

Research Article

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Kant's Metaphilosophy

<https://doi.org/10.1515/oppil-2020-0190>

received August 27, 2021; accepted October 21, 2021

Abstract: While the term “metaphilosophy” enjoys increasing popularity in Kant scholarship, it is neither clear what distinguishes a metaphilosophical theory from a philosophical one nor to what extent Kant's philosophy contains metaphilosophical views. In the first part of the article, I will introduce a demarcation criterion and show how scholars fall prey to the fallacy of extension confusing Kant's philosophical theories with his theories about philosophy. In the second part, I will analyze eight elements for an “imperfect definition” (*KrV* A731/B759) of philosophy outlining the scope of Kant's explicit metaphilosophy against the backdrop of recent metaphilosophical research: (i) scientific concept of philosophy, (ii) philosophy as an activity, (iii) worldly concept, (iv) philosophy as a (proper and improper) science, (v) philosophy as an architectonic idea (archetype and ectypes), (vi) philosophy as a social practice and the appropriate holding-to-be-true (one or many true philosophies?), (vii) reason as the absolute condition and subject of philosophy, and (viii) methodology of philosophy. I will put these elements together for an attempt to give an imperfect definition of philosophy – something that Kant promised but never did – in the conclusion.

Keywords: philosophy of philosophy, metaphilosophical discourse, definition of philosophy, idea of philosophy, ends of philosophy, philosophy as a science, methodology of philosophy, transcendental philosophy, empirical philosophy, architectonics

1 Introduction

Metaphilosophy or *philosophy of philosophy* emerged as a discipline in 1960s.¹ It stems from the view that just as nature and natural sciences, epistemology, morals, freedom, law, and metaphysics, “philosophy is one of its own normal topics.”² Metaphilosophy has been defined as “the inquiry into the nature of philosophical questions and the methods (to be) adopted in answering them”³ or a discipline that

investigates essence, kinds, possibilities, inner differentiations of philosophy itself and, if necessary, traces them back to certain motives, purposes, forms of thought, methodologies, models, etc.⁴

Regardless of how important or unimportant one esteems metaphilosophy and its basic question “What is philosophy?” – for example, Popper claims that theorizing about philosophy is almost of no value

¹ Two remarkable studies, Lazerowitz, *Studies in Metaphilosophy*; and Lefebvre's, *Métaphilosophie*, followed by the establishment of the journal “Metaphilosophy” in 1970 that publishes five volumes per year, mark the beginning of this discipline.

² Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xxxii.

³ Overgaard et al., *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, 4.

⁴ Geldsetzer, “Philosophie der Philosophie,” 904. Translated by M. L. Geldsetzer defines metaphilosophy, like the above-mentioned authors, focusing on its subject area (philosophy is becoming a subject of inquiry of philosophy).

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compared to more urgent questions⁵ – it has been a considerable insight of this discipline that “after all, no philosopher is a metaphysical *tabula rasa*.⁶ Every person doing philosophy has at least a preliminary and implicit picture of the essence, aims, and scope of philosophy that has impact on what she demands from philosophy, how she acts as a philosopher, and construes her philosophical theories. This picture of philosophy can be developed or questioned – and this process may be accelerated if one starts dealing with metaphysical issues explicitly. As a result, timely metaphysical inquiries may help to illuminate and advance one’s philosophical practice.⁷ This theoretical insight is linked to another important and problematic thought. The implicit and explicit metaphysical views that have impact on how one is doing philosophy are, in their turn, conditioned by at least two major factors: (a) the specific content a philosopher consumes, reproduces, and creates (books and articles she reads, seminars and conferences she visits, theories she deals with and puts forward etc.) and (b) the social surroundings (preferred philosophical directions at the university where she studies and works, the role of philosophy in her country, funding incentives and opportunities etc.).⁸ Hence, philosophical practice (I will refer to it in the following as PP) and metaphysics (MP) are in a constant interrelationship and do not grow and develop independently from one another. I will call this PP–MP-interrelatedness *metaphysical reciprocity*.

If the metaphysical reciprocity is a general and necessary feature of all philosophical practice, it would be naïve to claim that there has been no metaphysics until 1960s, just as it would be naïve that there has been no epistemology before the emergence of this term in modern philosophy. All implicit views and explicit statements about philosophy in the history of philosophy are metaphysical, regardless of whether they are uttered in passing, while authors have been concerned with other topics.

It would also be highly problematic, under this assumption, to claim that metaphysical theories start to appear with Kant. Authors who advocate this view – such as Geldsetzer and Theunissen – overestimate certain passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, such as the *Preface*, *Transcendental Dialectic*, and *The History of Pure Reason*, purporting that they are the right spot to look for Kant’s metaphysical views. Following the idea of metaphysical reciprocity, it is necessary both to distinguish between Kant’s PP and MP and to examine their interrelation. To work out Kant’s contribution to MP, his specific answer to the question “what is philosophy?,” one must first refer to passages with explicit statements about philosophy and then analyze their presuppositions in his PP. Kant’s transcendental philosophy and his analysis of reason and its history (PP) are not to be equated with his general idea of philosophy (MP), although his MP, just as any other MP, is dependent upon his PP. In the following, I will first elaborate on this difference by exposing what does not fall under the scope of Kant’s explicit metaphysics and showing how scholars fall prey to the fallacy of extension confusing Kant’s philosophical theories with his theories about philosophy. Then I will present eight of Kant’s explicit metaphysical views in his critical phase, which allow for what he calls an “imperfect definition”⁹ of philosophy that I will give in conclusion. Thus, my aim is to broadly outline

5 See Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 66, and a critical reply by Overgaard et al., *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 5–8: “Popper takes a particular metaphysics for granted.”

6 Plant, “Philosophical Diversity,” 586 (Plant refers to Nozick, see *ibid.*). Similar conclusions have been drawn by Raatzsch, “Philosophiephilosophie,” 55; and Theunissen, *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 112.

7 By philosophical practice I mean “doing philosophy”: reading, thinking, discussing, putting forward theories, defending a position, and acting as a philosopher in the widest sense. The upshot of the philosophical practice is a philosophical product (it may be the process of thinking and discussing (that involves theories), a theory or a research program). In this article, I will rather focus on Kant’s philosophical practice in terms of theories within the research program of transcendental philosophy. The reason why I don’t simply speak of the latter (of the “upshot”) and use the wider term “philosophical practice” is because I aim at drawing a strict line between all that (potentially) belongs to a philosophical practice, including what has impact on a scholar’s understanding of philosophy, and her explicit metaphysical statements. Both are interdependent, but not completely homogenous. Any future research on Kant’s metaphysics should draw this line for the reasons that I give in this article, including the one that will rather be focused on historical and social dimensions of Kant’s philosophical practice.

8 For a recent discussion of these factors see Plant, “On the Domain of Metaphysics.”

9 KrV A731/B759. The *Critique of Pure Reason* [KrV] is quoted according to the usual A/B pagination. References to all other Kant’s works follow the pagination of the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, excluding the abbreviation “AA,” i.e., I give volume and page numbers only. The cited English translations are from the Kant, *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by

Kant's explicit philosophy of philosophy and to point in a direction for any further research on Kant's metaphilosophy.

2 Metaphilosopical difference

The idea to give priority to explicit views on philosophy (MP), and then – following the idea of metaphilosopical reciprocity – to analyze their presuppositions in PP is rationally just¹⁰ if the author has made her understanding of philosophy explicit. It would then be wrong (a) to ignore these passages, (b) to equate her PP and MP, or (c) to extract her MP from PP prior to examining her explicit views. The reason why these mistakes can occur is a confusion of PP with MP, i.e., a disregard of *the metaphilosopical difference* between philosophical theories of an author and her view of philosophy. Not each theory can qualify for being metaphilosopical, just as not every theory is ethical, epistemological, or metaphysical. The most basic criterion for a demarcation of metaphilosopical theories from non-metaphilosopical must be a clear and direct connection to the question: "what is philosophy?" If there is no such direct connection made by the author, and she puts forward or analyzes positions like consequentialism, relativism, or physico-theology without relating them to a general inquiry into the nature of philosophy, then there is no metaphilosopical theory on her part. Otherwise, every first-order philosophical or sociological, psychological, or mathematical theory would be at the same time a second-order metatheory of philosophy, sociology, psychology, or mathematics, just because it is telling us something about the research practice within a discipline. Hence, the identification and confusion of PP with MP is fallacious in that it extends a domain beyond its limits. In relation to Kant and his interpreters, this could result in propositions of the type "Kant's transcendental philosophy is his metaphilosopical theory," "Kant's theory of antinomies of reason is a metaphilosopical theory," and "the whole of Kant's philosophy is his metaphilosopical theory," which would compromise the very idea of metaphilosopical: if every philosophical theory or a set of theories is at the same time metaphilosopical, the concept of metaphilosopical is redundant.¹¹ Let us look at such propositions in detail analyzing several examples, some of which claim to express Kant's metaphilosopical.

Proposition 1. "Kant's transcendental philosophy is his metaphilosopical."¹² In his famous letter to Marcus Herz (February 21, 1772), Kant wrote that he found the key to the whole mystery of metaphysics,

Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. I use the following abbreviations for Kant's works: *Briefe* for *Kants Briefe*; *Denken* for *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?*; *FM/Lose Blätter* for *FM: Lose Blätter* (*Jottings for the Progress of Metaphysics*); *GMS* for *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*; *KU* for *Kritik der Urteilskraft*; *Log.-Pölitz* for *Logik Pölitz*; *Logik* for *Jäsche-Logik*; *MAN* for *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*; *MS* for *Metaphysik der Sitten*; *Op. Post.* for *Opus Postumum*; *Pädagogik* for *Pädagogik*; *Prol* for *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*; *VNAEF* for *Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Tractats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*; and *VT* for *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmnen Ton in der Philosophie*.

10 By the technical term "rational justice" I mean – referring to Welsch, *Vernunft*, 698–715; and especially to Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 296–9 – a research-related ideal of (1) dealing with positions by analyzing their explicit views, knowledge goals, demands, and research-programmatic determinations before attributing to them something that they do not contain and (2) acceptance of the plurality of perspectives and their backgrounds.

11 Unfortunately, since the term "metaphilosopical" is becoming more and more popular, it becomes often used as a mere label. If an author uses this term in a dark and implicit way, i.e., without explaining what she means by MP, it is also likely that she will not consider the metaphilosopical difference and fall prey to the fallacy of extension. As Kant would say, it is "not an improvement but a deformation [...] when [...] boundaries are allowed to run over into one another" *KrV* BVIII.

12 Some researchers seem to utter such a proposition (implicitly or explicitly). Despite his thoroughgoing overview, Gerhard, "Philosophie," 1765, claims that in Kant, philosophy equals metaphysics (in the light of transcendental philosophy). In his analysis, he does not distinguish explicitly between Kant's philosophy and Kant's concept of philosophy (which is broader), and hence disregards the metaphilosopical difference. In the same Lexicon, Baum, "Metaphysik," 1533–4, states clearly that for Kant, metaphysics and philosophy are not the same. Theunissen, *Hegels Phänomenologie*, 136–40, considers Kant's critical metaphysics as a metaphilosopical theory, and he does not even point at Kant's explicit and extensive theoretical analysis of the concept of philosophy. He and Geldsetzer, "Philosophie der Philosophie," 904, consider Kant's statement in a letter to Herz

which lies in the question: “[w]hat is the ground of that in us which we call ‘representation’ to the object?”¹³ The inquiry into the subject-related *a priori* conditions of cognition is a new approach to what has been called *ontology* and *sciencia transcendentalis*.¹⁴ As Ficara points out: for Kant, ontology should be replaced by transcendental philosophy, but transcendental philosophy is, at the same time, ontology.¹⁵ Kant's transformed version of ontology was revised several times throughout his works. At first, it should be nothing more than transcendental critique – the *Critique of Pure Reason* only. But as Kant recognized that the practical reason and the power of judgment also contain *a priori* elements, the project of transcendental philosophy was extended (and even found a new definition in the *Opus Postumum*).¹⁶

Although transcendental philosophy is Kant's core research program and has a clear impact on his projects of metaphysics of nature and morals, his political philosophy and philosophy of religion, as well as his lectures on anthropology and pedagogy, it is only one area of research. It does not represent his idea of philosophy as such – although it has, as PP, impact on this idea. Moreover, consider Kant's architectonic order of the whole of science in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:¹⁷ the science as the whole of human cognition is subdivided into several disciplines, such as jurisprudence and philosophy. Philosophy, as such, is subdivided into pure and empirical philosophy.¹⁸ Pure philosophy contains propaedeutics (critique, which itself is a part of metaphysics) and metaphysics. Metaphysics is subdivided into metaphysics of morals and metaphysics of nature. The latter contains transcendental philosophy and a physiology of pure reason (physica rationalis, psychologia rationalis, rational cosmology, and rational theology). The claim that transcendental philosophy, which “considers only the **understanding** and reason itself in a system of all concepts and principles that are related to objects in general, without assuming objects that **would be given** (*Ontologia*),¹⁹ and its further developed form in Kant's works is identical to his general understanding of philosophy clearly disregards the metaphilosopical difference.

Proposition 2. “Kant's theory of antinomies of reason is a metaphilosopical theory.”²⁰ While questions such as “why do philosophers disagree?” and “is there progress in philosophy despite disagreement?” are metaphilosopical, the thesis-antithesis-dialectic in the chapter on *Antinomies* in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is a critical theory of metaphysics. The critical reason that appears as a neutral judge that watches different dogmatic parties fighting over an issue that cannot be solved draws conclusions concerning the possibility of synthetic cognitions *a priori*. The purpose is to point at the absurdity of such fights and resolve them by both the theory of regulative ideas and practical philosophy. Although one could use the examples in the chapter on the *Antinomies* to reflect on disagreement in metaphysics and link it to the problem of disagreement in philosophy *in general*, this is neither what Kant did nor what he intended to do.

Proposition 3. “Kant's theory of history of pure reason is a metaphilosopical theory.”²¹ One of the strands in the development of metaphilosopical as a discipline is discussions about the possibility of a neutral or standpointless philosophy, in general, or in relation to the history of philosophy (Gueroult's *dianoématique* or Lyotard's *récits*).²² In his description of the history of pure reason as the last chapter of the

that the first *Critique* is a metaphysics of metaphysics, as metaphilosopical, hence falling prey to the fallacy of extension. The same applies to Kelsey, *The Mother of Chaos and Night*. The recent Cambridge Kant Lexicon does not even have an entry for philosophy, see Wuerth, *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*. Although Kant, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for certain reasons argues that his concept of metaphysics is close to the archetypical idea of philosophy (I will come back to this point in Section 3.4), this statement does not amount to the entirety of his metaphilosopical thoughts.

¹³ See Briefe 10:132. See Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years*, 12.

¹⁴ For a recent inquiry into this subject see de Boer, *Kant's Reform of Metaphysics*, 73–100.

¹⁵ Ficara, *Die Ontologie*, 11.

¹⁶ For an overview over the development of the concept of transcendental philosophy in Kant see Hinske, *Kants Weg*, and for a programmatic understanding of it, Lewin, “Transcendental Philosophy.”

¹⁷ See Lewin, “The Universe of Science.”

¹⁸ KrV A840/B868.

¹⁹ KrV A845/B873.

²⁰ See Kelsey, *The Mother of Chaos and Night*; and Theunissen, *Hegels Phänomenologie*, 136–40.

²¹ See Geldsetzer, “Philosophie der Philosophie,” 904; and Theunissen, *Hegels Phänomenologie*, 136–40.

²² See Gueroult, *Dianoématique*; and Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

Critique of Pure Reason, Kant's fragmentary mapping of positions and counterpositions in relation to the object, origin, and method is an attempt to give an overview over the development of metaphysics. This was intended to give additional weight to the critical standpoint via a historical reconstruction and does not engage with any debate that can be regarded as metaphilosopical. This also applies to Kant's short description of the history of philosophy in the *Jaesche Logic*.²³ The right spot to look for his explicit metaphilosopical deliberations on how to write a history of philosophy or whether and how a philosophical history of philosophy is possible would be, e.g., the section *Of a Philosophizing History of Philosophy* in his *Jottings for the Progress of Metaphysics*.²⁴ But this is not what Geldsetzer or Theunissen have considered: what they see are *applied* metaphilosopical views on how to systematize philosophical positions and not Kant's explicit metaphilosopical deliberations.

Proposition 4. “*The whole of Kant's philosophy conveys a picture of his theory of philosophy.*” All the aforementioned propositions, including possible similar ones, such as “Kant's concept of empirical realism is metaphilosopical,” are attempts to arbitrarily attribute a metaphilosopical character to Kant's epistemological and metaphysical theories. If this practice of disregard for the difference between PP and MP would become common, MP would be a *flatus vocis* or an attention attracting label rather than a serious discipline. Another possible way to raise Kant's philosophical statements to the status of metaphilosopical is to claim that the whole of his philosophical endeavors conveys an idea of what picture he has of philosophy. Indeed, following the theory of metaphilosopical reciprocity, every philosopher must have some picture of philosophy, at least in the sense that one recognizes one's work as philosophical, and philosophical in a way that one is content with. One could try to deduce and reconstruct a person's view of philosophy from the theories and methods she applies, her goals and agendas, her writing style, the number of texts she creates and publishes etc., but this approach is entirely interpretative, and will risk arbitrary attributions. For example, if one does not take Kant's architectonics into account, one could deduce from his research program of transcendental philosophy that philosophy primarily deals with the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognitions: but for Kant, philosophy in its most general meaning is subdivided into pure and empirical philosophy. His idea of philosophy includes empirical philosophy (and even empirical psychology) that deals with empirical concepts, although the latter are just not in the focus of Kant's own research. Hence, the interpretative approach could be used in addition to the analysis of author's explicit theory of philosophy, but the explicit passages should come first.

3 Kant's metaphilosopical

The result of the previous section is that Kant's philosophy contains his metaphilosopical, but Kant's philosophy is not his metaphilosopical. What then is Kant's contribution to metaphilosopical? Does he anywhere give a picture of philosophy or arguments for a specific metaphilosopical view? When these passages can be found, they should take priority, before examining in which way they might be confined by or dependent on historical factors, or may illegitimately raise epistemological and metaphysical issues to metaphilosopical. In metaphilosopical research since and even prior to the 1960s, one can distinguish between three discourse formations: (I) one that deals with specific metaphilosopical questions, such as “what is philosophy?,” “how can thought experiments help advance philosophy?,” or “is progress in philosophy possible?”; (II) one that aims at a systematic inquiry into philosophy: “is there any general methodology or logic underlying all philosophical research?”; and (III) one that can be considered meta-metaphilosopical: “is metaphilosopical possible, and if so, how?”²⁵ Although Kant did not contribute to

²³ *Logik* 9, 27–33.

²⁴ See *FM/Lose Blätter* 20, 340–3.

²⁵ The talks at a recent conference on “New Directions in Metaphilosopical” at the University of Kent, which will be published in a special issue in the journal “Metaphilosopical,” confirms this division.

the latter, he dealt with questions from discourse formations (I) – see Sections 3.1–3.4 – and (II) – see Section 3.5.

3.1 A definition of philosophy?

A clear, precise, and universal definition of philosophy is one of the most difficult tasks and metaphilosohical problems. There are many different concepts of philosophy – and Kant is fully aware of the many deviations from its etymological and ancient Greek traditions:

Once it had lost its first meaning, as a scientific *wisdom of life*, the name of philosophy very soon came into demand as a decorative title for the understanding possessed by uncommon thinkers, for whom it now represented a sort of unveiling of a mystery. To the *ascetics* in the Makarian desert, their *monkishness* was said to be philosophy. The *alchemist* called himself *philosophus per ignem*. The *lodges* of old and later times are adepts of a mystery handed down to them, of which they jealously *refuse* to tell us anything (*philosophus per initiationem*). And finally, the most recent possessors of it are those who have it *within them*, but are unfortunately incapable of uttering and disseminating it generally, by means of language (*philosophus per inspirationem*).²⁶

Kant is not interested in integrating these and other different views of philosophy into one all-encompassing concept. His position is rather one of a *conceptual originalist* or *conventionalist*: he seeks to find, preserve, and refine a specific original view of philosophy that necessarily involves a concept of wisdom as discursive, sharable, and debatable knowledge. This is a common procedure for Kant. He often borrows concepts from their original, especially Ancient Greek, sources and refines them without using the deviating meaning they have received in more recent discourses.²⁷ For example, in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, he asks his readers,

those who take philosophy to heart [...] to take care to preserve the expression **idea** in its original meaning, so that it will not henceforth fall among the other expressions by which all sorts of representations are denoted in careless disorder, to the detriment of science.²⁸

The meaning of etymologically shaped and determined concepts like “philosophy” (containing “the love of” and “wisdom”) or “idea” (the substantialized verb *εἰδον*, the aorist of *όράω* (I see), the seen that lies beyond the experience as something pure, perfect, and complete) should not be arbitrarily changed and extended. Kant considers such practice as wrong and not suitable for scientific endeavors that need clear and precise concepts. Hence, for him, the original concepts and their explication and exposition must also contain demarcation criteria: not every spiritual or theoretical enterprise deserves the name of philosophy, and not every representation deserves to be called an “idea.”

Concerning the question of whether Kant anywhere provides a clear definition of philosophy, one should note that to define means for him “to exhibit originally the exhaustive concept of a thing within its boundaries.”²⁹ This procedure in its complete sense is possible in mathematics only, because its objects are also given in pure intuition and hence can be exhaustively defined. Non-mathematical concepts can

²⁶ VT 7:389. Kant is not yet aware of what will come next, like a book on “The Art of Preserving the Hair, on *Philosophical Principles*” (a title that Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 36, fn. 10, was wondering about) or “our client philosophy.” For Kant's metaphilosohical reflections in the essay *On the Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy* see Schulting, “The ‘Proper’ Tone of Critical Philosophy.”

²⁷ Kant's concept of philosophy is rooted in Ancient Greek philosophy. He is therefore – like all who refer to “philosophy,” as Heidegger (in “Was ist das – die Philosophie?”) will later say – on the way of the Greeks.

²⁸ KrV A319/B376. By the “careless disorder” Kant means the modern representationalism of Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza, who use “idea” as a common term for all representations. On the other hand, Kant suggests the concept *representatio*, of which idea is a specific case.

²⁹ KrV A727/B755.

only be either “explicated” (sensual concepts such as water or tree), “expounded” (*a priori* given concepts such as substance and law), or “declared” (arbitrarily made concepts such as of a model of a new watch).³⁰ One can only be probably, not apodictically, certain that one has defined and analyzed the *a priori* given concepts of law or philosophy³¹ exhaustively, as they are not given *in concreto* (neither by the senses nor in pure intuition). Therefore, unlike mathematicians, legal scholars and philosophers explicate and expound concepts and collect “elements for definition” that can be put together to “imperfect definitions, i.e., propositions that are not really definitions but are true and thus approximations to them.”³²

In the *Architectonic* chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Jaesche Logic*, and other relevant works, Kant therefore gives *elements* for an “imperfect,” i.e., non-exhaustive, not-really-definition of philosophy.³³ In the following, I will present eight such elements.

(i) Philosophy is “the system of philosophical cognitions or of cognitions of reason from concepts.”³⁴ Kant calls this the “scientific,” or “scholastic” concept (*Schulbegriff*) of philosophy.³⁵ By cognition of reason from concepts – which is a general feature that is also valid for other elements of definition of philosophy – Kant means the creation of concepts via the acts of comparison, reflection, and abstraction,³⁶ and the analysis and synthesis of the manifold that is contained under or linked to these concepts via such acts as judgments and inferences. All these acts are governed by reason, here in the wide sense as “the entire higher faculty of cognition”³⁷ that includes imagination, understanding, judgment, and reason in the narrow sense (the faculty of ideas) – the rational in contrast to the empirical. Philosophy is therefore a rational, self-dependent, not merely historical (imitative) engagement with concepts: philosophy is conceptual analysis and synthesis. In contrast to mathematics, which relies on intuitive cognition of reason, i.e., constructs concepts guided by non-empirical intuition, philosophy is cognition from concepts, i.e., completely discursive.³⁸ Objects can be given in empirical intuition and correspond to philosophical concepts, but they cannot be given via an intellectual, pure intuition. Here lies one of the major demarcation criteria of philosophy from non-philosophy for Kant. If somebody purports to cognize something without the hard rational work with concepts, from mystic revelations or intuitions, she is not doing philosophy: her acts lead to “death of all philosophy.”³⁹ Philosophy, in the scholastic sense, is striving to obtain scientific form via systematic unity of philosophical knowledge guided by the idea of logical perfection. By logical perfection one should understand completeness and coherence of cognitions following the three logical

³⁰ See *KrV* A727-731/B755-759.

³¹ I explain why philosophy is a pure concept *a priori* in Section 3.3.

³² *KrV* A731/B759.

³³ I therefore disagree with Ypi, “The Problem of Systematic Unity,” who claims that the *Architectonic* chapter contains “two definitions of philosophy” (778). Klingner, asking himself if the concept of culture belongs to philosophy, counts four basic elements of the conceptual exposition of philosophy: (a) apriority, (b) discursivity, (c) relation to objects (see *KU BXI*), and (d) systematicity (see *Technische Vernunft*, 27–34). I will not touch (c) (for (a) see Section 3.2) and do not claim that my list of elements is exhaustive, which, following Kant, would be a very bold claim. Klingner focuses on the scholastic concept of philosophy and does not consider the system of ends (the worldly concept) in regard to philosophy and several other basic elements for an imperfect definition of philosophy.

³⁴ *Logik* 9, 23. This exposition does not exclude what Kant calls “empirical philosophy,” i.e., “applied philosophy” (see *KrV* A840/B868 and A848-849/B876-877). He adds, however, that philosophy is rational cognition from principles, of which there could be principles of reason and empirical principles. This is the ground for the difference between pure – “[p]ure rational cognition from mere *concepts* is called pure philosophy or metaphysics” (*MAN* 4:469) – and empirical philosophy (qua empirical physics and practical anthropology, see Baum, “Metaphysik,” 1533–4) (see Section 3.2).

³⁵ Cf. *Logik* 9, 23 and *KrV* A838/B866.

³⁶ See *Logik* 9, 94–5.

³⁷ *KrV* A835/B863.

³⁸ See *KrV* A713/B741 and *Logik* 9:23. One other, less important difference between philosophy and mathematics is that the former deals rather with *quality*, while the latter focuses on *quantity*.

³⁹ *VT* 8:398. Kant especially refers to a “mystico-Platonic idiom,” uttered by Johann Georg Schlosser: “All human philosophy can show only the dawn: the sun must be divined” (*ibid.* 399). Plato and Pythagoras – in contrast to Aristotle, who did hard philosophical work with concepts – were the first to bring “Schwärmerei” (or “schwärmerische[n] Idealismus” *Prol* 4:375, remark) and a slow death to philosophy.

principles of theoretical reason: *homogeneity*, *specification*, and *continuity*.⁴⁰ As Kant argues in the *Jaesche Logic*, logical perfection includes such factors as extension (manifoldness) and richness (logical fruitfulness) of cognition, and clear and systematic definition, explication, exposition, and description of concepts and conceptual structures.⁴¹ Kant does not specify whether he means by the system of philosophical cognitions one unified system of the whole of philosophical knowledge, or several local systems (of analysis of a philosophical concept or a chain of concepts) that could be unified or conflict with each other. One could, however, infer from his remark that following the scholastic concept, philosophy is “one of the skills for certain arbitrary ends,”⁴² of which there could be many. Correspondingly, the result could be a plurality of cooperating and/or conflicting systems. But ideally philosophy is one unified system of philosophical cognitions (see Section 3.4).

(ii) Is philosophy necessarily systematic? The scholastic concept expounds philosophy as striving toward systematic unity of philosophical cognition as its result. But philosophy is also an *activity*. The act of philosophizing (i.e., of rational cognition from concepts) – as Kant differentiates in the *Opus Postumum* – is either some arbitrary and rhapsodic reasoning or a progress toward a system.⁴³ Philosophy requires: “[f]irst, a sufficient supply of cognitions of reason, and the second thing, a systematic connection of these cognitions, or a combination of them in the idea of a whole.”⁴⁴ Non-systematic reasoning is a part of philosophy. Of course, there may be philosophers who do not (wish to) go further. But, in Kant’s view, the necessary ends of reason, including the logical perfection of cognition (see (iii)), demand a systematic approach. Philosophy is also an act of learning and training that builds on existing philosophical works.⁴⁵

(iii) One further element of an imperfect definition of philosophy is its *worldly concept* (*Weltbegriff*, *conceptus cosmicus*). The concept “worldly” (sometimes rendered with “cosmopolitan”⁴⁶) means something that concerns and interests every person as a part of one and the same world. In this context, the term “world” is neither used cosmologically as in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, nor in the sense of the (impossible) sensible intuition of the whole of the objects in the world as it is in *Weltanschauung* in the third *Critique*, nor as a political, cosmopolitan concept. Kant rather has an anthropological understanding of world as of a place where humans plan and administer their lives (both as individuals and as a community) in mind.⁴⁷ He therefore considers the worldly element of philosophy as something rather common and popular, not necessarily striving for systematicity and logical perfection – it is opposed to the scientific, scholastic philosophical practice. Nevertheless, philosophy is poorly understood without the worldly element: it gives the scholastic endeavors directions toward the highest practical ends of reason and questions that interest everyone. The worldly concept is the one that gives philosophy its proper meaning as love, doctrine, and practice of wisdom, in short: “*Pursuit of Wisdom*.”⁴⁸ Of course, Kant is fully aware that the

⁴⁰ *KrV* A658/B686.

⁴¹ *Logik* 9:40–81 and 139–50.

⁴² *KrV* A839/B867.

⁴³ See *Op. Post.* 21:119.

⁴⁴ *Logik* 9:24.

⁴⁵ See *KrV* A837/B865; *Logik* 9:25.

⁴⁶ See the translation of *KrV* by Guyer and Wood. Hinske claims that Kant used “cosmicus” to disambiguate the concept “Welt” in the first *Critique*. The term “cosmicus” is a hapax legomenon, something that Kant did not actually use. But the same applies to *in sensu cosmopolitico*. Pölitz seems to have changed *cosmicus* to *cosmopoliticus* in his logic manuscript, which, for Hinske, is a better alternative. The “*Weltbegriff*” of philosophy is rather – following Alois Riehl – something like “*Kulturbegriff*,” cultural concept of philosophy (I would prefer to say “anthropological concept”). See Hinske, “Kants Verankerung der Kritik im *Weltbegriff*,” 268 and 270. For “*Weltbegriff*” see also Stolzenberg, “Was Jedermann Notwendig Interessiert”; and Bermes, “*Welt* als *Thema der Philosophie*.”

⁴⁷ It is also important to note that Kant was invited to contribute to the popular-philosophical journal “*Der Philosoph für die Welt*,” published since the 1770s by J. J. Engel, which had impact on his differentiation between world and school. For the role of this division for his concept of anthropology since the mid-1770s, see Sturm, “Kant und die Wissenschaften,” chapter 5.

⁴⁸ VNAEF 8:417. Kant brings the terms love, doctrine (*doctrina sapientiae*), and practice together in the *Op. Post.* 21:119, but also in several passages spread throughout his works. Kant also used – like, e.g., Wolff, *Vernünftige Gedanken*, 1–10 – the German translation for philosophy: “*Weltweisheit*,” “worldly wisdom,” and called transcendental philosophy *Weltweisheit* and himself a teacher of *Weltweisheit*. See Fröhlich, “*Weltweisheit*,” 2629–30. In his *Op. Post.* 21, 130, he noted, however, that

love of wisdom – following Pythagoras, who called himself a philosopher in contrast to the Seven Sages of Greece – is not the same as wisdom (being a simple practical idea of reason, which can be only partially encountered *in concreto*)⁴⁹ and that there are different ways to expound this *a priori* given concept. Wisdom could mean – as in the fifth century B.C.E. – not only a deep feature of rationality, but also knowledge, conversance with something, prudence, and skill.⁵⁰ But the worldly concept of philosophy is neither based merely on skill nor just on acquaintance and experience with different things. When used in the history of philosophy for the first time by Herodotus, i.e., before Pythagoras, the compositum *φιλοσοφία* even referred to the love of knowledge of countries that one visited and of heavenly bodies.⁵¹ In contrast to this, for Kant, wisdom is an unachievable ideal, a feature of the most perfect reason both in its theoretical and practical domains.⁵² As such, it is inextricably linked to Kant's concept of the highest good (morality and proportionate happiness) as the “entire vocation of all human beings”⁵³:

wisdom is the concordance of the will to the *ultimate purpose* (the highest good); and since this, so far as it is attainable, is also a duty, and conversely, if it is a duty, must also be attainable, and since such a law of actions is called moral, it follows that wisdom for man will be nothing else but the inner principle of *willing* to obey moral laws.⁵⁴

Wisdom, therefore, is not an arbitrary end or knowledge goal. Its one and only object is the highest good: “*wisdom* considered theoretically signifies *cognition of the highest good*, and practically *the fitness of the will for the highest good*.”⁵⁵ To recent scholarship that considers whether Kant determines wisdom or the highest good to be the highest end of philosophy and science in general, one should admit that both sides are right.⁵⁶ It does not matter if one claims that the former is higher, because it is necessarily linked to the highest good, or that the latter is, because the highest good can neither be cognized nor wanted without a certain degree of wisdom (as theoretical and practical fitness). But insofar as wisdom is presented as only a means: the “sun” (*sol oriens*) that one orients oneself by – to use Kant's metaphor and idea from *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* – is rational faith in morality and corresponding happiness.⁵⁷ Philosophy as love and pursuit of wisdom is therefore actually pursuit of the highest good as the end of pure practical reason. For Kant, this *εὐαγγέλιον* of critical philosophy will lead to “*the imminent conclusion of a treaty of perpetual peace in philosophy*.”⁵⁸

The worldly concept, in difference to the scholastic (scientific, theoretical), is hence rather a practical concept of philosophy.⁵⁹ The philosopher, following this element of definition, is not a mere “philodox” or “artist of reason” (theoretical philosopher): she is a “moralist,” a “legislator of reason.”⁶⁰ As such, she – as philosopher in the highest sense – is using theoretical means and progress made by the artist of reason for ends and questions that concern everyone, foremost: (1) What can I know? (metaphysics, as not only

Weltweisheit is not a good term to denote philosophy – not as good as knowledge, science, and wisdom. As Fröhlich claims, the reason for this is that Kant wanted to stress the striving for wisdom, which is not contained in *Weltweisheit*. *Weltweisheit* as German translation of philosophy that sometimes was used to denote philosophy in contrast to theology (not however in Wolff), later disappeared from the philosophical discourse. For an overview over the concept of philosophy from Leibniz to Kant see Schneiders, “Der Philosophiebegriff.”

⁴⁹ See Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 54–6, 68 (footnote 70), 70 (footnote 71), and 98–9.

⁵⁰ See Kranz, “Philosophie,” 573–5.

⁵¹ Ueberweg, *Grundriss*, 2.

⁵² See *Op. Post.* 21:131.

⁵³ KrV A840/B868. This is Johann Joachim Spalding's motto for enlightenment. See Stolzenberg, “Was Jedermann Notwendig Interessiert.”

⁵⁴ VNAEF 8:418.

⁵⁵ KpV 5, 130.

⁵⁶ For wisdom see Sturm, “Kant on the Ends of the Sciences,” 14 (footnote) and 18 (footnote), and for the highest good Gava, “Kant's Definition of Science.”

⁵⁷ Denken 8, 139–42.

⁵⁸ VNAEF 8, 419.

⁵⁹ See *Op. Post.* 21:130: “*Philosophy* a technical speculative or moral pract. concept” (translated by M.L.).

⁶⁰ See KrV A839–840/B867–868 and Logik 9:24. I will not focus on the view and the role of the philosopher (which is an ideal that no one can fully represent) in Kant. For Kant's concept of the philosopher, see Kleinhans, *Der ‘Philosoph’*; Trawny, “Das Ideal des Weisen;” and Treloar, “Kant on Philosophy and Being a Philosopher.”

something that can become a science, but also as natural disposition of human reason⁶¹); (2) What ought I to do? (morals); (3) What may I hope? (religion); and, as Kant added in the *Jaesche Logic* in contrast to the first *Critique*: (4) What is man? (anthropology), the deepest question that (1)–(3) can be reduced to.⁶² “From this point of view philosophy is the science of the relation of all cognition to the essential ends of human reason (*teleologia rationis humanae*).”⁶³ Essential ends, however, are not the highest, of which there is only one: “all other ends are subordinated.”⁶⁴ An attempt to reconstruct the hierarchy in the system of interdependent ends of philosophy can, therefore, look as follows: (1) highest good (morality and corresponding happiness), (2) wisdom, (3) the four questions that concern everyone, (4) logical perfection of cognition, and (5) arbitrary scholastic ends.

Of course, Kant's view of philosophy (MP) is not independent from his PP. But following the theory of metaphilosophical reciprocity, this is a normal condition for every metaphilosophical theory. The dichotomy between the scholastic and the worldly concepts is deeply rooted within transcendental philosophy and construed in analogy to the division between theoretical and practical reason and the doctrine of the primacy of the latter. The unity of reason and the unity of philosophy are guaranteed by Kant's theory of reason's natural pre-disposed *teleology*: arbitrary knowledge goals must result in logical perfection and be organized to answer the four basic questions of philosophy and lead to wisdom that aims at the highest good. The whole of philosophy is therefore neither the scholastic nor only the moral concept of philosophy – it is the combination of both: “*Wissenslehre*” (doctrine of knowledge, theoretical philosophy) and “*Weisheitslehre*” (doctrine of wisdom, practical philosophy) belong together.⁶⁵

3.2 Is philosophy a science?

The concepts analyzed in Section 3.1 do not represent an exhaustive list of elements of an imperfect definition of philosophy. For Kant, philosophy is also (iv) a *science*. Kant does not only call philosophy repeatedly a science and subordinate it to the architectonic idea of science as the whole of human knowledge. He also claims:

Not only does philosophy allow [...] strictly systematic connection, it is even the only science that has systematic connection in the most proper sense, and it gives systematic unity to all other sciences.⁶⁶

Furthermore, it is a “doctrine which, of all sciences, constitutes man's greatest need.”⁶⁷ Hence, unlike in the positivistic understanding of science and even more unlike in the view of philosophers who for various reasons exclude philosophy from science, such as Merleau-Ponty, Jaspers, or Peter Hacker,⁶⁸ philosophy,

⁶¹ Cf. *KrV* B21–22. The question why reason has a natural disposition for metaphysics – as Kant stated in the *Prolegomena* – belongs to metaphysics merely as a *scholion*, i.e., as addition, not as a part of this science. This inquiry lies in the domain of anthropology (see *Prol* 4, 362–4).

⁶² See *Logik* 9, 25.

⁶³ *KrV* A839–840/B867–868.

⁶⁴ *Logik* 9:24. Cf. *KrV* A840/B868.

⁶⁵ For this way of putting it see VNAEF 8, 420–1. I agree with Ypi, “The Problem of Systematic Unity,” that Kant's teleological unification of theoretical and practical philosophy is *de facto* accomplished in the *Critique of Judgement*, but the solution is at least programmatically already present in the first *Critique*.

⁶⁶ *Logik* 9:24.

⁶⁷ VNAEF 8:417 (capital letters removed).

⁶⁸ See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible*, 27: “Philosophy is not science, because science believes it can soar over its object and holds the correlation of knowledge with being as established, whereas philosophy is the set of questions wherein he who questions is himself implicated by the question.” For Jaspers, *The Idea of the University*, 25, philosophy and science “do not coincide. Nor is philosophy just one science among others. It is, in fact, essentially different in origin, method and meaning.” He (like Popper) holds against Kant that *a priori* apodictic certainty in science is impossible, hence, whether the claim that Kant's philosophy is universally valid nor the claim that philosophy can be a science is defensible (see Walker, “Karl Jaspers and Karl Popper,” 173–4). For Hacker, “Some Remarks of Philosophy,” 43–5, philosophy is neither an empirical nor *a priori* science like

as Kant understands it, is the prototype, the ideal paradigm of science. Philosophy – in its highly developed form – contains, represents, and articulates criteria of scientificity and for demarcating science from non-science. The questions “what demarcates science from non-science?” and “is philosophy a science?” belong to philosophy. It is therefore incorrect to look for these criteria outside of philosophy, e.g., in mathematics or physics as examples of secure sciences, and then coming back to philosophy and checking whether it meets criteria obtained elsewhere. It is also unreasonable to look for passages on elements of the definition of science and then, on this basis, to check whether Kant understands philosophy as a scientific enterprise. This is because natural science, as well as logic, metaphysics (which Kant seeks to bring on the right way to science), and philosophy in general share the same root: reason as the entire higher faculty of cognition.

- (1) Reason is responsible for systematicity, which is, as stated in the quote above, foremost a feature and demand of philosophy, much more than it is in mathematics and physics. Striving to realize the system of ends, including logical perfection and the highest good, philosophy seeks the “whole of cognition ordered according to principles,”⁶⁹ and bridges the gaps between other established and/or developing sciences, giving them architectonic unity:

Philosophy is the only science that knows how to provide for us [...] inner satisfaction, for it closes, as it were, the scientific circle, and only through it do the sciences attain order and connection.⁷⁰

- (2) A system (from the Ancient Greek *συνιστάναι*, to place together, to organize, to form in order) should not be a mere aggregation, a mere “rational supply,” even if it is ordered via a mathematical method. To become a science, cognitions should be systematized according to *principles*. But there are two kinds of principles: empirical principles (of experience) that constitute what Kant calls an “improper science” and pure rational principles that ground the “proper science.” Only via the latter – e.g., found in logic, mathematics, and the pure part of natural sciences – will a science become fully certain and apodictic, i.e., not merely a historical or empirical “interconnection of grounds and consequences.”⁷¹

To clarify, whether philosophy is a proper science, a science of reason, or merely an improper science, one should first note that Kant’s aim is to bring the pure part of philosophy on the “secure course of a science.”⁷² De Boer shows in a recent study that Kant’s transcendental philosophy in the first *Critique* meets the requirements for a proper science.⁷³ Second, one should understand that philosophy is subdivided into pure and empirical philosophy: “[a]ll philosophy, however, is either cognition from pure reason or rational cognition from empirical principles. The former is called pure philosophy, the latter empirical.”⁷⁴ Philosophy must, therefore, like the natural sciences, have a pure, proper part (as a *science of pure reason* (*Vernunftwissenschaft*)), and an improper part based on cognition from empirical principles (as a *rational science*).⁷⁵ In Kant’s view, the former should contain *a priori* principles for the latter. The empirical philosophy becomes therefore an “applied philosophy.”⁷⁶

mathematics and logic, although its problems are *a priori*. There is “no body of well-established philosophical truths” and no established subject matter. It contributes to understanding qua concept-clarifications, not to knowledge.

⁶⁹ *MAN* 4:467. Cf. *KrV* A647/B675 and A842-843/B870-871.

⁷⁰ *Logik* 9:26. Philosophy even accommodates empirical psychology as “a long-accepted foreigner, to whom one grants refuge for a while until it can establish its own domicile in a complete anthropology (the pendant to the empirical doctrine of nature)” (*KrV* A849/B877).

⁷¹ *MAN* 4:468. For analyses of Kant’s concept of science in the *Metaphysical Foundations* see Van den Berg, “Kant’s Conception of Proper Science,” Sturm, “Kant’s Conception;” Pollok, *Kants Metaphysische Anfangsgründe*; and Plaass, *Kants Theorie der Naturwissenschaft*.

⁷² *KrV* BVII.

⁷³ See de Boer, “Does the Investigation.”

⁷⁴ *KrV* A840/B868.

⁷⁵ The same applies to the *Metaphysics of Morals* (see *MS* 6:205–6). In the first *Critique*, Kant states that sciences of pure reason (*Vernunftwissenschaften*) are transcendental philosophy, pure mathematics, and pure morals – see *KrV* A480/B508. Therefore, empirical philosophy is not a science of reason, but a rational science.

⁷⁶ See *KrV* A848-849/B876-877. In the following passage, Kant means only the pure part of philosophy: “We have explained cognitions of reason as cognitions from principles, and from this it follows that they must be *a priori*. But there are two kinds of

But what are the principles of reason of philosophical knowledge, in contrast to principles of cognitions of nature, e.g., analogies of experience, or morals?⁷⁷ While these questions require an extensive systematic inquiry that cannot be offered here, it is certain that philosophy is based on such major principles and ends of reason as logical perfection (including distinctness and coherence, unity, manifoldness, and continuity), wisdom, and the highest good. A science obtains its inner value via the ends of reason. And since “science has an inner, true worth only as *organ of wisdom*,”⁷⁸ philosophy, genuinely seeking to obtain it, is by far more prototypical for a science than other sciences.

(3) Furthermore (see Section 3.3), philosophy is based on the architectonic use of reason: “[n]obody attempts to establish a science without grounding it on an idea,”⁷⁹ which determines the arrangement and the purpose of a system of cognitions. What philosophy is and of which parts it consists – such systematic architectonic questions belong to the nature of philosophy.

Philosophy is therefore a science insofar as it is deeply rooted in reason: in its highest demand for systematicity, principles, highest ends, and architectonic use. Following Kant's metaphilosophy, philosophy, when objectified in a philosophical analysis of philosophy, is exemplary and can be used as basis for the extraction of universally valid criteria of scientificity and for the demarcation of science from non-science. The right question to ask is therefore not “is philosophy a science?,” but rather: “are other sciences as scientific as philosophy?”

3.3 Idea of philosophy: Archetype and ectypes

One other significant element that must be expounded is (v) the pure *a priori* character of the concept of philosophy. Although philosophy qua enterprise of reason is a science, it is not a science in its most completed form. This is what Kant means in the *Architectonic* chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* when he writes: “philosophy is a mere idea of a possible science, which is nowhere given in concreto.”⁸⁰ No one can point at a system of cognitions and say that this is the single and true philosophy. The reason for this is Kant's doctrine of ideas: “[a]n idea is nothing more than a concept of perfection that is not yet to be found in experience.”⁸¹ Ideas are archetypes (*a priori* given concepts of reason), or representations of something pure, perfect, and complete.⁸² Although transcendental ideas, such as the infinity of the world, or the ideal, have absolutely no objective reality because they are part of the necessary logic of *illusion*, several other ideas, like wisdom and freedom, can be partially given *in concreto*. These latter, therefore, appear in the practical sense, i.e., they can “be realized” as ectypes. A wise person can embody the idea of wisdom to a certain degree,⁸³ and the categorical imperative (*ratio cognosciendi*) is an appearance of freedom (*ratio essendi*) in experience.⁸⁴ The reason for this is that wisdom, freedom, and similar ideas

cognitions, which are both *a priori*, but which nevertheless have many noteworthy differences, namely, mathematics and philosophy.” *Logik* 9, 22–3.

⁷⁷ For an overview over Kant's supreme principles of reason in general and its theoretical and practical domains, see Willaschek, “The Structure of Normative Space.”

⁷⁸ *Logik* 9, 26.

⁷⁹ *KrV* A 834/B 862. Cf. *Log-Pölitz* 24:530 and *Logik* 9, 93.

⁸⁰ *KrV* A838/B866.

⁸¹ *Pädagogik* 9:444, translated by M.L.

⁸² For a table of all types of ideas and their functions in Kant see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 104–5. For Kant's concept of architectonic ideas of science, sciences, and their parts, see Lewin, “The Universe of Science.” For a reconstruction of the architectonic idea of philosophy in the *Architectonic* chapter of the first *Critique* see also Euler, “Kants Philosophiebegriff,” 517–22.

⁸³ See *KrV* A569/597 and A328/B385.

⁸⁴ See *KpV* 5, 4, *KU* 5:468, and *Logik* 9, 93.

belong to the domain of the practical as *indispensable conditions* for certain acts: “an idea of practical reason can always be actually given *in concreto*, though only in part; indeed, it is the indispensable condition of every practical use of reason.”⁸⁵

Architectonic ideas that belong to the domain of the methodology of reason have a similar indispensable function:

In all sciences, above all in those of reason, the idea of the science is its universal *abstract* or *outline*, hence the extension of all the cognitions that belong to it. Such an idea of the whole – the first thing one has to look to in a science, and which one has to seek – is *architectonic*, as, e.g., the idea of jurisprudence.⁸⁶

Just as wisdom can be realized only partially and in a certain specific way because no wise person is gradually as wise as the other and consumes or imparts the same cognitive content,

in its elaboration the schema, indeed even the definition of the science which is given right at the outset, seldom corresponds to the idea; for this lies in reason like a seed, all of whose parts still lie very involuted and are hardly recognizable even under microscopic observation.⁸⁷

The ideas of science (as the whole of human knowledge), particular sciences (philosophy, jurisprudence, etc.), and their parts (transcendental philosophy, public law etc.) are, in Kant’s understanding, heuristic.⁸⁸ The ectypes never match the perfect archetype. Philosophy, its imperfect definition, its division, and systematic completion are only attempts to get closer to the original idea. Kant’s own philosophical development is a vivid example for the gap between the architectonic ideas and their ectypes. His heuristic ideas and his research practice fall apart regarding (1) the idea of transcendental philosophy, the concept of which changed several times in his works, and (2) the idea of philosophy, at least in the aspect of its division, but also, seemingly, in one other crucial point.⁸⁹

3.4 One or many true philosophies?

In the first *Critique*, Kant’s statement is clear: the idea of philosophy is nowhere given *in concreto*. He claims, however, optimistically and cautiously, that the search for the perfect picture and system of philosophy will last “until the only footpath, much overgrown by sensibility, is discovered, and the hitherto unsuccessful ectype, so far as it has been granted to humans, is made equal to the archetype.”⁹⁰ Sixteen years later (1797), in a passage from the preface to the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* – famously taken by Eckart Förster to mark the beginning of the twenty-five years of philosophy from Kant to Hegel,⁹¹ he writes that

[i]t sounds arrogant, self-seeking, and for those who have not yet relinquished their old system, belittling, to assert: that prior to the development of critical philosophy there had been no philosophy at all.⁹²

Does Kant contradict himself? Can the idea of philosophy lose its heuristic function? Does Kant start to equate a general concept of philosophy with transcendental philosophy and violate the metaphilosopical difference as some of his interpreters claim? And does the pure part of philosophy now eliminate the

⁸⁵ *KrV* A328/B385.

⁸⁶ *Logik* 9, 93.

⁸⁷ *KrV* A834/B862.

⁸⁸ For a more complete picture of the architectonic levels see Lewin, “The Universe of Science.”

⁸⁹ For (1) see Hinske, *Kants Weg*; and Lewin, “Transcendental Philosophy.” For (2): Rovira, “Kant’s Division of Philosophy;” Emundts, “Kant Über Die Einheit der Philosophie;” and Ypi, “The Problem of Systematic Unity.”

⁹⁰ *KrV* A838/B866.

⁹¹ See Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years*, ix. Förster pays, however, no critical attention to the metaphilosopical difference.

⁹² MS 6:206.

empirical in the architectonical division of philosophy?⁹³ What is Kant's contribution to the metaphilosophical discussion about unity, disunity, and disagreement in philosophy?⁹⁴ And what does it say about Kant's understanding of philosophy and his elements of imperfect definition?

One possible way to interpret this passage is to claim that Kant fell prey to dogmatism that he previously fought. Oizerman, e.g., concluded that Kant,

like his predecessors, [...] indulged in illusions about his own philosophy. However, all philosophical doctrines are inherently dogmatic, that is, they believe that the philosophical search has finally been completed, the truth that fatally eluded all other philosophers has been comprehended.⁹⁵

I suggest a different view. This is an exceptional passage in a preface: and prefaces often involve a reactive sociological dimension. Before coming to this point, Kant discusses – similarly as in the *Prolegomena*⁹⁶ – a charge made by his contemporaries – first by Garve – that his philosophy is obscure and difficult to understand. There, Kant defends his position that metaphysics as the “systematic critique of the faculty of reason [...] can never become popular.”⁹⁷ Unlike a popular philosopher, a scientist of reason must apply strict scholastic methods and separate the pure from the empirical to make progress. Furthermore, Kant was confronted with two other very different reactions to his works. On the one hand, e.g., Heinrich Jung-Stilling wrote in a letter to Kant (1789) that “as soon as one comprehends the *Critique of Reason* one sees that no refutation of it is possible. Consequently, your philosophy must be eternal and immutable.”⁹⁸ On the other hand, Kant was confronted with the view from Reinhold and Fichte that his system is incomplete. Kant, having had contact with both, believed that they merely taught his system in Jena, which led him, in 1799, to famously declare: “the *Critique* rests on a fully secured foundation, established forever; it will prove to be indispensable too for the noblest ends of mankind in all future ages.”⁹⁹ Given this background, two points are relevant for Kant's argumentation in the preface to the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*: (vi) the social dimension of doing philosophy, and (vii) adherence to the critical path based on “a fully secured foundation” (transcendental analysis of reason), informed by his defense of the science of reason from competing, e.g., dogmatic, overdemanding, popular or skeptic, views.

Ad (vi). For Kant, philosophy is also a social enterprise, which means that he acknowledges that there are and have been many different approaches to philosophy and ways of philosophizing that “contributed to the present-day philosophy.”¹⁰⁰ Given that a philosophy must not only be coherent and well-grounded, but also prove itself among competing philosophical enterprises. To this end, an author of a philosophy must believe that her product equals the archetype, the single and true idea of philosophy. She must believe in the truth of her system without diminishing the value of previous attempts and accomplishments of philosophers. In other words, Kant presupposes that any serious attempt to establish a philosophical system must be accompanied by a strong conviction that this system is true. And this holding-to-be-true (*Fürwahrhalten*) in relation to one's personal architectonic idea of philosophy must be much more than a modest *doctrinal belief* (like in the case of regulative transcendental ideas). Analogous to reflective judgments based on aesthetic ideas with purported subjective and objective validity, it must be held with a maximum of conviction, or a claim that one *knows* that one's proposed ectype equals the archetype.¹⁰¹

⁹³ See Baum, “Metaphysik,” 1533–4.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., Rescher, *The Strife of Systems*; Rescher, “Philosophical Disagreement;” and Schilpp, “Is ‘Standpointless Philosophy’ Possible?”

⁹⁵ See Oizerman, *Kant i Hegel*, 73, translated by M.L.

⁹⁶ *Prol* 4. 263–4. Kant remarks that not everyone has to study metaphysics if he or she finds his writings obscure and not understandable. People have different talents. But if one wants to assess metaphysics, one can demand that he or she studies it fundamentally.

⁹⁷ *MS* 6, 206.

⁹⁸ *Briefe* 11, 7.

⁹⁹ *Briefe* 12, 370.

¹⁰⁰ *MS* 6, 207.

¹⁰¹ In the chapter *On Having an Opinion, Knowing, and Believing* (in the *Canon of Pure Reason*) of the first Critique, Kant also attributes different kinds of taking to be true (*Fürwahrhalten* or “propositional attitudes”) to several, but not all kinds of ideas

If, therefore, the critical philosophy calls itself a philosophy before which there had as yet been no philosophy at all, it does no more than has been done, will be done, and indeed must be done by anyone who draws up a philosophy on his own plan.¹⁰²

Ad (vii). This is just one part of Kant's argument that focuses on the state of mind of the researcher. The other – that concerns the subject of study – stems from the view that philosophy, just as other sciences, have its specific *subject*. Kant gives moralists, chemists, and teachers of medicine as examples: they all have certain subject matters, like virtue, chemistry, and classification of diseases. They follow general rules of scientific research in that they use the results of previous scholars for their analyses, and they compete over the best understanding of *one and the same subject*. One cannot evade and make perpetual peace in science by just changing the subject or claiming that one describes some different subject or only a part of it (i.e., putting forward an easily recognizable eristic argument). One would scarcely expect a doctrine of virtue that would claim that it is not really a doctrine about virtue or a doctrine of reason that would claim that its subject is not reason. Thus, Kant seems to purport that scientists are commonly oriented by the ideal of a perfect systematic understanding and description of a fixed subject, and *vice versa*. The fixed subject itself demands a unified clear description. In philosophy, this subject is reason: as “there can be only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies,” otherwise there would be “two different and true philosophies *on the same subject*, which is self-contradictory.”¹⁰³ If there is one reason, it must be represented in one system, although there may be different attempts to represent it. This is the critical Kant's basic presupposition about philosophy: philosophy is foremost analysis of reason by reason, “reason's *knowledge of itself*”¹⁰⁴ (*Selbsterkenntnis der Vernunft*). One could disagree with Kant on the subject matter of philosophy, but if one recognizes that reason is the absolute condition of philosophy as (i) cognition from concepts (i.e., cognition from reason), (ii) rational activity, (iii) directed by ends (ideas of wisdom and of the highest good) given by pure reason, (iv) science of reason (in its pure part) and rational science (in its empirical), (v) something that represents itself as an architectonic idea of reason, (vi) and that is accompanied by a rational kind of holding-to-be-true, and (vii) one is obliged – if one wishes to – to compete with Kant for a better understanding of one *fixed subject* and meet the requirements for this fight.¹⁰⁵

Hence, the problematic proposition that there has been no philosophy prior to critical philosophy is coming from Kant walking the path between dogmatism and skepticism. When Kant claims that his ectype is closest to what philosophy in truth is, he defends (vi) his project and (vii) philosophy in general from dogmatic, sceptic, popular, and anarchic understandings. This must also be considered in the context of *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* and *Proclamation of the Imminent Conclusion of a Treaty of Perpetual Peace in Philosophy*. Reason as a natural provider of ideas, rational kinds of holding-to-be-true, and ends is the one true compass of philosophers, and philosophy that critically examines and orients itself by this compass, is the cure, the right medicine for any sickness both of reason and within philosophy.¹⁰⁶

(which is spread throughout his works). For a short overview see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 99–105. For a recent discussion of the completeness of different kinds of holding-to-be-true in Kant see Höwing, “Zur Vollständigkeit.”

¹⁰² MS 6, 207.

¹⁰³ MS 6, 207, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁴ Prol AA IV 317, cf. ibid. 328 and KrV AXI. Baum, “Subjekt und Person bei Kant,” 250, noted that it could be an alternative title for the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I suggest that given the further analysis of reason in Kant's works and its role as simultaneously subject and operator of philosophy, one could say that this could be the overall title for the whole critical Kantian project.

¹⁰⁵ For a systematic metaphysical analysis of fixed knowledge goals, research-programmatic determinations, and demands in philosophical debates, as well as rational duties that arise from the perspectivistic understanding of the logic of philosophical research, see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, second part.

¹⁰⁶ See *Denken* 8, 139–42, and for what will be later a Nietzschean motive of health and sickness within philosophy VNAEF 8, 414. It should be noted that even if philosophy reached the point of becoming a perfect ectype, equal to the archetype, the philosopher is not freed from the necessity of rational cognitions from reason: “[e]ven granted that there were a philosophy actually at hand, no one who learned it would be able to say that he was a philosopher, for subjectively his cognition of it would always be only historical” (*Logik* 9, 25).

3.5 Methodology of philosophy

Reason, as the one and true subject of philosophy, is also responsible for a certain (viii) methodology of philosophy. This methodology is one other major element of philosophy's exposition and belongs to systematic metaphilosophical discourses. These discourses are centered around such questions as whether there can be only one methodology or many different methodologies in philosophy¹⁰⁷ and whether one should follow a “paradigmatic” (Kuhn) or “programmatic” (Lakatos) understanding of the logic of philosophical research.¹⁰⁸ I will not discuss the Kantian methodology of philosophy in this article, although I touched on several topics that belong to it, such as definitions in philosophy, work with concepts under the guidance of logical perfection (see especially the *Jaesche Logic*), principles, and architectonic ideas of philosophy and its parts.¹⁰⁹

4 Conclusion

As the concept “metaphilosophy” increasingly emerges in studies on Kant and descriptions of Kant congresses and conferences, it should be made clear what a metaphilosophical theory is and in which sense Kant's philosophy contains contributions to metaphilosophical discourses. Not all of Kant's theories should be called metaphilosophical. One should avoid the fallacy of extension in which one uses “metaphilosophical” as a mere label without recognizing the *metaphilosophical difference*: although each philosophical theory in some way reflects philosophical practice, and can be potentially used for metaphilosophical analyses (inquires on questions, such as “what is philosophy?” and “why do philosophers disagree?”), not each philosophical theory is intended to be metaphilosophical.

I have shown several examples for such confusions in Kant scholarship and pointed in a direction for the future research on Kant's metaphilosophy. Kant's explicit metaphilosophical views should come first. Following the idea of metaphilosophical reciprocity, one should then analyze their background conditions – e.g., Kant's concept of reason (see element (vii)). Furthermore, I brought metaphilosophical research and systematic research on Kant's concept of philosophy into dialogue to show that both lines of inquiry can benefit from each other. Kant does not contribute to a meta-metaphilosophical discourse, i.e., to questions like: “what is metaphilosophy and is it possible?”, “what is the best way of doing metaphilosophy?”. He does, however, enter the discourse on separate metaphilosophical questions such as: (i)–(iii) “what is philosophy and what are its ends?”; (iv) “is and in which sense is philosophy a science?”; (v)–(vii) “does one true philosophy exist or is philosophy only an idea?”; and systematic metaphilosophical questions: (viii) “is there a general methodology of philosophy?”. This is, however, only an excerpt of Kant's metaphilosophical discussion, which cannot be covered in their entirety in one paper.¹¹⁰

In the *Jaesche Logic*, Kant stated that “[b]efore we try to give a definition of philosophy, [...] we must first investigate the character of various cognitions themselves.”¹¹¹ Although he expounds the concept of

¹⁰⁷ For a recent overview over different methodologies in philosophy see Cappelen et al. *The Oxford Handbook*.

¹⁰⁸ For the former see, e.g., Schnädelbach, “Philosophie;” Gakis, “Philosophy as Paradigms;” Hartmann, *Neues System*, for the latter Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, second part.

¹⁰⁹ For a comparison of Kantian and Lakatosian methodologies applied to the idea of transcendental philosophy see Lewin, “Transcendental Philosophy.”

¹¹⁰ To give an idea of what I only partially included or what I could not consider in detail in my study: (1) Kant's pre-critical phase, (2) several other relevant passages and topics, such as the relation of philosophy to the history of philosophy, philosophy and institutional practice (*The Conflict of the Faculties*), philosophy in regard to such concepts in Kant like discipline, doctrine, field, territory, and domain, philosophy and enlightenment, philosophy and popular philosophy, and applied philosophy, (3) biographical and historical background, and (4) an attempt to reconstruct Kant's implicit view of philosophy (which, as I argue, can be only an addition to the explicit-view-first-metaphilosophy).

¹¹¹ *Logik* 9, 22.

philosophy in giving elements for an imperfect definition, he never attempts putting them together. Here is an attempt at an imperfect definition referring to the collected elements (i)–(viii):

Philosophy is discursive rational cognition from concepts, and either a non-systematic reasoning or a skill to reach different ends, striving toward systematicity and logical perfection of philosophical knowledge ordered according to principles. A system of such knowledge deserves the name of philosophy if it is a pursuit of wisdom, oriented by the highest good (morality and corresponding happiness) and questions that interest everyone. It has either the form of a proper science of reason (pure philosophy) or of a rational science (empirical philosophy). Although the one true philosophy is a mere architectonic idea of a science, which is nowhere given *in concreto*, critical philosophy can hold-to-be-true to be its closest ectype as it has recognized reason as the absolute condition and subject matter of philosophy. Its critical analysis gives a clear methodology and philosophy of philosophy.

Acknowledgements: The author wants to thank Thomas Sturm for his helpful advice in the initial phase of my work on this study. The author also benefited from the comments Thomas Sturm and Martin Sticker gave on the draft version of this article.

Funding information: This research was supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation grant no. 075-15-2019-1929, project “Kantian Rationality and Its Impact in Contemporary Science, Technology, and Social Institutions,” and Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (IKBFU), Kaliningrad.

Conflict of interest: Author states no conflict of interest.

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