. A *categorical* syllogism connects subject and predicate (‘This cheese is yellow’); it corresponds to ‘substance’ in the transcendental table, and to the first analogy of the physiological table (4:303). A *hypothetical* syllogism connects a hypothesis with a consequence, and is thus a conditional (‘If it snows, the hills are white’); transcendental table: ‘cause’; physiological table: second analogy. A *disjunctive* syllogism connects two or more opposing or contrasting propositions (‘It rains today, or it rains tomorrow, or it does not rain at all’); transcendental table: ‘community’; physiological table: third analogy (4:303). (c) The threefold distinction between psychology, cosmology, and theology in §§46–55 matches the field of *special* metaphysics (see also Handout 2). (d) A *paralogism* (§43) is an invalid inference grounded in an ambiguous middle term (cf. CPR A402–3/B411). An *antinomy* (§43) is a pair of contradictory theses that are justified by apparently sound arguments (cf. §52, 4:340 for a clear explanation).

