

The Main Transcendental Question III, §§ 57–60

Kant considers §§57–60, ‘On determining the boundary of pure reason’ as a ‘note’ (4:360), in which he answers the third main question about the possibility of metaphysics in general. But these sections have two further roles: one is to introduce the final question, which is about the possibility of metaphysics as a science, and the other is to hint at the connections between theoretical and practical philosophy.

1. Why is it important to determine ‘the boundaries for the use of our reason’? (§57 ¶¶1–3, 4:350–1)
2. ‘Experience never fully satisfies reason’ (4:351). What does Kant mean by this? (§57 ¶4, 4:351–2)
- 3★. Try to elucidate Kant’s point about the difference between a boundary [*Grenze*] and a limit [*Schranke*] in relation to reason and its dialectic (§57 ¶¶5–9, 4:352–4; see also §59, 4:360–2).
4. Kant suggests that we can think [*denken*] but not cognise [*erkennen*] things in themselves or ‘intelligible beings’. Briefly explain this (§57 ¶¶10–1, 4:355).
- 5★. How does ‘cognition according to analogy’ work, and why is this relevant? (§58, 4:357–60)
6. So, *how* is metaphysics possible at all [*überhaupt*]? (§60, 4:362–3)
- 7★. Kant mentions morals a few times (e.g., 4:353, 4:363). How does this relate to the discussion of pure reason and its limitations?

Background Information. (a) A limit [*Schranke*] are negations that indicate some incompleteness (§57, 4:352). So, insofar as we are limited in some way, there is no question as to what lies beyond that limit; but as in mathematics and natural science, the limits may change. A boundary [*Grenze*] delineates two domains, as it were: inner and outer—or something that is ‘out of bounds’. In the case of reason and metaphysics, these are the ‘fields’ of the knowable and the unknowable, whose connection can nonetheless be thought (of not cognised). (b) The distinction between the ‘conditioned’ and its conditions (§57, 4:354) appeals to the nature of transcendental ideas: they refer to the totality of the conditions of a particular that is hence ‘conditioned’. This matches the thought that ideas of reason have no determinate object, i.e. a ‘conditioned’ particular. Since the totality of conditions is not itself a determinate object, it could not be cognised either. This insight is at the heart of dogmatic metaphysics, where it is assumed that the totality of conditions can be (or is) an object of cognition with determinate properties. (c) Roughly, *deism* is the theory God is the first cause of the universe, which then operates according to (divine) laws without incessant (divine) intervention. In contrast, *theism* is the view that God constantly intervenes in the universe. When Kant says that Hume’s arguments against theism are ‘strong’ (4:356), he also may have in mind his own rejection of the three possible proofs for God’s existence in the *CPR* A592–630/B620–58.

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