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Towards a New Understanding of Pre-Critical Philosophy: A Continuist Approach to Kant's Philosophical Development from 1755 to 1781.

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METHOD OF CITATION

Throughout the text, references to Kant's works will be based on abbreviations of the titles. All the references to pre-critical works written between 1755 and 1770 are based on *"Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770"*, except for "*Universal Natural History"* and "*Correspondence"* (see bibliography). Citations to the "*Critique of Pure Reason*" refer to the Cambridge edition translated Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (1998). The following list provides all the abbreviations in chronological order according to the first publication.

A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition (1755)	*NE*
The Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens (1755)	*UNH*
The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of Which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology (1756)	*PM*
An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism (1759)	*Optimism*
The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures (1762)	*FS*
The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God (1763)	*OPA*
Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy (1763)	*Magnitudes*
Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality (1764)	*Inquiry*
Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics (1766)	*Dreams*
Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space (1768)	*DS*
On the Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World (Inaugural Dissertation) (1770)	*ID*
Critique of Pure Reason (1781 – 1787)	*Critique ('A' - 'B')*

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Abstract

The thesis wants to argue in favour of a continuist relation between the pre-critical and critical period of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. A detailed analysis of the most relevant pre-critical efforts will show that the critical project of a propaedeutic science, one that could ground metaphysics as a science, was not the product of new research carried out between 1770 and 1781; rather, it came from the gradual and coherent development that started with his early philosophy. By showing which pre-critical works anticipated the Critique, the thesis will criticise discontinuous interpretations of Kant's thought and, simultaneously, propose a new understanding of "*Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*" and the "*Inaugural Dissertation*" as anticipations of the transcendental dialectic.

Introduction

In 1781, Immanuel Kant published one of the most famous and influential books of Western philosophy, the "*Critique of Pure Reason"*[1]. However, during the course of his 50-year academic career, such a ground-breaking effort was anticipated by a great number of so-called minor works which speculated over a wide variety of topics. Nowadays, the importance of these early efforts is often overshadowed by the massive philosophical system inaugurated by the first *Critique*. During the crisis and 11 silent years between the "*Inaugural Dissertation*"[2] (1770) and the *Critique*, Kant considered his previous works as fruits of a "*dogmatic slumber"*[3], a definition which represented the basis on which many of the philosophical interpretations of his pre-critical works rest[4]. For this reason, Kant is commonly regarded as a philosopher who became important only for what he wrote in the *Critique*. From this derives a discontinuous picture of Kantian philosophy, one that depicts all his early works as negligible and in theoretical discontinuity with the critical philosophy.

In this thesis I want to re-establish the importance of Kant's pre-critical efforts by arguing in favour of a continuist approach. In fact, a detailed analysis of some of the most important pre-critical works will show that the aim of providing a propaedeutic[5] transcendental science, one that could ground metaphysics as a science, was a project that gradually took shape throughout his entire career, rather than the product of entirely new research carried on between 1770 and 1781. The crucial point that I want to sustain is that there was continuity in the philosophical questions that he considered, although his answers were not always the same. Moreover, in the course of my analysis, some pre-critical works such as *Dreams* or the *ID* will be interpreted in a new light, thus criticising many anti-metaphysical readings that hamper their correct interpretation[6]. This way, I will show that

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[1] *Critique.*
[2] *ID.*
[3] *Kant (2004), p. 10.*
[4] *See Schönfeld (2000), Ch. III "Climax and Crisis"; Vanzo (2013).*
[5] *It is important to clarify here how the concept of "propaedeutic" will be intended throughout the text. Kant defines his concept of propaedeutic science mainly in the ID by referring to the necessity of a foundation of metaphysics. Thus, "propaedeutic" must be understood as a synonym of "anticipation" or "preparation" for further development. In this sense, the propaedeutic philosophy of the ID is the bedrock of a secured science, one that could never stand on its own without this preparatory analysis.*
[6] *McQuillan (2015), See section 2: "A History of (Mis)Reading".*

the early Kant anticipated not only the project of providing a secure foundation for metaphysics, but even some ideas that will be clarified only in the *transcendental dialectic*. In this sense, I will dedicate the first section to a broad analysis of Kant's intellectual and historical development, thus giving a macroscopical picture of his philosophy. This large-scale approach will provide a perfect background for a detailed, microscopic analysis of some specific concepts that were introduced in the pre-critical period and fully developed in the *Critique.*

Yet, it must be noted that there cannot be complete continuity between the two philosophical periods. In fact, although continuity of the metaphysical project and the anticipations of the *transcendental dialectic* will be clear, we must remember that there are sporadic points of theoretical discontinuity between the pre-critical period and the *Critique*. However, these points will not be enough to reject the continuist approach.

In order to support this approach I will consider four main pre-critical works in the first section: *NE*, *OPA*, *Inquiry* and *ID*. In the end, their content will be compared with the preface of the *Critique* and with the *transcendental analytics* in order to see to what extent the *Critique* can be considered as the realisation of Kant's entire academic career. Furthermore, in the second section the focus will be on *Dreams* and on the concept of noumenal perfection, introduced by Kant in the *ID*, in order to strengthen the continuist approach and to highlight the philosophical importance of these two books. Moreover, before the conclusion, a brief comment on where discontinuity can be found between 1755 and 1781 will show that, even though it can be said that the critical Kant criticised his early belief in the ontological argument in favour of the existence of God, the continuist approach still holds.

Before the argumentation, some premises are needed. Firstly, a consistent part of this work will be devoted to the rehabilitation of an often-neglected work such as *Dreams*. In fact, as Colin McQuillan precisely notes[7], the standard interpretation of this treatise as anti-metaphysical and centred mainly on its second part, which contains no philosophical insight, have to be considered misinterpretations of its true content. As will be shown, *Dreams* can be considered not only as a speculation on the method of metaphysics, but also as an anticipation of the transcendental ideas of the pure reason. In the same way, the concept of noumenal perfection will be interpreted as an anticipation of the distinction between the faculty of the intellect and the faculty of pure reason.

[7] *McQuillan (2015).*

Moreover, it could be said that this re-interpretation of pre-critical works as anticipations of the *Critique* becomes an anachronistic attempt to force new and not intentional interpretations of Kant's works. To answer to this criticism, it is enough to remember that my thesis is an accurate account of how the themes discussed in the pre-critical texts are still present in the *Critique*. Simply put, it would wrong to say that the young Kant wanted to write a *"Critique of Pure Reason".*

Thirdly, and most importantly, it was Kant himself who questioned his own pre-critical works and wanted to neglect them *in toto*[8]. However, this rejection will be interpreted as a consequence of two factors: he had not been able to find a solid grounding for metaphysics in almost twenty years of research, and the influence of Humean scepticism was becoming stronger during the late 1760s[9]. The inability to provide a convincing result after so many years of metaphysical inquiries would have discouraged any philosopher.

Lastly, it is important to remember that, due to the limited scope of this inquiry, many pre-critical works will not be considered here. However, such works (*Optimism*, *FS*, *DS*, *Magnitudes*, *PM*, *UNH*) must not be considered central to the present effort for two reasons: they are repetitions of doctrines clearly expressed in the analysed works, for example the *PM* and *UNH*, which are in their metaphysical core contained in the *NE*; and many other works are treatises on natural phenomena which had almost nothing to do with the metaphysical interests of the author.

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[8] *In this sense, his answer to a publisher who wanted to recollect all his pre-1770 work is emphatic "I accept your proposal of putting together a collection of my minor writings. However, I would not like to have included anything before 1770, so that it would begin with my dissertation (ID)". See Kuehn (2001), p. 190.*

[9] *See Waxman (2005), "General Introduction" and "Part III".*

Section 1

The aim of this section is to show that, during the period between 1755 and 1770, Kant remained always focused on a precise goal for his academical inquiries: to criticise how metaphysics was considered during his times (1) and to find a proper way to do metaphysics by himself (2). Hence, even if during this period many philosophical currents influenced his writings, it must be shown that his goal remained the same.

The Kant of the first academic years can be considered as a rationalist, given the direction of his studies and the theories expressed in his first works[10]. However, from the 1760s onwards, he started to read Hume, and, for this reason, he began to speculate over metaphysics while considering empirical or *a posteriori* perspectives as well. As is well known, this pre-critical ambivalence resulted in many interpretations of the *Critique* which consider it as the synthesis of modern rationalism and empiricism, and, to a certain extent, this chapter will put it in evidence, although this synthetic interpretation has its drawbacks[11].

In order to show that during this period his aim remained unaffected, the main focus will be devoted to four works. The first will be the *NE*, written in 1755, in which the first attempt to introduce new insights in the metaphysical speculations of modern times can be clearly pointed out by considering the introduction of the principles of succession and coexistence. Secondly, the *OPA* will be considered as a crucial works which show not only how Kant was profoundly influenced by both rationalism and empiricism, but also that the project to find a secure demonstration of metaphysical truths was still at the core of his work. Thirdly, some brief comments on the *Inquiry* will be helpful in order to understand how the *OPA* can be connected to the *ID*. Finally, the *ID*, Kant's last pre-critical and quasi-critical effort, will be considered in connection to the *Critique* in order to highlight that the necessity to find a propaedeutic science (that is transcendental philosophy) was the final result of the entire pre-critical period.

[10] *See Calinger (1979); Beiser (1992); Kuehn (2001), Ch. 3.*
[11] *Vanzo (2013), Vanzo (2016).*

1. *First Metaphysics.*

Historical context – First elucidation: Inversion of priority – Principle of determining ground – Demonstration of the existence of God – Two new principles of metaphysical cognition – Conclusions.

"A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition" was the second public dissertation defended by Kant in 1755. In it, he tried to problematise the most cutting-edge metaphysical systems of his times by directly addressing the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition. Besides the blatant rationalism that emerges while reading the text, the historical context in which it is inserted could help to understand the background of Kant's first philosophy. The influence of his former professor Knutzen, a famous astronomer at the time, explains why, together with an interest in metaphysics, Kant studied also natural sciences and, in particular, Newton's flourishing theories[12]. In fact, it is not surprising that the central aim of other works like *UNH* and *PM* was the attempt to harmonise Newtonian descriptions of the physical world with the metaphysical systems of Leibnizian character. Yet, *NE* is the most striking declaration of rationalism since it focuses on the exposition of his first metaphysical system of knowledge. By doing this, Kant aimed at obtaining some new insights which could criticise the metaphysics of its times that, as suggested in the title, needed some elucidations.

Its purpose was to "*throw some light on the first principles of our cognition*"[13]. Hence, according to Kant, there was the need to clarify something about cognition. In order to do this, the book was organised around three main topics: a discussion about the validity of the principles of contradiction and of identity, the elaboration of the "*principle of determining ground*"[14] in its proper use, and, finally, the elaboration of two new principles of metaphysical cognition.

The first elucidation could be referred as an inversion of priority. Kant believed that the Leibnizian and Wolffian metaphysical theories were based on the wrong fundamental principle, namely on the principle of non-contradiction. According to Kant, their central claim was that there must be a unique supreme principle of metaphysical

[12] *See Calinger (1979); Cassirer (1981), Ch. 1-2; Beiser (1992); Kuehn (2001), Ch. 2-3.*
[13] *NE, p. 5.*
[14] *NE, p. 11.*

cognition, the function of which is to subsume under itself all the possible propositions of cognition[15]. A supreme principle of this kind, according to Kant, must be a simple proposition which could be able to account for both affirmative and negative truths. By referring to truths he means propositions where a single predicate is connected to a subject, thus yielding judgments that can have an affirmative or a negative value. However, a simple proposition can never account for negative and positive truths at the same time because "*if, therefore, a proposition is truly simple, it must be either affirmative or negative*"[16]. In other words, simple propositions are connections of one predicate with one subject, and, given the fact that a proposition cannot be affirmative and negative at the same time (we cannot predicate something about an object and simultaneously negate the same predication), the propositions concerning affirmation and negation cannot be considered together as a single principle. Hence, in order to account for all possible cognition, the supreme principles must be two, one for the affirmative truths and one for the negative ones. Kant then identifies these principles in a quite Parmenidean sense: the principle of affirmative truths is "*whatever is, is",* whereas the principle of negative truths is "*whatever is not, is not"*[17]. These are the simplest expressions of the supreme principles of cognition, and he believes that his conception of the principle of identity is perfectly summarising them. This is because, according to the philosopher, the truth of every proposition is based on the identity between the concepts of a subject and its predicates. Simply put, if the predicate 'red' is connected to a subject that is a 'red apple', we have an identity and an affirmative truth; whereas if the predicate 'not red' is connected to a subject that is a 'green apple', we still have an identity, but this time it is a negative truth. Hence, Kant's principle of identity can account for both negative and positive truths. Moreover, it has a priority over the principle of contradiction because it is more fundamental, meaning that it is able to express the two first propositions in simpler terms than the principle of contradiction, which cannot directly indicate truths, but needs to rely on another concept (impossibility[18]) first.

It is important to note that this first argument is entirely conducted from a rational-logical point of view[19]. This has two important consequences. The first is that in 1755 Kant

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[15] *NE, p. 6-10.*
[16] *NE, p. 5.*
[17] *NE, p. 7.*
[18] *NE, p. 9-10.*
[19] *A rational demonstration, especially during late-modern times, was one that aimed at finding truths regardless of contingent factors and empirical influences. This was a result of the historical importance that the faculty of reason, which distinguished humans from animals, gained during the Enlightenment. In this sense, Kant's demonstrations obviously lack the logical rigour of*

was firmly convinced about the rational ability of the human mind to acquire any kind of metaphysical knowledge, while the second is that the rationalistic method needed some more clarification. In this sense, the following section is even more emblematic.

Despite the fact that the two new principles of metaphysical knowledge are discussed in the last section of the work, the analysis of the principle of determining ground is probably the core of the whole work. According to it, "*That which determines a subject in respect of any of its predicates, is called the ground"*[20]. This means that the determination of true objects is dependent on a ground which is "deciding" which predicates are to be assigned to a specific subject. In other words, a thing becomes a subject only in so far as it was determined by something else, meaning that the number of its predicates were limited by a determining ground. This being clear, it is easy to see how fast this theory becomes a rationalistic proof of the existence of a Supreme Being: in order to exist, a subject needs a prior determining ground that posed it since "*the concept of a cause is by nature prior to the concept of that which is caused*"[21]; hence, something cannot have its cause in itself. Therefore, the possibility of the existence of a being must reside in another determining ground.

But how does he define possibility? Possibility is the product of a comparison between concepts that must be *absolutely* given since, without them, there would be nothing to compare, and, therefore, impossibility. Furthermore, these concepts need to be united in a single being because, otherwise, its absolute necessity would be limited by other necessary beings, and thus absoluteness (and possibility) would be lost. Consequently, there must be an absolute being which is the determining ground of the possibility of the existence of all the other things and that comprehends the unity of all the possible concepts in itself. This being is the ground in the absence of which nothing at all can be thought: God.

From this demonstration Kant draws a list of divine characteristics which he will use to refute some false corollaries that other philosophers deduced from the principle of determining ground, such as a deterministic picture of the world or the existence of God as

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contemporary analytic philosophy; they are focused on a propositional logic that is still taking a lot from Aristotle and from the strong faith in the abilities of human reason which is typical of the modern times. Later on, Kant will use the concept of "a priori" to express this ability to find truth with the sole use of reason.

[20] *NE, p. 11.*

[21] *NE, p. 14.*

cause of itself[22]. Besides these critiques, there are two important things to note: firstly, this proof of the existence of God is entirely dependent on logical reasoning, another image of his rationalistic tendencies; secondly, his principle of determining grounds is propaedeutic to the introduction of two completely new principles of metaphysical cognition in the last part of the work.

In fact, the third section is entitled "*Presentation of the two new principles of metaphysical cognition, both of which are extremely rich in consequences and derive from the principle of the determining ground*"[23]. The first one is the principle of succession, a rule stating that, contrary to what the Wolffian philosophers say, the cause of the change of a simple substance is not an inner activity, but, rather, it is an "*infallible chain of grounds*"[24]. A substance in itself, as noted before, has no causal power over itself, so, in order to change, it would need the action of another determining ground. The application of this principle is probably the very first attempt of the philosopher to challenge scepticism: if we consider the human soul as an inner substance, according to the rule of succession, the various changes that occur in it must be caused by "*a number of things present outside the soul which stand in reciprocal connection*"[25]. It follows from this that "*the change of perceptions also takes place in conformity with external motion*"[26]. Thus, the existence of external bodies is demonstrated, and Kant uses this idea to criticise scepticism and Leibniz's pre-established harmony[27].

It is interesting to note that this proof of the existence of material bodies will be crucial in many other pre-critical works (*PM* and the *UNH)* in order to demonstrate the possible compatibility of a revised Leibnizian metaphysics with Newtonian physics, thus yielding a complete explanation of reality based on rationalistic premises. In fact, moving to the second principle of coexistence, Kant used it mainly as another proof that the Newtonian physics of attraction and repulsion is a direct consequence of the principle of determining ground. This principle says that every relation between substances hinges upon God since mere "*coexistence of substances of the Universe is not sufficient to establish a connection between them. There is required, in addition, a certain community of origin*"[28].

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[22] *NE, Propositions IX – XI.*
[23] *NE, p. 37.*
[24] *NE, p. 38.*
[25] *NE, p. 39.*
[26] *NE, p. 39.*
[27] *NE, p. 39. For further comments on Leibniz's pre-established harmony see also Slowik E. (2016).*
[28] *NE, p. 41.*

Hence, the application of this principle explains that all the relations between physical bodies such as place, position, and space are possible only in so far as there is an absolutely necessary being that is granting them. Among these relations, the Newtonian forces of attraction and repulsion have to be included.

After this analysis, two points result crucial. Firstly, Kant was a strong promoter of modern rationalism, especially by providing his demonstration of the existence of God. Secondly, this work has a specific aim, that is to promote a new way to found metaphysical knowledge by introducing some variations to modern systems: the priority of the principle of identity over non-contradiction, the principle of determining ground, and the addition of the two new metaphysical principles.

Hence, already in 1755 Kant firmly believed in the power of metaphysics to establish secure knowledge, provided that the proper method to do it was clearly established[29]. The *NE* was his first attempt to furnish such a method, and the goal for the next chapters will be to judge whether this belief on metaphysics was still present during the following periods of his academic career.

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[29] *Although Kant did not provide a specific definition of metaphysics in the NE, it is useful to remember that his conception of metaphysics was still in line with its modern understanding. Metaphysics was the research of the nature of the world deduced using only pure reason and, in this sense, it aimed at providing supreme principles which could explain a priori all that exists. This approach clarifies the meaning of Kant's first metaphysical system developed in UNH and PM, where some principles given by reason had to account also for the physical world.*

2. *Ontological and Cosmological Arguments.*

The only Possible Argument – First addition to the ontological proof of the NE –Second addition to the ontological proof of the NE – Indemonstrable fundamental judgments in the Inquiry – The new cosmological argument – Conclusions.

As Manfred Kuehn correctly noted[30], *OPA* has to be considered as a product of long speculations of the Prussian philosopher. In fact, "*its origin can be traced back at least to the fifties, when Kant was working on cosmogony*"[31]. Hence, it is not surprising to see that the entire first section of the book was dedicated to the so-called ontological proof of the existence of God[32], meaning a detailed exposition of the same argument which Kant developed in 1755 with the *NE*[33]. However, a considerable part of the book was devoted to another argument, namely the new cosmological one (or the revised physico-theological, in opposition to Wolff's wrong cosmological argument), thus building a parallelism between the logical, "*a priori*"[34] ontological demonstration, and the empirical, "*a posteriori*"[35] and "*natural*"[36] proof of the existence of a Supreme Being. This division is a

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[30] *Kuehn (2001).*
[31] *Kuehn (2001), p. 140.*
[32] *It is interesting to note that Kant uses the term "ontological" to describe an argument that relies on the concept of "possibility" of things. As Logan (2007) notes, it is highly improbable that he considered the classical ontological argument, namely Anselm's one, in his speculations. Logan claims that this shows Kant's ignorance of the history of the ontological argument. Be that as it may, it is enough here to remember that Kant's conception of the ontological argument is focused on possibility and modern metaphysical discussions like the one concerning determining grounds.*
[33] *Kant's philosophical approach to religion is often connected to his Pietist education. During the late 18th century, Königsberg was one of the most important German cities where this evangelical movement developed. Pietists were contrary to the strict formalism of the Protestant orthodoxy and believed in the personal interpretation of the subjective religious experience. This subjectivism saw the practice of conversion as an individual form of rebirth and awakening. Kant received a Pietistic education throughout his childhood and his parents, both Pietists, contributed to introduce him to this religion. Although it is quite sure that Kant was interested in the social and political events concerning Pietism, it is almost impossible to understand whether his pre-critical philosophy was influenced by this early education, especially given the unreliable information coming from Kant's early biographers. For further information see Kuehn (2001), p. 33-39. Given the uncertainty of such connection, the analysis of Kant's demonstration of the existence of God will be detached from any Pietist interpretation, thus yielding an interpretation that is as close as possible to the texts.*
[34] *OPA, p. 135.*
[35] *OPA, p. 137.*
[36] *OPA, p. 200.*

sign of the development of Kant's philosophy from 1755 to the publication of *OPA* in 1763: together with the interest in metaphysics and the rationalism of his times, in this period he started to investigate English empiricism, especially by reading David Hume's works[37].

An analysis of the text will show that the modern discussions about the cosmological argument became so important to Kant that he felt the necessity to include it in his metaphysical system in order to give it a more secure grounding. Apparently, not only rationalism was able to account for metaphysical truths, but also *a posteriori* arguments, even if only to a certain extent.

The text is organised in two macro-sections preceded by a preface. In it, Kant declares his intent: "*sound reason, which still lies within the limits of ordinary insights, yields sufficiently convincing proofs of the existence and properties of this Being*"[38] (God). Yet, he believed that a philosophical cognition of the existence of such a being could be obtained in a better way. However, in order to find this argument, one must venture onto "*dark and shoreless ocean, marked by no beacons*"[39] that is metaphysics, a discipline which he considered certainty possible, even if it had to be sought in this shoreless ocean.

These sentences perfectly express the belief that Kant felt for his rational demonstration of the existence of God. In fact, the first section of *OPA* is a complete re-proposition of the demonstration already seen in chapter 1, but with two interesting new additions.

The first addition is a further development of the concept of possibility of the existence of substances intended as *internal possibility*. Kant stressed this point in order to clarify the distinction between the properties and the existence of a substance. In fact, propositions that connect predicates to subjects can be logically correct and attribute external qualities to these substances. However, these judgments will never be able to say something about the existence of the internal possibility of a substance, since existence is not a predicate contained in a judgment, but it is an entirely different thing. This way, God becomes the absolutely necessary ground of the existence of all substances in terms of their internal possibility, whereas their actual physical properties are dependent upon the determination of predicates in subject by the same grounds introduced in the *NE*.

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[37] See *Kuehn (2001), p. 139-143; Waxman (2005), "General Introduction"; Logan (2007); de Boer (2019).*
[38] *OPA, p. 111.*
[39] *OPA, p. 111.*

Again, this was important to criticise all the philosophical traditions (Leibnizian-Wolffian among them) which sustained a direct creation and intervention of God in the physical world, a point even more developed in the *Inquiry*, not surprisingly written in 1763 and published one year later. Hence, here there is another addition which shows once again the necessity to establish a clear rulebook before being able to do metaphysics correctly.

The second addition to the ontological argument in *OPA* is methodological and strictly connected with what will be the content of the *Inquiry*. In short, this book (published in 1764) was the first true methodological treatise of the author. Its two main goals were to demonstrate that the methods in metaphysics and in mathematics have to be clearly distinguished, and to understand to what extent the former discipline can aim at a similar degree of certainty as the latter. However, given the limited scope of the present analysis, it will simply be useful to note that one of the crucial findings of this treatise was the necessity to rely on some sort of "*indemonstrable fundamental judgments*"[40] that arise in our mind. These judgments are the only possible source of knowledge which metaphysics can use as its basis, given that it cannot start from clearly stated definitions as mathematics does.[41] In this sense, the ontological argument is a perfect example of how to do metaphysics starting from fundamental judgments, namely from the first principles of metaphysical cognition (identity, determining grounds, etc. via analysis). Before resuming the analysis, it is worth to note that the *Inquiry* represented a continuist step and a crucial link in the passage from the *OPA* to the *ID* since it introduced the necessity of a (not yet defined as such) preliminary speculation over the method which philosophers use for the sake of obtaining scientific truth. The main point was to understand whether metaphysics could obtain definitions without imitating the method of mathematics, but only a clear distinction of their method could answer this question.

Going back to the *OPA,* the second section exposes Kant's new cosmological argument in three steps. Firstly, thanks to geometry, it is possible to notice that even the most chaotic and complex arrangements of sensible events can be organised and explained by a coherent theory. This geometrical understanding must be considered as a picture of the inherent "*order and harmony*" that "*prevail throughout space*"[42], although perhaps our sensible cognition will never grasp its entire perfection.

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[40] *Inquiry, p. 254.*
[41] *Inquiry, p. 248.*
[42] *OPA, p. 137.*

The second step is to assure the cause of nature's coherence in itself. God is providing the possibility of the existence of such an organised nature, but It is not determining every physical relation between objects. Using Kant's terms, things can exist in a moral or in a non-moral dependency upon God, meaning that God willed that the things existed in a direct way (moral), whereas their reciprocal relations are only indirectly (non-morally) dependent upon It[43]. In fact, the coherence with a set of physical laws is inherent to the essence of things in themselves. Kant writes:

> *The fact that things, which are so beautifully related to each other, should exist at all, this is to be attributed to the wise choice of Him who created them on account of that harmony. But that each of these things should, in virtue of simple grounds, contain such an extensive adaptedness to harmony of many different kinds, and that a wonderful unity in the world should, as a result, be able to be maintained – that is inherent in the very possibility of the things in question.* (*OPA, p. 146).*

Hence, starting from the senses, it is possible to understand the laws of motion and to see the order and harmony of this physical world entirely *a posteriori*. This way, Kant was able to save the philosophical importance of natural laws and, at the same time, to subsume them under the metaphysical concept of a Supreme Being which is granting their possibility indirectly[44]. Again, the existence of God is proved, but this time starting from experience, thus showing that there can be more than one way to arrive at God.

Kant defines this demonstration as the "*revised method of physico-theology*"[45], in contrast with the classical one. While "*If one listened to what the (classical) physico-theological authors have to say, one would be persuaded to imagine that the riverbeds had all been hollowed out by God*"[46], the revised one is able to account for the validity of natural sciences and for the extension of philosophical understanding following Newton's principles.

The work is concluded by a third section which summarises the findings of the treatise. Here, Kant provides a classification of all the possible arguments that have been

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[43] *OPA, p. 143-144.*
[44] *See also Massimi (2008) and Massimi (2014).*
[45] *OPA, p. 164.*
[46] *OPA, p. 161.* He is referring to Wolff's argument.

used to infer the existence of God so far. All the arguments must come "*either from the concepts of the understanding of the merely possible (1), or from the empirical concept of the existent (2)"*[47]. Two arguments can come from each of these possibilities: the first, "*going from the possible as a ground to the existence of God as a consequence*" (1-A); the ontological one, considering "*the possible as a consequence of the divine as a ground*" (1-B); the old cosmological argument, "*proceeding from that, the existence of which we experience, to the existence merely of a first and independent cause, and then, by subjecting that concept to analysis, proceed to the derivation of its divine characteristics*" (2-A); and the new cosmological argument of refined physico-theology, which "*proceed(s) directly from that which experience teaches us to both the existence and the properties of the Divine Being*"[48] (2-B).

According to Kant, only 1-B and 2-B are proper arguments, whereas 1-A and 2-A, the Cartesian and the Wolffian arguments respectively, are impossible. Leaving the detailed analysis of the critiques for another work, it is enough to note that the problems with them arise because they fail to account either for the true nature of God as the ground of internal possibility (1-A) or for the physical reality as an indirect product of God's will (2-A).

What is important to stress here is that only two arguments are possible, the ontological and the revised physico-theological. But, at this point, a question arises spontaneously: what is the one and only possible argument between the two of them? Kant's answer is puzzling: it is the ontological one in reason of its ability to demonstrate the existence of God with a mathematical degree of certainty. This is thanks to the method followed to arrive at such a conclusion: entirely rational and based on the first principles of metaphysical cognition. However, even the physico-theological argument has a special position among all the others, and sometimes it can even have a greater value than the ontological:

> If the question were raised, which of the two proofs was the superior, our reply would be this: if it is logical exactitude and completeness which is at issue, then the ontological proof is superior. If, however, one is looking for accessibility to sound common sense, vividness of impressions, beauty and persuasiveness in relation to man's moral motives, then the advantage must be conceded to the cosmological proof. *(OPA, p. 200).*

[47] *OPA, p. 195.* Numbers added.
[48] *OPA, p. 195-196.*

Hence, Kant is recognising the existence of another way to acquire metaphysical knowledge, one which does not derive from logical analysis of metaphysical concepts but from experience. Faced with this new idea, he needed to reformulate his entire metaphysical system in order to include in it *a posteriori* knowledge. Kant's attempt to insert the cosmological argument inside his system is crucial for the purpose of the present inquiry since it shows that he always wanted to provide an explanation of how it is possible to do metaphysics and on what terms it could be done. A first rationalism resulted in the ontological argument of the *NE* and the first section of the *OPA*; whereas the cosmological argument was introduced here not only because its validity was debated by the English philosophers of Kant's times[49], but also because the whole validity of natural theology was discussed in the German philosophical ambient. In fact, the *Inquiry* was "*an answer to the question proposed for consideration by the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences for the year 1763*"[50].

In conclusion, during the almost 10 years of preparation for the publication of this work, Kant elaborated two major shifts of perspectives of his metaphysical system which did not influence the general aim of his philosophy and, at the same time, give a picture of the philosophical influences that he captured. The first change concerned the new developments of the ontological method in contrast with the classical conception of God as directly causing every aspect of the world. The second, and more important, is the introduction of a revised cosmological argument inside his new and more comprehensive attempt to do metaphysics. Again, perhaps the arguments were modified and expanded, but his main concern remained to find the right way to do metaphysics[51].

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[49] *Kuehn (2001), p. 140-143; Waxman (2005), "Part III"; Logan (2007).*

[50] *Inquiry, Subtitle.*

[51] *In the OPA Kant's definition of metaphysics did not vary from that implied in the NE. It was still deeply inserted in modern speculations about the possibility of rational knowledge of the first principles of cognition and sceptical theories. This is even more evident by taking into account his strong belief in the indemonstrable judgments of the Inquiry.*

3. *An Answer to the Problem of Metaphysical Knowledge.*

Kuehn's limited view – A declaration of intents with the ID – From the ID to the realisation of the project: The Critique – Conclusions.

To conclude the historical progression, the *ID* and some sections of the *Critique* will be briefly commented. In considering these works, we will analyse two fundamental aspects: whether the *ID* can be considered as a declaration of intents which summarises a period in which the search for a way to do metaphysics had already started (1), and to what extent the *transcendental logics,* the second section of the *Doctrine of Elements* in the *Critique*, can be considered as the realisation of the project expressed in the *ID*, but structured long before (2).

In analysing the period which preceded the *ID*, Manfred Kuehn's biography proves useful, but at the same time limited. Kuehn believes that, between 1755 and 1769, "*Kant did not so much have an all-inclusive metaphysical position as he was searching for one*"[52]. This claim could be an almost perfect summary of what has been exposed so far. Kant was searching for an all-inclusive metaphysics which could attain a mathematical degree of certainty. To obtain it, he criticised other metaphysical systems, the Leibniz-Wolffian one above all. It is therefore right to consider this as a period of development, influenced by Crusius, Leibniz, Wolff, Hume and empiricism in general[53]; however, it would be wrong to consider it in marked contrast with the period from the *ID* onwards. This is because the research on the possibility of such an "*all-inclusive metaphysical position*"[54] remained constant throughout his entire academic career. He did not have it yet during the 1760s, but he was considering its possibility by adding new principles (determining ground, succession, coexistence) and new arguments (cosmological) to his metaphysics.

Hence, when Kuehn writes that "*In order to be able to give a coherent account of any kind of development, we must have at least some ideas about the end product of that process. We must be able to specify what counts as development "toward" that goal*" and "*However, there is no such final goal toward which the early Kant developed*" since "*His*

[52] *Kuehn (2001), p. 175.*
[53] *See Kuehn (2001), Ch. 2-3; Adickes (2017).*
[54] *Kuehn (2001), p. 175.*

critical philosophy represents — as he himself tells us - the beginning of something new"[55], this fails to recognise that a certain continuity was there. It is certainly true that Kant himself considered his transcendental philosophy as something entirely new and somehow detached from the pre-critical theories[56]; however, it is not true that there was no specific goal presented with the latter works, and it is false that this goal was different from that of the critical period. In this sense, the *ID* can be considered as a crucial bridge.[57]

The *ID* was the public dissertation that Kant had to defend in order to become professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg, a position for which he waited almost 15 years[58]. In it, many of the theories that will be crucial in the first *Critique* are contained, such as the separation between a real and a logical use of the understanding and the importance of space and time as proto-*a-priori* pure principles of our cognition. However, while a detailed account of the content of this dissertation will be considered in section 2, understanding the aim of this work is enough in light of what has been discussed so far. Section 5 becomes crucial in this sense, especially paragraph 23[59]. Here Kant explains that there is a specific difference between natural sciences and "*pure philosophy, such as metaphysics*"[60]. The former disciplines are the result of the application of some basic principles of our understanding (like the principle of non-contradiction) to physical phenomena in order to organise them and to "*subordinate phenomena to more general phenomena*"[61]. This is a sort of intuitively clear process since there is no need to clarify the method before yielding the result of this science. Why? Because "*in natural sciences and mathematics, use gives the method*"[62]. On the contrary, in metaphysics there are no principles of the understanding that can attain a mathematical degree of certainty, so this discipline is not immune to error. For this reason:

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[55] *Kuehn (2001), p. 179.*
[56] *See Kuehn (2001), p. 190.*
[57] As mentioned in the introduction (see page 9 above), it is always important to remember that in this period Kant's lack of confidence in his own early work was a temporary discomfort resulting from Hume's influence and the long research on metaphysics.
[58] *Kuehn (2001), p. 188.*
[59] *ID, p. 406-407.*
[60] *ID, p. 406.*
[61] *ID, p. 406.*
[62] *ID, p. 406.*

Here, in pure philosophy, method precedes all science. And everything which is attempted before the rules of this method have been properly hammered out and firmly established will appear to have been rashly conceived and to deserve to be relegated to the vain playthings of the mind. For, since it is the right use of reason which here sets up the very principles themselves,(...) the exposition of the laws of pure reason is the very genesis of science; and the distinguishing of these laws from suppositious laws is the criterion of truth. (ID, p. 406).

Kant here is clearly recognising that there was something to be added to the speculations over metaphysics at which he arrived after the *Inquiry*. The doubt regarding principles of pure understanding, meaning those principles from which our metaphysical inquiries start, is in contrast with the faith that Kant had for the "*indemonstrable fundamental judgments*"[63] of the *Inquiry*. In fact, the inability of those judgments to arrive at a mathematical degree of certainty is a new problem for the philosopher. This shows that the *ID* is a further step towards the solution to the problem of metaphysics. Until the *Inquiry*, the final result was to rely on some fundamental judgments, now he has doubts about them.

Hence, an absence of the discussion regarding the method of metaphysics was the reason why "*those who have devoted themselves to this enquiry, seem, hitherto, to have accomplished scarcely anything at all*"[64]. Kant should probably be inserted in this group; for his various attempts to find a correct way to do metaphysics, despite the fact that they all pointed at this goal, lacked this preliminary inquiry[65].

Kant understood that, in order to do metaphysics, an expression of a method which "*will serve as a propaedeutic science, and it will be of immense service to all who intend to penetrate the very recesses of metaphysics*"[66] was needed. The connection to the first *Critique* is clear here. However, before showing it, it is important to stress that with the *ID* another piece of the process to secure metaphysics was added. Firstly, metaphysics was based on a simple addition of new principles to the common systems provided in the *NE*.

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[63] *Inquiry, p. 254.*
[64] *Inquiry, p. 407.*
[65] *It is in the ID that Kant's definition of metaphysics encounters the necessity of a preliminary inquiry. In this sense, the ID started the passage from metaphysics intended in a very modern sense to a metaphysics intended as the science of the limits of reason (as the Critique will explain).*
[66] *Inquiry, p. 415.*

Then, it needed to be revised in light of new cosmological arguments in the *OPA*. Subsequently, a methodological discussion on fundamental judgments had to be added in the *Inquiry*, and, finally, doubts about them resulted in the declaration of intent of the *ID* and in the necessity of a propaedeutic science.

By now, it seems clear that, although the themes exposed progressively changed, the constant need for revision, contrarily to what Kuehn writes, provides a precise picture of the questions that Kant had in mind throughout his whole career: how can we find a right way to do metaphysics? Can it obtain a mathematical degree of certainty? In this sense, the *ID* collected all the material gathered during the 1750s and the 1760s and used it to declare his intent to formulate a propaedeutic science (1).

The *Critique of Pure Reason*, specifically in the *transcendental logic*, is the realisation of this intent. The three well-known questions posed in the introduction to the second edition[67] are already telling in this sense: "*How is pure mathematics possible? How is pure natural science possible?*"[68] and *"How is metaphysics possible as science?"*[69]. Mathematics and physics are already established as sciences, and an inquiry into the faculty of pure reason will show how this is possible (they provide synthetic *a priori* judgments). However, in metaphysics things are different. First of all, it must be proved that it can somehow attain a scientific degree of certainty. However, this goal is of the most difficult kind since reason, in dealing with metaphysics, speculates over concepts that are detached from experience. In Kant's terms, "*Metaphysics – a wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason that elevates itself entirely above all instruction from experience, and that through mere concepts (...) – has up to now not been so favoured by fate as to have been able to enter upon the secure course of science*"[70]. Thus, the aim of the work is clearly stated:

> *the concern of this critique of pure speculative reason consists in that attempt to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics, undertaking an entire revolution according to the example of geometers and natural scientists. It is a treatise on the method, not a system of the science itself; but it catalogs the entire outline of the science of metaphysics, both in*

[67] *Critique (B), 136-152.*
[68] *Critique (B), 147.*
[69] *Critique (B), 148.*
[70] *Critique (B), 109.*

respect of its boundaries and in respect of its entire internal structure.
(Critique (B), p. 112).

To understand whether metaphysics can be a science, he firstly needs to understand what "being a science" means. This is the goal of the *transcendental aesthetics* and the *transcendental analytics*. The human faculty of intellect is able to provide synthetic *a priori* judgments by conceptualising empirical objects using the two pure a *priori* forms of space and time (*transcendental aesthetics*) and the pure concepts of the intellect, namely the categories (*transcendental analytics*). The presence of an object which is conceptualised by the subject is necessary for the intellect to provide scientific knowledge. Hence, mathematics and physics are sciences because they are the result of an application of pure *a priori* concepts of the intellect to empirical objects. In this sense, the *transcendental analytics* is crucial in order to explain how intuition of those objects and the application of the categories of the intellect is mediated by the faculty of imagination, another crucial element of human understanding.

What is important to understand is that such operation is impossible in metaphysics. Given the fact that metaphysics is a purely conceptual analysis detached from sensible data of experience, the label of science seems to be precluded to it. Yet, this is not entirely true; metaphysics is still possible for Kant. In this sense, his transcendental philosophy must be intended not only in its:

negative utility, teaching us never to venture with speculative reason beyond the boundaries of experience; and in fact that is its first usefulness. But this utility soon becomes positive when we become aware that the principles with which speculative reason ventures beyond its boundaries do not in fact result in extending our use of reason, but rather, if one considers them more closely, inevitably result in narrowing it by threatening to extend the boundaries of sensibility, to which these principles really belong, beyond everything, and so even to dislodge the use of pure (practical) reason. (Critique (B), p. 114).

Hence, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a treatise on the method of metaphysics, on how and if it is possible to consider the pure speculations of reason, detached from sensible experience, as the source of scientific knowledge. The *transcendental logic*, divided in

transcendental analytics and *transcendental dialectic*, will have the crucial role to explain respectively the negative and the positive result of such an inquiry. Leaving a specific thematization of the positive role for the second section of this work, here it is enough to notice that the restriction of scope provided by the *transcendental analytics* and the deduction of the categories became the realisation of the declaration of intents posed with the *ID* (2).

In the end, this continuist approach to Kant's philosophical production undermines a strong separation of the pre-critical and the critical periods in favour of a more nuanced perspective. On the one hand, it is clear that there was a certain discontinuity in the belief that metaphysics could actually provide knowledge about non-empirical concepts (See section 2, chapter 3). On the other hand, it has been shown that, from 1755 to 1781 (and probably until his death), the belief in the possibility to provide a scientific foundation to metaphysics remained strong, and, despite the numerous shifts of perspectives, the project of discovering how and to what extent metaphysics was possible remained the core of Kant's philosophical interests. In this sense, continuity between the two periods can be found.

Moreover, this continuity can be seen even from a more specific point of view. If, on the one hand, the historical development of Kant's works provided a continuous picture from a macroscopic viewpoint; on the other hand, a detailed analysis of how some specific concepts and theories were anticipated in pre-critical works and retained in the first *Critique* will strengthen the position on a microscopic level, thus providing interesting new perspectives on the interpretation of some pre-critical efforts.

Section 2

In beginning the second part of the work, some more premises are needed. First of all the aim of the chapter will be to see whether some ideas exposed in the *transcendental dialectic* were anticipated during the pre-critical period. In particular, it will be noted how the crucial theme of the transcendental ideas of pure reason was hinted in two specific works: the already introduced *ID* and *Dreams*. While doing this, it will become clear that these anticipations not only provide stronger and more specific arguments in support of the continuist thesis (the macroscopic picture), but even that the aforementioned positive role of metaphysics took gradually shape in these pre-critical works and, finally, became the kernel of some specific ideas, namely Kant's regulative ideas of reason: God, soul and world. This is the reason why this chapter can be considered as a microscopic analysis if compared to the previous one. However, not all three ideas were clearly identified or distinguished before the *Critique*. In this sense, the present analysis aims at finding which transcendental ideas were clearly anticipated, which ones were merely foreshadowed, and which ones were not yet fully thematised. In connection with this, chapter 3 will be an interesting example of why it could be said that the older Kant criticised and rejected his early philosophy.

The second part of the *transcendental logic* will have a crucial role in this chapter. For this reason, it is necessary to provide a brief account of the main themes of the *transcendental dialectic* before analysing whether and where those themes were anticipated. In order to do this, the *transcendental dialectic* will be considered in its three main aims: introducing the concept of transcendental ideas, explaining why these ideas are commonly used in an improper way, and explaining what the regulative use of these ideas could be.

First of all, what are the transcendental ideas of reason? Kant's distinction between the faculty of the intellect and that of pure reason is crucial to answer this question. All the sections before the *transcendental dialectics* were devoted to the analysis of the operations of the sole intellect in so far as it is the specific faculty that is able to provide scientific knowledge by conceptualising objects coming from sensible intuition using time, space and the pure *a priori* categories. Hence, reason has apparently nothing to do with scientific knowledge. In fact, Kant believes that this faculty is working on another separate field, one

which is deprived of every sensible intuition. Human reason "*contains the origin of certain concepts and principles, which it derives neither from the senses nor from the understanding*"[71]. These principles are derived from the "*faculty of rules*"[72], i.e. the intellect. While the intellect applies the rules, namely categories, to sensations to provide *unity*, i.e. knowledge, reason aims at providing another kind of unity: "*If the understanding may be the faculty of unity of appearances by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles*"[73]. This means that reason creates new ideas starting from the rules of the intellect, meaning the categories. If these rules are unified without reference to experience, they yield some purely abstract principles that are completely different from the concepts of the intellect.

Once this distinction between reason and intellect is clear, it has to be considered that, when thinking about reason, Kant finds himself "*in some embarrassment*"[74] because: "*the subjective necessity of certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity. (---). (This is) an illusion that cannot be avoided at all*"[75]. Kant's embarrassment stems from the error of reason: the concepts that it creates by connecting the rules of the intellect are mere illusions, presented to the mind as true even if they lack reference to phenomena.

In short, reason tries to take the concepts provided by the intellect and to unite them searching for the "*unconditioned*"[76] through deductions that are entirely detached from experience. For instance: the intellect provides the category of causality, and then reason takes causality and applies it purely abstractly to different concepts to see if the series of causal connections between them will ultimately lead to a first unconditioned cause, an unconditioned object. This sort of Aristotelean process leads to the rational concept of an unconditioned cause at the beginning of all the causal processes in the world. This idea of a prime cause is one of the three Kantian transcendental illusions: God. In the same manner, throughout the history of philosophy, the concepts of soul and world were thematised by the most diverse philosophical currents, but each one of them failed to recognise something crucial about transcendental ideas: they are illusory since they do not come from experience, but they come from pure reason.

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[71] *Critique (B), p. 387.*
[72] *Critique (B), p. 387.*
[73] *Critique (B), p. 389.*
[74] *Critique (B), p. 387.*
[75] *Critique (B), p. 386.*
[76] *Critique (B), p. 392.*

After this follows the second aim of the *transcendental dialectic*: the demonstration of the fallacy of those ideas. Given the limited scope of the present analysis, it will be sufficient to note that the crucial demonstration of the falsity of these ideas remains substantially the same, although it is divided in three different sections, one for each transcendental illusion ("*Paralogisms of Pure Reason*" for the concept of soul, "*Antinomies of Pure Reason*" for the concept of a world, "*Ideal of Pure Reason*" for the concept of God[77]). The relevant point is that, given the absence of an empirical source for these concepts, it will never be legitimate to infer their real existence. As a consequence of this, both the arguments in favour and those against the existence, of e.g. the beginning of the world (first antinomy), can and will never be demonstrable. In this sense, God, the world and the soul are illusions in a negative sense, providing a false belief in concepts that are not conceptualised in the proper way by the intellect. Hence, claiming that it is possible to prove something about these essentially metaphysical concepts is wrong.

However, Kant revives metaphysics by providing a positive role for transcendental ideas. In fact, a sort of Platonic understanding of them is the key to bring back metaphysics to the realm of sciences. Plato's idea of the Good is compared to the Sun[78] which, while shining high in the sky, provides the light to see all the material objects of the world. In this sense, humans can know objects only thanks to this light. If this metaphor is translated in political terms, it means that a good way to govern a state is to imitate as much as possible a supreme idea of Republic, one which serves as an *archetype* for all the real ones. And, although the real constitution may never become as perfect as the ideal one, "*the idea of this maxim is nevertheless wholly correct when it is set forth as an archetype, in order to bring the legislative constitution of human being ever nearer to a possible greatest perfection*"[79]. Transcendental ideas can be considered as archetypes of the same kind. Kant writes:

> *Although we have to say of the transcendental concepts of reason: They are only ideas, we will by no means regard them as superfluous and nugatory. For even if no object can be determined through them, they can still, in a fundamental and unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon for its extended and self-consistent use, through which it cognises*

[77] *Critique (B).*
[78] *Plato, Republic. Book VI, 509b.*
[79] *Critique (B), p. 397.*

no more objects than it would cognise through its concepts, yet in this cognition it will be guided better and further. (Critique (B), p. 403).

In this sense, transcendental ideas can be considered as canons, as "*regulative ideas*"[80]. They regulate the limits of sound intellect while, at the same time, they provide a direction to human inquiries. Thus, metaphysics has to be understood as a science of the limits of human reason, and Kant "saves" it by considering it the science of regulative ideas.

After this summary, it will be possible to analyse whether any pre-critical work is presenting some sort of anticipation regarding the concept of transcendental ideas or the conception of metaphysics as a propaedeutic science of limits.

[80] *Critique (B), p. 590.*

1. *Dreams of Metaphysics.*

Philosophical and historical interpretations of Dreams – First idea in support of Kant's belief in metaphysics: Historical background and the true content of Dreams – Second idea in support of Kant's belief in metaphysics: The soul as a transcendental idea – Conclusions.

In 1766, Kant published a small work which was entirely dedicated to the question of immaterial beings: "*Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*". In it he described human souls as immaterial beings. The work was very different from anything that the philosopher published before mainly for its non-academic style and for the fact that many readers considered the topic highly non-philosophical. For these reasons, *Dreams* has been considered as an almost negligible treatise, Kant's most "curious book"[81], or as a proof of the anti-metaphysical tendencies that the philosopher was starting to endorse during the late 1760s. None of these comments provide an adequate interpretation of *Dreams*. Although the second part of the book is dedicated to the critique of Swedenborg's mystical experiences (he was a so-called spirit-seer, a person inserted in the world of ghosts and all sorts of mystical adventures)[82], the first section needs to be considered as the crucial theoretical exposition of the content of the work. In here are contained two specific metaphysical ideas that will strengthen the continuist approach exposed in the first section and will show why it is wrong to dedicate such little attention to this work, as, for example, Kuehn did by reiterating anti-metaphysical readings of it.

The first idea regards the method of metaphysics and the correct way to do it, developed in contrast with Swedenborg *and* in favour of a true metaphysics, whereas the second idea is the role of "*imaginary inferences*"[83] coming from popular belief and from a certain common-sensical understanding of the metaphysical dimension of immaterial beings[84].

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[81] *Kuehn (2001), p. 170, expressing the strangeness of its content.*
[82] *Kuehn (2001), p. 171.*
[83] *Dreams, p. 312.*
[84] *Dreams, p. 307-308.*

In dealing with the first idea, I will consider McQuillan's account of *Dreams* in support of my thesis[85]. In his article, he criticised all the anti-metaphysical readings of this book. He believed that all the standard interpretations failed to recognise the clear distinction between a true metaphysics and the metaphysics of a spirit-seer. Simply put, in *Dreams* Kant was not criticising metaphysics in general, but only a mystical one. McQuillan supports this view by analysing the historical background that brought to the *Dreams* (1) and the content of the text (2).

In the first section we have already shown why, during the 1760s, the *Inquiry* represented an important point of continuity in Kant's metaphysical project. In it, he proposed the view that, although metaphysics should be completely separated and distinguished from mathematics in terms of method, it could still acquire some mathematical degree of certainty by relying on indemonstrable fundamental judgments. Hence, it is clear that, in this period, Kant had a strong belief in the validity of this doctrine. Yet, it could be said that he could have changed idea during the two years preceding the publication of *Dreams* (1766). However, McQuillan finds in the correspondence with Lambert and Mendelssohn a refutation of this idea.

Johann H. Lambert (1728-1777) was a Swiss philosopher and mathematician who inspired Kant's philosophical development throughout a long correspondence that started during the 1760s, whereas Moses Mendelssohn was one of the most important metaphysicians in 18th century Germany and represented both a friend and a sort of rival for Kant (Kant's *Inquiry* did not win the essay competition in 1764 because it was defeated by Mendelssohn's essay)[86].

Kant repeatedly mentioned to Lambert his intention to write "*a few little essays, the contents of which I have already worked out. The first of these will be the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Philosophy, and the Metaphysical Foundations of Practical Philosophy*"[87]. These works were supposed to be a summary of his main interests: "*all of my endeavours are directed mainly at the proper method of metaphysics and thereby also the proper method for philosophy as a whole*"[88]. Although he never published those essays, the reason was clearly not connected to any scepticism regarding metaphysics. The

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[85] *McQuilllan (2015). For a detailed background see Beiser (1992); P. Guyer and A. Wood "Introduction to the Critique of Pure Reason" in Cambridge (1998) edition; Schönfeld, M.(2000), Chapter III; Johnson, G. (2003), "Introduction"; Rukgaber (2018).*
[86] *Kuehn (2001).*
[87] *Kant (1999), p. 82.*
[88] *Kant (1999), p. 82.*

correspondence with Mendelssohn during 1766 can be interpreted in the same way. McQuillan shows that Kant was writing to him because he strongly believed that they were sharing the same goal: to "*create a new epoch in metaphysics*"[89]. Kant was firmly convinced that he had a lot to say about metaphysics and that only a sharp thinker like Mendelssohn could understand him.

Hence, Kant's correspondence during the 1760s shows that he was still very convinced of the validity and importance of metaphysical inquiries. His concerns were focused on showing how metaphysics was possible rather than on refuting the entire discipline or on criticising himself and all his previous efforts.

The content of the texts is even more telling in this sense. As stated before, it is divided in two main sections. The first is the most important because it contains the entire philosophical speculations, whereas the second is a critique directed to Swedenborg and contains some final considerations connected to the first part.

The preamble anticipates the content of the work: he will talk about "*the realm of shades*"[90], meaning the realm of immaterial spirits, in order to understand what the philosophical attitude towards them should be. He further writes :"*To believe none of the many things which are recounted with some semblance of truth, and to do so without any reason, is as much foolish prejudice as to believe anything which is spread by popular rumour, and to do so without examination*"[91]; so this realm needs to be analysed without scepticism or prejudice.

What are immaterial spirits? The first chapter is entirely devoted to the attempt to compare his definition with those coming from popular belief, but it must be noted that he immediately says that he does "*not even know what the word 'spirit' means*"[92], thus putting his own definition to the same level of a popular one. According to him, a standard philosophical definition of spirit is that of "*A being endowed with reason*"[93]. Gradually, Kant considers all the possible existing beings in order to understand what should be characteristic of a spiritual and rational one, and the result yields another crucial feature: they must lack the quality of impenetrability[94]. This is because if spirit-beings were composed of matter, they would follow the Newtonian rules of attraction and repulsion and

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[89] *Kant (1999), p. 90.*
[90] *Dreams, p. 305.*
[91] *Dreams, p. 306.*
[92] *Dreams, p. 307.*
[93] *Dreams, p. 307.*
[94] *Dreams, p. 309.*

therefore be visible, but this is not the case. Hence, spirit-beings are immaterial, but they can occupy the same place of a material body, meaning that they have the property of penetrability. At this point, Kant introduces the concept of human soul as a perfect example of immaterial being that occupied the same space filled by matter, even though is not contained in a specific part of that physical body[95].

What is important to understand here is that, although the soul is not being considered as an idea but as a being whose existence must be proven, its existence is still concerning a world which can never be grasped by human understanding. In fact, the first and second chapter are completely devoted to show that it is possible to imagine a great number of hypotheses concerning the features of these immaterial beings (soul included), but the fact that they do not follow the Newtonian rules of attraction and repulsion poses an insuperable barrier to what our understanding can grasp. Thus, the understanding has no way to reach the immaterial world:

> *In so far as I have denied them the property of filling the space in which they operate, I would have deprived myself of a concept by means of which the things which present themselves to my senses are otherwise thinkable for me; and the inevitable result must, therefore, be a kind of unthinkability. (Dreams, p. 311).*

Kant goes even further by stating that "*We may, accordingly, accept the possibility of immaterial beings without any fear that we shall be refuted, though there is no hope either of our ever being able to establish their possibility by means of rational argument*"[96]. This means that there is no logical problem with the possible existence of the soul; the point is that humans will never be able to have concrete proofs to demonstrate it. Although the connection with transcendental ideas is already clear here, it is enough to note that this line of reasoning brings Kant to separate between two different kinds of thinkers: there are spirit-seers like Swedenborg, who claim that they are able to see and have ghostly proofs of the existence of these immaterial beings, and there are "waking dreamers"[97] metaphysicians, who believe in the philosophical possibility to speculate over immaterial

[95] *Dreams, note p. 309.*
[96] *Dreams, p. 311.*
[97] *Dreams, p. 330.*

beings. Spirit-seers are completely wrong in their claims and Kant ascribes them a certain "*mental disturbance which is called madness*"[98]. On the contrary, metaphysicians (like Wolff or Crusius) could still "*awake completely*"[99] by recognising that, as McQuillan correctly notes[100], their theories come from ordinary language and popular belief rather than from correct metaphysical foundations. By correcting their theories, they would be able to see that metaphysics in possible only in so far as mystical experiences are excluded from it.

Throughout the text, Kant explicitly says that he is still "*very much inclined to assert the existence of immaterial natures in the world, and to place my own soul in the class of these beings*"[101], but the concrete possibility to understand them is limited. Leaving aside spirit-seeing, "*the situation is quite different when it comes to the philosophical theory of spirit-beings. The theory can be completed, albeit in the negative sense of the term, by securely establishing the limits of our understanding and by convincing us that the various different appearances of life in nature, (...) constitute the whole of that which is granted us to know*"[102]. This clearly represents an anticipation of what was previously defined as the negative role of metaphysics. Towards the end of the text, Kant describes again the advantages of metaphysics:

> *It consists both in knowing whether the task has been determined by reference to what one can know, and in knowing what relation the question has to the empirical concepts, upon which all our judgments must at all times be based. To that extent metaphysics is a science of the limits of human reason*". *(Dreams, p. 354).*

Hence, already in 1766 Kant believed that metaphysics was a useful discipline first and foremost in so far as it was understood in terms of science of the limits of human reason.

To summarise, this text is clearly providing a critique to the mystical spirit-seers and even to some metaphysicians of Kant's times; however, it is completely wrong to consider it also as a critique of metaphysics in its entirety. Both McQuillan's historical

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[98] *Dreams, p. 333.*
[99] *Dreams, p. 329.*
[100] *McQuillan (2001), p. 197.*
[101] *Dreams, p. 314.*
[102] *Dreams, p. 339.*

background and the analysis of the text showed that Kant was still very convinced about the validity of the discipline, especially if understood in terms of science of limits. In this sense, the project of a propaedeutic science stated with the *ID* and realised in the *Critique* becomes even more clear and in continuity with the rest of the pre-critical works.

Besides the critique to anti-metaphysical readings, the analysis of the text proves extremely useful even in dealing with the second idea that stems from Kant's metaphysical claims in *Dreams*. In fact, it is possible to extrapolate two ways (1,2) in which Kant anticipates the thematization of the soul as a transcendental idea by looking at some specific concepts and expressions used in the first two chapters.

Firstly (1), as already noted, despite the fact that human understanding cannot comprehend immaterial beings, Kant is still convinced of their existence, and specifically of the existence of the human soul. Where does this conviction come from?

While speculating about the relation between physical body and the soul, Kant claims that in order to know where the place of the soul in a body is, it is necessary to presuppose "*something with which we are not acquainted through experience, though it may perhaps be based on imaginary inferences*"[103]. This means that the concept of a soul comes from some inferences that are completely detached from experience, inferences that are developed only in our mind. The fact that so many popular beliefs about immaterial beings were part of Kant's cultural background is not only proof of the mysticism of 18th century Germany, but even of something rooted in the nature of human minds in general. Every possible discussion about the soul and immaterial beings must be necessarily based on speculations coming from ordinary language, from popular belief, as Kant notes in the beginning of the work, because these are the only sources that can shape concepts like soul using imaginary inferences. Kant was recognising a common human tendency to formulate concepts that are beyond empirical experience, one that in the *Critique* will become natural and that he will identify as the activity of the faculty of principles, meaning of pure reason[104]. The similarity of this tendency with the faculty of principles is also shown by a second element (2). In the second chapter of the first part, Kant begins some speculations regarding the possible characteristics of these immaterial beings. If the whole point of the book were to criticise mystical interpretations of spirit beings and dreamy metaphysicians, why would he push himself so far as to say that it is possible to imagine many things about

[103] *Dreams, p. 312.*
[104] *Critique (B), Transcendental Dialectic.*

spirits, such as a world of immaterial beings "*existing in its own right*"[105] or the fact that they follow some sort of "*pneumatic*"[106] laws? Because he wanted to demonstrate that it is *logically* possible to postulate anything about this immaterial world. The possibility of postulating "*chimeras*"[107] (as the metaphysicians do) is perfectly compatible with the fact that there will never be any possible demonstration of the validity or falsity of these speculations. In this sense, the absence of a connection with empirical intuition foresees what the *transcendental dialectic* will refer as "*antinomies of pure reason*"[108].

According to the Kant of the *Critique*, the main error that metaphysicians perpetrated throughout history was to consider the three transcendental illusions of soul, God and world as true and existing concepts. In *Dreams*, he anticipated this approach regarding the soul by criticising the false results of dreamy metaphysicians like Crusius and Wolff. Hence, once again, the fact that metaphysics should be seen as a science of limits means that it should teach us why some ideas must be considered as regulative rather than source of metaphysical knowledge.

Yet, in *Dreams* Kant is referring to the soul and all immaterial beings as entities, beings whose real existence must be proven, whereas the *Critique* will treat the three transcendental illusions as ideas, not beings. This is the most fundamental difference that comes between the pre-critical and the critical understanding of transcendental ideas. The fact that while speculating on the possible features of spirits he comes to the idea of an "*immaterial world*" where they are all united, a world that he compares to "*a heavenly home"*[109]*,* is a clear demonstration that he was considering spirits in a substantial sense. It could be said that, in *Dreams,* spirits were different entities if compared to physical bodies, but they were still objectified entities. Spirits were part of a sort of noumenical world that had to be completely separated from that of attraction and repulsion. However, this concrete conception of souls was discarded in the *Critique* in favour of an idealistic and logical conception of the illusions. This was probably caused by the role played by the categories of the understanding in the *Critique*, something which was not yet conceptualised by the philosopher in *Dreams*; but this is beyond the scope of the present work.

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[105] *Dreams, p. 317.*
[106] *Dreams, p. 317.*
[107] *Dreams, p. 330.*
[108] *Critique (B).*
[109] *Dreams, p. 320.*

In conclusion, the analysis of *Dreams* resulted in a critique of all its anti-metaphysical readings and in a further support for the continuist approach. In particular, the second result comes from Kant's intent to define metaphysics as a science of the limits of human reason and, at the same time, from two anticipations of the *transcendental dialectic*: the logical possibility to speculate over metaphysical claims in reason of their non-empirical testability, and the common-sensical and natural way in which thoughts about immaterial beings come to be part of popular understanding.

In this sense, *Dreams* has to be interpreted as a rich book, full of information on how Kant's metaphysics developed throughout the 1760s, rather than just as a simple critique to the spirit-seer Swedenborg.

2. *Noumenal Perfection and the Real Use of Understanding.*

A new analysis of the ID – The concept of noumenal perfection – Noumenal perfection as a regulative idea – The elenctic and dogmatic use of the understanding – Conclusions.

The second work with relevant anticipations of the *transcendental dialectic* is the *ID*. In the first section the *ID* has been used in support of the continuist approach, but here a deeper analysis will show that this text provides two specific anticipations: the concept of "*noumenal perfection*"[110] concerning regulative ideas (1), and the distinction between the elenctic and the dogmatic use of the understanding in connection with the critical distinction between intellect and pure reason (2).

As the analysis will prove, the *ID* contains a number of important ideas, like the dependence of sensible cognition on space and time, that will be fundamental for the *transcendental aesthetics*[111]. This shows that some critical concepts, like the role of intuition, were already quite clear to Kant in 1770. If the distinction between reason and intellect were already anticipated as well, this would mean that even the transcendental ideas could be foreshadowed here. Still, it has to be proven whether this is the case. In order to understand it, the focus will be mainly devoted to Kant's speculations about intellectual cognition, the faculty that introduces the crucial dialectical concept of noumenal perfection. However, Kant does not provide a clear discussion of it (especially concerning the passage from the categories to noumenal perfection), and, for this reason, a detailed analysis of the text is necessary.

As the title of the first section suggests, "*On the concept of a world in general*"[112], the world is supposed to have a great relevance in the treatise. Yet, Kant surely does not mean the world as a transcendental idea. What the philosopher is trying to provide is a theory which could explain how the cognition of the external world is generated by the human mind. For this reason, after some comments on the different ways in which the concept of the world can be defined (it can be an "*abstract concept of the understanding*" or a concept following from "*the sensitive faculty of cognition*"[113]), and on some crucial

[110] *ID, p. 388.*
[111] *See De Boer (2019).*
[112] *ID, p. 377.*
[113] *ID, p. 377.*

factors which require attention for this definition[114], Kant shifts to the second section to introduce the distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition. The entire third paragraph is crucial to understand their role:

> *Sensibility is the receptivity of a subject in virtue of which it is possible for the subject's own representative state to be affected in a definite way by the presence of some object. Intelligence (rationality) is the faculty of a subject in virtue of which it has the power to represent things which cannot by their own quality come before the senses of that subject. The object of sensibility is the sensible; that which contains nothing but what is to be cognised through the intelligence is intelligible. In the schools of the ancients, the former was called phenomenon and the latter noumenon. Cognition, in so far as it is subject to the laws of sensibility, is sensitive, and, in so far as it is subject to the laws of intelligence, it is intellectual or rational. (ID, p. 384).*

Hence, sensible cognition regards how the mind encounters the objects that are present in experience and conceptualises them through a sensible receptivity. On the contrary, intellectual cognition, also called the understanding or "*the superior faculty of the soul*"[115], is the possibility to conceptualise objects that are not coming from sensible receptivity, meaning that they are not sensibly present, but they are representable only through the mind itself.

Sensible cognition is further developed in the third section which contains the "*principles of the forms of the sensible world*"[116]. Here Kant provides a detailed account of the principles which allow the mind to have an external intuition of objects. This is a quite important anticipation of the *transcendental aesthetics* in so far as space and time are identified as the *conditio sine qua non* of the possibility of the sensible receptivity of objects by a subject. However, the relevant anticipations for the present thesis are formulated in the development of the superior faculty of the understanding.

This faculty is "*twofold*"[117]; it can act in a logical sense or in a real sense. When used in the logical sense, it provides a simple classification by subordinating and comparing

[114] *ID, p. 380-382.*
[115] *ID, p. 385.*
[116] *ID, p. 391-400.*
[117] *ID, p. 385.*

concepts according to the principle of non-contradiction. Hence, the most important feature of this part of the understanding is that it does not yield new concepts, it simply takes other concepts and relates them. So where are concepts coming from? What is the material of this subordination and comparison? The material comes from sensible cognition; it is the appearance of objects grasped by means of sensible receptivity. Once that appearance is organised by means of the logical use, then the higher faculty of the soul acquires objects of experience that are also called "*phenomena"*[118]. Therefore, phenomena are the result of a reflective cognition which is the product of sensible cognition and logical understanding.

But the faculty of the understanding also has a real use, one that actually positively provides new concepts without the need for sensible cognition; they "*are given by the very nature of the understanding: They contain no form of sensitive cognition and they have been abstracted from no use of the senses*"[119], where Kant is particularly eager to specify that "abstraction" here means total detachment from sensibility rather than provenience. An example of these purely abstract concepts is "*the case with moral concepts, which are cognised not by experiencing them but by the pure understanding itself*"[120]. Kant then provides a list of concepts that are "*abstracted from the laws inherent in the mind": "possibility, existence, necessity, substance, cause etc.*"[121], concepts that in the *Critique* will become the categories.

It is crucial to note the difference from the role that categories play here and in the *Critique*. While here they are concepts that "*never enter into any sensory representation*"[122], in the *Critique* Kant will completely change his mind. Somewhere between 1770 and 1781 he realised that the categories of pure understanding are inherently part of sensible experience, and their application is the only way through which the intellect can acquire knowledge of an external world[123]. However, the general importance of the categories as true source of knowledge is the same in both works, thus making clear that Kant firmly believed in the possibility of an intellectual and abstract cognition in the *ID*.

Before speculating about the consequences of this shift of perspective, it is useful to introduce the concept of noumenal perfection. Kant does so by further distinguishing

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[118] *ID, p. 386.*
[119] *ID, p. 386.*
[120] *ID, p. 387.*
[121] *ID, p. 387-388.*
[122] *ID, p. 388.*
[123] *Critique. The transcendental aesthetics and analytics explain that the function of categories is based on the presence of an external world.*

two possible uses of the concepts of the understanding (coming from its real use): the elenctic and the dogmatic[124]. While the elenctic is the "*negative*" one which "*keep(s) what is sensitively conceived distinct from noumena*" and which "*preserve(s) science from the contagion of errors*", the dogmatic use is free to take the principles of the pure understanding (categories) and to form other abstract concepts starting from them, thus "*lead(ing) to some paradigm (...) which is a common measure for all other things in so far as they are realities*". Hence, the dogmatic use is the positive one[125]. The paradigm that results from the dogmatic understanding is the noumenal perfection, which can be perfection in a theoretical sense, and in this sense "*it is the Supreme Being God*", or in the practical sense, meaning "*moral perfection*".

Kant's introduction of this concept in the discussion about categories has two problems. First, it is not entirely clear how the passage from the concepts of the understanding to the perfect paradigm is realised, and second, it must be understood what Kant intends with the world "paradigm". The philosopher did not provide a clear solution to the first problem in the *ID*, and for this reason the concept of noumenal perfection remains puzzling. However, the clarification of the meaning of "paradigm" could shed some light into the problem. Paradigm is a translation of the original Latin word *exemplar*, a word which could also be translated in English as idea, example or model. This semantic field brings immediately into the discussion the Platonic reference to ideas or archetypes that Kant uses to introduce transcendental ideas in the *Critique*. This is further confirmed by the fact that the paradigm should be "*common measure for all other things in so far as they are realities*"[126]. Simply put, it seems that noumenal perfection, both in its theoretical and practical sense, is a sort of proto formulation of all the transcendental ideas. However, as already noted, Kant is still very convinced of the reality of noumenal perfection, and this is understandable in light of the still pre-critical conception of categories as truly functioning only if separated from experience. Yet, if noumenal perfection is interpreted as an anticipation of transcendental ideas, the passage from categories to this concept will be fully explained in the *Critique*: through the natural tendency of pure reason to search for

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[124] *ID, p. 388. Specifically, see paragraph 9 for all the citations in this paragraph.*
[125] *In paragraph 9, Kant refers to the elenctic and dogmatic as the two "ends" of the concepts of the understanding. In this sense, the first end is to create a mere catalogue of what the concepts related to phenomena are (elenctic), whereas the second end is to go beyond the distinction phenomenon/noumenon by yielding new concepts that are dogmatic (without reference to phenomena) and paradigmatic (with reference to noumenal perfection).*
[126] *ID, p.388.*

an unconditioned end of all the series of conditions. In other words, noumenal perfection becomes the pre-critical equivalent of the concepts of soul, world and God. If understood in terms of model or example, its regulative function for all the other objects of experience becomes even clearer, thus providing an anticipation of transcendental ideas in the sense of regulative and archetypical ones (1).

Could it be said that Kant was also hinting the separation between the faculty of the intellect and that of reason in this section? The answer (2) is clear after a further explanation of the dogmatic use of the understanding. Its role is to give concepts without reference to empirical data, exactly the same role that the faculty of pure reason will have in the *Critique*. Hence, the faculty of the intellect in the *ID* is represented by both the logical use of the understanding, which is merely organising sensitive cognition, and the elenctic use of the understanding, which is keeping phenomena separated from noumena.

The dogmatic use in the *ID* seems able to grasp the real essence of noumena by arriving at the paradigm of noumenal perfection through the principles of the understanding, meaning the categories. Hence, in 1770 Kant believed that the proper use of the categories was what will be the rational one in the *Critique*, meaning that of providing regulative ideas useful for the development of human knowledge[127]. However, somewhere during the 11 silent years he must have changed his mind and understood that the proper field of application of the categories of pure understanding is the intellect, thus considering transcendental ideas as useful and illusory at the same time.

Kant then adds a fourth section to the book which is entirely concerned with some further speculations on how the concept of world as the unity of substances is possible, a reflection which can be considered negligible for the present purpose.

What is important to understand in conclusion of this analysis is that the fifth section, where the necessity of a propaedeutic science is stated, now becomes even clearer. According to Kant, metaphysics is possible when the role of sensible cognition is clearly distinguished from that of the faculty of the understanding. In this sense, the *ID* is a first attempt to introduce this distinction by stating that metaphysics falls in error as soon as it steps out of its boundaries. Although the shift in the role and relevance of the categories from the *ID* to the *Critique* shows that those boundaries were not quite clear in 1770, it is still striking to see how much of the *Critique* was contained in this last pre-critical effort.

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[127] *This is also demonstrated by the explanation of the three metaphysical fallacies of subreption in section 5. They are "illusions of the understanding" (ID, p. 407) that arise when concepts of sensible cognition are erroneously applied the understanding, meaning to the field of categories.*

In conclusion, a detailed analysis of the text indicates that the concept of noumenal perfection can be considered as a proto-transcendental idea in so far as it represents a paradigmatic unity of concepts deriving entirely from the mind and not from empirical cognition. Although Kant was not able to describe specifically how the passage from the categories to the paradigm of perfection happens in the *ID*, a parallelism between the critical distinction intellect/reason and the pre-critical elenctic/dogmatic use of the understanding shows that this passage can be explained by means of the activity of the pure reason, a faculty introduced in the *Critique* but only overshadowed in the *ID*.

This analysis was also compatible with the continuist approach exposed in the first section. This because, even if the *ID* exposed a conception of the separation between sensible and intellectual cognition in favour of the intellectual side, it is still evident that the necessity of a preliminary inquiry over the faculty of understanding was considered as the only way to acquire a proper foundation for metaphysics.

3. *Kant Criticising Kant.*

The conception of God in the OPA – The conception of God in the Critique – Why Dreams is different from the OPA – Conclusions.

It has been illustrated that the anticipations concerning the *transcendental dialectic* were focused on the concept of the soul and on a general concept of noumenal perfection. Although the concept of world was thematised in the *ID*, it would be wrong to consider it directly as a transcendental concept. The same happens when Kant's idea of God is considered throughout his entire philosophical production[128]. In this sense, the purpose of this section will be to show that there was theoretical discontinuity throughout his career, to a point where it is possible to say that the Kant of the *Critique* criticised the early Kant. However, as it was repeatedly stressed before, it would be wrong to consider this discontinuity as a complete picture of the passage from the pre-critical to the critical period. For this reason, it is important to understand where it is really possible to say that Kant criticised himself. However, given the limited scope of this analysis, the focus here will be entirely devoted only to the most evident point of discontinuity: the conception of God.

OPA becomes crucial again. Towards the end of this book, Kant lists all the possible arguments that philosophers used to demonstrate the existence of the Supreme Being. The two most important ones were his ontological and cosmological proofs. Despite Kant's strong belief in the validity and natural strength of the new cosmological argument, he considered the ontological argument as the best. This is because during the early 1760s he was still very convinced of the power of reason to grasp metaphysical truths without the help of experience. Hence, the ontological method was even able to attain a mathematical degree of certainty, and for this reason it had to be considered the best.

The ontological argument was based on the existence of an absolutely necessary being which was supposed to be the ground, the *condition sine qua non* of the internal possibility of all other substances. As previously noted, this proof was entirely based on a logical speculation over the concept of possibility, a speculation which yielded this supreme ground of all possibility as a sort of indirect ruler of the physical world. The possibility of the existence of this absolutely necessary being was exactly what Kant

[128] *See Wood (1992); Logan (2007).*

wanted to criticise in the section "*On the impossibility of the ontological proof of God's existence*"[129] of the *Critique*. If the validity of the ontological argument was a solid point for the pre-critical Kant, the slow and progressive perfectioning process of his theories brought him to its total refutation.

This is not surprising once the analysis of the *transcendental dialectic* has proven that God is one of the illusory transcendental ideas and should not be considered as a true entity anymore. Using Kant's own words, "*one easily sees that the concept of an absolutely necessary being is a pure concept of reason, i.e., a mere idea, the objective reality of which is far from being proved by the fact that reason needs it*"[130]. According to the critical Kant, to talk about an absolutely necessary being in terms of a nominal definition, meaning as "*something whose non-being is impossible*"[131], adds nothing to the actual possibility of its existence; "*through this one becomes no wiser in regard to the conditions that make it necessary to regard the non-being of a thing as absolutely unthinkable*"[132]. This is in clear contrast to his initial doctrine exposed in the *OPA*: "*Accordingly, there is a certain reality, the cancellation of which itself would cancel all the internal possibility whatever. But that, the cancellation of which eradicates all possibility, is absolutely necessary. Therefore, something exists absolutely necessarily*"[133]. By comparing these quotes, it appears clear that in the *transcendental dialectic* Kant was indirectly criticising his younger self and all his metaphysical speculations over the proofs of the existence of God. In the *Critique*, absolute necessity becomes a chimera which needs to be substituted by a transcendental perspective, meaning by the realisation that God is a mere regulative idea.

Besides the refutation of the ontological argument, the *Critique* also provides confutations of the old cosmological and the physico-theological ones. However, it is not necessary to develop a detailed analysis of these refutations here since these proofs were already criticised by the pre-critical Kant. Rather, what is important to understand is that with the elaboration of the transcendental philosophy every possible conception of God as something different from a mere idea coming from the faculty of the principles had to be eliminated.

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[129] *Critique (B), p. 563.*
[130] *Critique, p. 564.*
[131] *Critique, p. 564.*
[132] *Critique, p. 564.*
[133] *OPA, p. 127.*

It could be argued, however, that a similar change of perspective happened to Kant's approach to the soul. In fact, in *Dreams* the soul is certainly not introduced as an idea, but as an immaterial being whose existence shall be proven. This way, the relegation of the idea of soul to the realm of transcendental illusion would be another proof of the discontinuity between the pre-critical and the critical period. Yet, this would be a wrong argument since, as previously noted, in *Dreams* Kant is constantly repeating that ignorance reigns with regard to the world of immaterial beings[134]. Instead of providing various possible arguments in support of some specific definition or demonstration of the existence of souls, Kant is emphasising that human understanding is not able to grasp immaterial beings. This is the reason why, almost ironically, their existence is logically possible and indisputable inasmuch as empirically non-testable. The logical possibility of conceiving immaterial beings as existent but in a totally separated world is exactly the puzzling problem that Kant wanted to deal with in 1766. On the contrary, *OPA* clearly illustrates how the conviction of the demonstrability of the existence of God was strong throughout the pre-critical period, a conviction that sets apart the pre-critical concept of God from that of the soul.

It has to be stressed that this point of discontinuity, as many possible others[135], cannot and has not to be considered as a problem for the continuist approach exposed before. Even if from a microscopic viewpoint it is possible to find some theoretical discontinuities, it has been clearly shown that the macroscopic picture is that of an author whose constant goal was to find the correct way to provide a scientific dimension to metaphysics. Whether he was able to do so in every single aspect of his philosophy is not something that would eliminate his philosophical efforts. Kant's entire career until the *Critique* of pure reason was focused mostly on metaphysics, and its progressive development exposed in section 1 indicates it.

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[134] *Dreams, p. 305-306.*

[135] *It is interesting to note that another point of discontinuity should be highlighted with regard to the strong Leibnizian tendencies of the young Kant. However, this topic requires a separate effort.*

Conclusion

A detailed analysis of the historical development of Kant's theoretical philosophy from 1755 to 1781 showed that it is not appropriate to consider his pre-critical philosophy as a project which was completely detached from the critical period (1781-1804). Kant's belief in the possibility of a scientific metaphysics - intended mainly as a modern speculation about the first principles of cognition of the world, and only after the *Critique* as a science of limits of reason - remained strong throughout his entire career and, although there were some periods of discomfort and sceptical influences, he never stopped asking himself how metaphysics should be intended. During these 26 years, the answers to such a general question changed repeatedly; however, the main question remained unaltered. This has been seen in the analyses of many pre-critical works.

In the *NE*, the necessity to criticise the metaphysics of his times (Leibniz-Wolff tradition), together with the addition of some principles which could elucidate how to form a correct metaphysical system, showed Kant's first intent to provide a correct and new way to do metaphysics. In this sense, *OPA* represented a further step. The growing importance of natural theology and of the cosmological argument in demonstration of the existence of God in the European scene posed a challenge to his ontological argument. This is why Kant felt the need to dedicate most of this treatise on the possible validity of a new cosmological argument. Thus, *OPA* has to be understood as a further attempt to create a metaphysical system by including and analysing in it every possible argument for the existence of a Supreme Being. Again, the aim was still to create a strong metaphysics, although the themes treated were influenced by Kant's interests of the period. The same should be said about the *Inquiry*, a treatise concerning the validity of natural theology. In it, the first methodological discussion about metaphysics takes the scene and proves that Kant's aim during this period was focused on the possibility of acquiring mathematical degree of certainty in metaphysics. In other words, an inquiry over the method of these two sciences was supposed to clarify how metaphysics could arrive at the same results of mathematics without imitating its methods. The result was a strong belief in the ability of some indemonstrable judgments to grasp metaphysical truths. However, the *ID* indicates that during the late 1760s this belief was gradually losing its strength. The declared necessity of a propaedeutic science that could make philosophers understand what is and what is not

part of metaphysics is the crucial addition of this work. This shows that he was doubting the validity of those fundamental judgments and that he needed a new foundation for them. This represents Kant's higher theoretical pre-critical peak, reached immediately before the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The transcendental philosophy of the *Critique* provided the preliminary analysis of the faculty of human understanding which was needed in order to understand whether metaphysics could be possible and what the status of the sensible and intellectual cognitions (introduced in the *ID*) should be.

All the small additions and revisions to the metaphysical system that he started to build with the *NE* came to a conclusion here: the possibility of metaphysics as a science was firstly researched on the errors of other metaphysical systems, then it became a methodological inquiry, and, in the end, this methodological inquiry became the necessity of a propaedeutic science expressed in the *ID* and realised in the *Critique*.

Hence, in light of the progressive development revealed by the continuist approach, Kant's arguments of the *Critique* must be considered as something which was not the product of a totally new research. Rather, the *Critique* cannot be fully understood without references to the preliminary inquiries of the pre-critical period. This means that all the simplistic interpretations of Kant's pre-critical philosophy as negligible, all the anti-metaphysical interpretations of the production between the 1760s and the *Critique,* and Kuehn's claims regarding the absence of a clear project throughout Kant' early philosophy, must be rejected in favour of the more complete picture provided here.

Once the real importance of the pre-critical philosophy is clarified, it is possible to offer new interpretations of some pre-critical works. The first example is *Dreams*, a treatise that was repeatedly misinterpreted and should be intended as an interesting anticipation of transcendental ideas and the limiting role of metaphysics, rather than as an anti-metaphysics effort. Its core was to demonstrate that metaphysics is possible, provided that all the mysticism that surrounds it was eliminated. In this sense, the critique of the spirit-seer Swedenborg is surely a big part of the work, but it has to be interpreted as a simple example that adds no philosophical content to its crux, meaning to the first part. In it, Kant inserts many useful speculations that clarified his way to think and conceptualise spirit beings like the human soul. In particular, the logical possibility to think about immaterial concepts that need to be defined starting from ordinary language are some considerations that will remain unaltered in the transcendental idea of the soul. Although Kant's conception of the soul as a spirit being shifted from a more concrete and objectified view

in *Dreams* to an idealistic one in the Critique, it is still possible to say that the structure and the basis of many critical arguments were firstly treated here.

Furthermore, the *ID* has to be interpreted as an anticipation of transcendental ideas as well. Besides the interesting continuity between the *ID* and the *transcendental analytics,* it must be remembered that the concept of noumenal perfection can provide useful insights about how Kant intended transcendental ideas before the *Critique*. In this sense, chapter 2 of the second section is only the first step towards further research about such a complicated concept. The noumenal perfection was a sort of unified version of the three transcendental illusions clearly distinguished in the *Critique*, and Kant's way to introduce it by using the Latin expression *exemplar* is pointing towards this direction. Moreover, in the second section Kant provided a clear scheme which categorised the real use of the faculty of the understanding as elenctic and dogmatic. Given the different roles of the two functions, this distinction can be considered as a first step towards the critical separation between reason and intellect. The elenctic, together with the logical use of the understanding, provides a clarification concerning what is part of the phenomenal world and what is part of the noumenal world, and, in this sense, it is assimilable to the critical intellect. On the contrary, the dogmatic use provides new concepts by detaching its speculations from empirical data and by using only a pre-critical version of the categories. This was a clear anticipation of the faculty of the principles of the *Critique*.

In conclusion, it would be disingenuous to claim that Kant's entire philosophical production is completely continuous, and chapter 3 section 2 showed one of the reasons why. Although further research concerning other possible points of disconnection would be extremely useful, here it is enough to say that the aforementioned discontinuities cannot hamper the continuist approach. It would be wrong to claim that Kant's philosophy can be separated into two independent theoretical periods (1755-1780 and 1781-1804), especially because such a position would not account for the continuity in the research of a proper way to do metaphysics, something that represented Kant's main interest throughout most of his career.

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