

Research Article

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Where Do All These Ideas Come From? Kant on the Formation of Concepts Under the Guidance of Pure Reason

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Abstract: It is not just rationalist metaphysics, but also Kant's transcendental philosophy that is teeming with *a priori* concepts. According to Kant, some of these *a priori* concepts are "ideas," and similar to the categories, some of these ideas in turn belong to the nature of human reason, while others can be derived from them. It is therefore part of Kant's claim in the "Transcendental Dialectic" to be able to explain not only the leading ideas of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology as natural concepts of reason, but the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary of the *metaphysica specialis* as well. This article outlines how Kant's derivations of these concepts work. After explaining Kant's classification of *a priori* concepts and the derivation of the transcendental ideas, his derivations are explored in more detail using the example of the concepts of the pure doctrine of the soul. This contributes to a better understanding of Kant's theory of philosophical concepts while also shedding light on the rather rarely treated topic of the "Transcendental Dialectic."

Keywords: *Transcendental Dialectic*, metaphysics, rational psychology, classes of concepts, transcendental ideas, predicables, concept of soul, German eighteenth-century philosophy

Kant's considerations on the constitution of experience as well as on the specialty of moral laws have been particularly influential and are still regarded as worthy of appreciation for further systematic reflections. The "Transcendental Dialectic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in contrast, is mostly understood as being primarily a rejection of rationalistic metaphysics and therefore seems to be of historical interest only. If one leaves aside the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic" and the "regulative use of the ideas of pure reason" discussed there, I think this understanding is quite correct.¹ However, it would be mistaken to understand the historical Kant exclusively as a destroyer of metaphysics. Heinz Heimsoeth rightly pointed

¹ The fact that the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic" contains a positive result both for Kant's own theoretical philosophy and regarding contemporary discussions is shown in detail by Meer, *Grundsatz*. On the systematic relevance of transcendental ideas, see Lewin, *System*. Flach, *Grundzüge*, offers a post-neo-Kantian account of the concept of epistemic regulation. Bunte, *Erkenntnis*, sees Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" as having special systematic relevance, since "Kant's discussion of the transcendental paralogies [sic] provides the key to the reflexive structure of transcendental self-consciousness from which the table of judgments as a whole can be derived" (110, my translation). In what follows, neither the problem of deriving the functions of judgment nor Bunte's suggestion will be discussed. I only note here that the question of deriving the functions of judgment from apperception misses Kant's point. For, first, the derivation of the particular from a general is not possible within the framework of a functional theory of cognition (on this, see Hiltcher, "Funktionale Reflexivität"), and second, Kant just borrows the functions of judgment from contemporary logic (on this, see Ludwig, "Kants Begründung").

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out in his commentary on the “Transcendental Dialectic” that “for Kant himself” the second major part of the first *Critique* had been “the very goal of the work,” and that his critique of rationalistic metaphysics was meant to “clear the ground for his own new construction.”² Kant’s love for metaphysics, which he confessed in the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*,³ was not extinguished even through his own criticism, as the late *Preisschrift* on the progress of metaphysics, for example, impressively shows.

This ambiguous attitude on the part of Kant with respect to metaphysics can also be found in the “Transcendental Dialectic” itself. This is especially evident in the specific concepts of pure reason, the transcendental ideas. On the one hand, they designate the objects of rationalist metaphysics and carry with them an “illusion” (*Schein*) that presents these objects as allegedly real. On the other hand, however, they have their origin in reason itself, its “nature,”⁴ and its “need.”⁵ They are not just arbitrarily invented concepts that could be put aside as it were as soon as the illusion associated with them becomes clear. To be sure, Kant’s discussion certainly exposes rationalist metaphysics as a hopeless enterprise that relates to objects that lie beyond the bounds of our cognition. However, dealing with the concepts of pure reason is not a mere folly on the part of metaphysicians, since these concepts deal with something that belongs to reason itself and that was merely misunderstood by the metaphysicians.

It is not only the transcendental ideas that Kant lends legitimacy to in this way. He also tries to explain the *a priori* origin of other metaphysical concepts, an endeavor which is supposed to be anything but arbitrary. It is in this regard part of the claim of the “Transcendental Dialectic” to explain not only the leading ideas of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology as natural concepts of reason, but the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary of the *metaphysica specialis* as well. And insofar as these concepts have a disciplining function for their use in a new “practical-dogmatic” metaphysics,⁶ the “Transcendental Dialectic” is in this regard not simply a criticism of traditional metaphysics, but also preparation for true metaphysical work that will be based entirely on the practical use of reason.

In what follows, I consider the question of how Kant’s derivations of metaphysical concepts from the nature of pure reason and from the transcendental ideas work. After some remarks on Kant’s proposed classifications of concepts (1) and his derivation of the transcendental ideas (2), the further derivations claimed by Kant will be reconstructed using the example of the concepts of the pure doctrine of the soul (3). Finally, I will give a very short outlook on the function of these concepts in view of the practical metaphysics proposed by Kant (4). This contributes on the one hand to understanding Kant’s theory of *a priori* concepts while on the other hand also shedding light on the rarely treated topic of the “Transcendental Dialectic.”

1 The conceptual status of ideas of pure reason

In the section “On the Transcendental Ideas,” Kant points out the two essential features of transcendental ideas:

They are not arbitrarily invented, but given as problems by the nature of reason itself ... Finally, they are transcendent concepts, and exceed the bounds of all experience, in which no object adequate to the transcendental idea can ever occur.⁷

² Heimsoeth, *Dialektik*, VIII (my translation).

³ *Träume* 2:367: “Metaphysics, with which, as fate would have it, I have fallen in love but from which I can boast of only a few favours” For references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the original edition (A/B) is referred to; for Kant’s other writings, the “Akademie-Ausgabe” is referred to. The English translations used are listed in the bibliography.

⁴ *KrV* A 327.

⁵ *KrV* A 309.

⁶ Kant uses the term “practical-dogmatic metaphysics” only in his late *Preisschrift* (see *Fortschritte* 20:311; for details, see Caimi, “Begriff”).

⁷ *KrV* A 327.

According to Kant, the transcendental ideas firstly have their origin in the “nature of reason itself” and secondly have no objective reality, since they are “transcendent.” Both features allow for the clear classification of the ideas of pure reason in the totality of all possible concepts. Kant himself occasionally uses two basic distinctions for the classification of all possible concepts: The first distinction aims at the question of whether concepts are “given” or “made” (1.1); the second distinction sorts concepts according to whether they have “objective reality” or not (1.2). Both distinctions are not yet sufficient to fully explain the status of ideas of pure reason.⁸ But they are helpful for characterizing the status of ideas of pure reason in a general way. They do not yet allow for a detailed account of the generation of individual ideas, but they at least sufficiently distinguish ideas from other concepts and at the same time lead to an internal differentiation within the class of ideas of pure reason.

1.1 Given and made concepts

The idea that the entire repertoire of possible concepts can be traced back to some basic concepts runs through the entirety of modern philosophy. According to Descartes, such basic concepts denote “simple natures,” such as “cognition” (*cognitio*), “extension” (*extensio*), and “existence” (*existentia*).⁹ According to Locke, there are simple ideas from which more complex ideas are composed.¹⁰ And Leibniz sees the possibility of a complete analysis of concepts leading to simple concepts as their basic elements, which are recognized by intuition.¹¹ To be sure, Kant rejects the idea of innate concepts as well as the idea that something simple could be given in intuition.¹² However, he also follows this tradition in a certain sense when he speaks of derived or compound concepts. These concepts play a role in various contexts of his philosophy. Before I turn to an example, namely the Paralogisms chapter of the first *Critique*, where Kant tries to derive some rational–psychological concepts by “composition,”¹³ I would first like to briefly introduce Kant’s proposal for classifying all (theoretical) concepts according to “given” and “made” concepts, as found in his *Logic*. By doing so, one can also gain a complete overview of the totality of all possible concepts.

In his doctrine of concepts, presented in the *Logic*, Kant basically distinguishes given from made concepts with respect to the “matter” of concepts (their “object”¹⁴), where the given concepts “are given either *a priori* or *a posteriori*.”¹⁵ Kant specifies only the given concepts in more detail there, but *Reflexion* 2853 further distinguishes made concepts. In this *Reflexion*, he distinguishes “arbitrarily” (*willkürlich*) and “naturally” (*natürlich*) made concepts, the first being “invented” (*gedichtet*) and the second being concepts “inferred by reason,” called “ideas.”¹⁶ Accordingly, all concepts can be divided into the following types: (a) given concepts are either (aa) categories (“notions”) as *a priori* given concepts or (ab) concepts of experience as *a posteriori* given concepts; (b) made concepts are either (ba) ideas as naturally made, i.e., here: “inferred by reason,” concepts, or (bb) arbitrarily made concepts.¹⁷ Adding Kant’s division of concepts with respect to the “origin of concepts in regard to their matter,” which is not considered in (general) logic but

⁸ Possible concepts are all concepts that are at least consistent. Thus, they could also refer to “thought-entities” (*Gedankendinge, entia rationis*; see *KrV* A 290, 292).

⁹ Descartes, “*Regulae ad directionem ingenii*,” 12.14, AT X, 419.

¹⁰ Locke, *Essay*, II.1f., 119.

¹¹ Leibniz, “*Discours de métaphysique*,” 24, SSB VI.4, 1568.

¹² *KrV* B 167, A 772.

¹³ *KrV* A 345.

¹⁴ See *Logik* 9:91.

¹⁵ *Logik* 9:93.

¹⁶ *Refl* 2853, 16:547; see Klimmek, *System*, 9f.

¹⁷ *Logik* 9:94. In this classification, the concepts of reflection are not considered, since “what is exhibited through them is not the object in accordance with what constitutes its concept (magnitude, reality), but rather only the comparison of representations, in all their manifoldness, which precedes the concept of things” (*KrV* A 269).

“in metaphysics,” the concepts of kind (aa) are called “intellectual” concepts, of kind (ab) “empirical” concepts, and of kind (bb) “arbitrary” concepts.¹⁸

However, the classification of all (theoretical) concepts according to the distinction between given and made concepts is problematic, especially with regard to the classification of ideas (ba). This is because an exact identification of the ideas qua “naturally” made or “inferred” concepts with the transcendental ideas, with which the “Transcendental Dialectic” of the *Critique of Pure Reason* deals in an outstanding way, turns out to be implausible. It is true that right at the beginning of the first book of the “Transcendental Dialectic,” Kant calls the “concepts from pure reason” “inferred concepts.”¹⁹ In this respect, with reference to *Reflexion* 2853, they could be understood as made concepts, which, unlike the arbitrarily made concepts of type (bb), are not composed arbitrarily, but “contain something ... borrowed from the nature of the understanding”²⁰ and are intellectually made concepts. However, this interpretation is opposed to Kant’s statement “that transcendental ideas are just as natural to [human reason] as the categories are to the understanding.”²¹ Kant’s starting point for the derivation of ideas is the “form of the syllogisms” or the “function of reason in its inferences,”²² i.e., reasoning as a logical function of reason. With this, Kant proceeds analogously to his explanations on the clue of the “Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding.”²³ There, the starting point for the formation of the categories, i.e., of the concepts given *a priori* (aa), is set in the logical function of understanding (judging). Both the categories as well as the transcendental ideas are thus derived by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* from the logical functions – the “nature” of understanding or reason.

The dichotomy of given and made, as found in the doctrine of concepts of the *Logic*, thus turns out to be insufficient to address the specificity of pure concepts of understanding and reason.²⁴ That is because either both kinds of concepts are given concepts, since they are “borrowed” from the “nature” of understanding or reason,²⁵ or both are made concepts, since they are “reflected” or “inferred” *a priori* concepts. They are then understood as concepts derived from the functions of judging or reasoning, which as the logical functions alone constitute the logical “nature” of understanding or reason and which are accordingly exclusively given *a priori*.²⁶

Nevertheless, Kant’s classification of the transcendental ideas in *Reflexion* 2853 as made concepts is comprehensible. That is because the categories are “merely reflected concepts:” “they contain nothing beyond the unity of reflection on appearances.”²⁷ That which they describe, the “synthesis of a manifold,”²⁸ is already presupposed in every cognition of an object. And insofar as knowledge of objects proceeds in judging, the categories can be taken directly from the functions of judgment. In contrast, reason never refers directly to objects, but to the judgments of the understanding.²⁹ And its logical function, reasoning, already has a less immediate character.³⁰ Moreover, the derivation of the transcendental ideas is once again more complex than that of the categories. I will come back to this. At this point, it may suffice to ascribe a kind of intermediate position to the transcendental ideas in the context of the distinction between given and

¹⁸ Intellectual concepts contain something “borrowed from the nature of the understanding,” empirical concepts something “derived from experience,” and arbitrary concepts something “invented” (see *Logik* 9:94).

¹⁹ *KrV* A 310.

²⁰ *Logik* 9:94.

²¹ *KrV* A 642; see also 327, 614, 669.

²² *KrV* A 321.

²³ See *KrV* A 66ff., esp. A 79f.

²⁴ See also Hiltcher, “Begriff.”

²⁵ See also Prien, *Logik*, 54.

²⁶ If one holds to Kant’s parlance in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, all intellectual concepts, the transcendental ideas as well as the categories, are to be called given *a priori* concepts. In his remarks on the possibility of definitions in the “Doctrine of Method,” Kant cites as examples of “concept[s] given *a priori*” not only some categories, namely “substance” and “cause,” but interestingly also “right” and “equity” (see *KrV* A 728), which are manifestly ideas – though not transcendental ones.

²⁷ *KrV* A 310.

²⁸ *KrV* A 77.

²⁹ See *KrV* A 302, 305, 307.

³⁰ See *KrV* A 303.

made concepts: On the one hand, they arise from the given “nature of reason,” and on the other hand, they still have to be “inferred” in a certain way and to that extent are “made.” They could therefore be called “quasi-given concepts.”

The arbitrarily made concepts (bb) can also be subdivided again into (bba) mathematical concepts that contain “an arbitrary synthesis which can be constructed *a priori*,”³¹ (bbb) predicables (*Prädikabilien*) as “derived concepts *a priori*,”³² and (bbc) arbitrarily composed concepts that “depend upon empirical conditions.”³³ In these concepts, there are clearly fewer problems resulting from the underlying distinction between given and made. Thus, the determination of mathematical concepts (bba) as arbitrary (made) concepts also coincides with numerous statements by Kant, not only in the *Logik*, but also in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.³⁴ The fact that the mathematical concepts are to be characterized as made concepts refers here to the possibility of their *a priori* construction in pure intuition.³⁵ However, it is to be noted here that the forms of intuition themselves and the formal concepts of space and time are obviously given,³⁶ which is why there can be no question of a completely arbitrary construction of these concepts.

The predicables (bbb), in turn, as derived concepts of the understanding, can also be counted among the intellectual concepts, since some of them are generated merely from the combination of the categories “with each other.”³⁷ Moreover, there are predicables that are generated by a combination of categories “with the modis of [pure] sensibility.”³⁸ Since in the case of predicables a special combination is necessary, they can well be understood as made concepts (bb). Finally, in their distinction as arbitrarily made concepts, as in the case of composed concepts (bbc), the problem arises that the elements to be combined are not (arbitrarily) constructed or “made” ones, but given ones – in the case of predicables: the categories and “modis of pure sensibility,” and in the case of composed concepts: empirical concepts (ab).

The classification of all (theoretical) concepts on the basis of the distinction between given and made from the *Logik* thus turns out not to be completely coherent. This distinction, however, draws attention to two points that are important with respect to a general characterization of the ideas of pure reason. First, Kant assumes that concepts can be given *a priori* if they arise from the logical “nature” of understanding or reason, as the example of the categories (aa) demonstrates. And second, *a priori* concepts can also be made concepts, as the examples of mathematical concepts (bba) and predicables (bbb) demonstrate.

1.2 Objective reality of concepts

For a coherent classification of all (theoretical) concepts, it is more promising to consider the referentiality (objective reality) of the individual types of concepts.³⁹ Looking at the categories (aa) and the mathematical concepts (bba), this question can be answered in short order because both types of concepts represent special cases with respect to the question of their objective reality. The categories have a special kind of objective reality, because they “lie at the ground of all experiential cognition.”⁴⁰ According to Kant, they are the only given concepts whose objective reality can be demonstrated *a priori*. In the case of mathematical concepts, the proof of objective reality is secured by the procedure of mathematical construction. It is true that they are not concepts of objects of empirical knowledge. However, they have objective reality, because

³¹ KrV A 729.

³² KrV 82; see *Fortschritte* 20:272.

³³ KrV A 729.

³⁴ See *Logik* 9:141; KrV B 201, A 729f.; further *Deutlichkeit* 2:276, 280.

³⁵ See KrV A 712–38.

³⁶ See KrV A 26, A 31.

³⁷ KrV A 82.

³⁸ KrV A 82.

³⁹ See Hiltcher, “Begriff.”

⁴⁰ KrV A 93.

their object can be given *a priori* in pure intuition and they “can be applied to empirical intuitions.”⁴¹ They are therefore those made concepts whose objective reality can be shown *a priori*.

On the other hand, in the case of predicables (bbb), the question of objective reality cannot be decided *a priori* as in the case of categories and mathematical concepts. On the contrary, in this respect, they do not differ from the arbitrarily composed concepts (bbc) and the empirical concepts (ab). In all of these concepts, according to Kant, it is necessary that there be an empirical presentation of the concept. Kant makes this point particularly clear in his late *Preisschrift*:

The possibility of a thought or concept rests on the principle of contradiction, e.g., that of a thinking immaterial being (a spirit). The thing of which even the mere thought is impossible (i.e. the concept is self-contradictory), is itself impossible. But the thing of which the concept is possible is not on that account a possible thing. The first possibility may be called logical, the second, real possibility; the proof of the latter is the proof of the objective reality of the concept, which we are entitled to demand at any time. But it can never be furnished otherwise than by presentation of the object corresponding to the concept; for otherwise it always remains a mere thought, of which, until it is displayed in an example, it always remains uncertain whether any object corresponds to it, or whether it be empty, i.e., whether it may serve in any way for knowledge.⁴²

The objective reality of a concept can be spoken of precisely when it demonstrably refers to an object and thus claims, in the case of intuitions and concepts, to contribute to the knowledge of this object or, in the case of judgment, to afford knowledge of this object. With regard to concepts, Kant says here that the criterion for the objective reality of a concept is not the mere absence of contradiction of the concept, i.e., the mere conceivability of the object designated by it (as in the case of the concept “spirit,” *Geist*), but the possibility of the presentation of the object designated by it in intuition. Accordingly, a concept has objective reality if its object is not only logically possible, i.e., conceivable without contradiction, but furthermore demonstrably real, i.e., can be represented in intuition.⁴³

The formation of empirical concepts (ab) by the logical operations of understanding (“comparison,” “reflection,” and “abstraction”) guarantees *eo ipso* their objective reality, since in the case of empirical concepts the representations from which such concepts are “derived” are representations of a given manifold of empirical intuition.⁴⁴ In short, empirical concepts are produced on the occasion of perceptions. An “example” of an empirical concept already exists at the time of its genesis. If, on the other hand, empirical concepts or concepts given *a priori* are combined to new concepts (bbc and bbb), the objective reality of these new concepts must be shown separately, if their objects are to be regarded as objects of experience.⁴⁵

In the context of the question of objective reality, the ideas of pure reason are an exception in the set of all possible concepts. For the transcendental ideas are “merely sophistical (dialectical) concepts” if they are understood as “concepts of certain objects.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, the ideas of pure reason are those *a priori* concepts to which no objective reality can be ascribed. While categories and predicables can be represented in intuition, the ideas of pure reason are characterized by the fact that no object can correspond to them in experience, since they go “beyond the possibility of experience.”⁴⁷ They transcend the realm of possible experience constituted by the cooperation of pure forms of intuition and categories, since they represent the “unconditioned”⁴⁸ or the “supersensible.”⁴⁹ Through this representation of the “unconditioned,” they produce the “transcendental illusion” of being related to special objects, which is why they are to be treated in a “dialectic” according to the system of critique.⁵⁰

⁴¹ KrV B 147.

⁴² Fortschritte 20:325f.

⁴³ See also KU 5:351; further KrV A 220f. and KU 5:342.

⁴⁴ See Logik 9:94, 92.

⁴⁵ See also Kant’s example of the “chronometer” in KrV A 729; on predicables, see Plaass, *Theorie*, 83f.

⁴⁶ KrV A 644.

⁴⁷ KrV A 320.

⁴⁸ KrV A 322.

⁴⁹ KU 5:342.

⁵⁰ See KrV A 297f., 308f.

The two distinctions mentioned – that between given and made concepts and the question of objective reality – allow for a characterization of the ideas of pure reason as follows: These ideas are concepts that have their origin in pure reason, and are therefore *a priori* concepts, but their objective reality can never be proven. With regard to the first distinction, an intermediate position could be identified, although it remains open whether all or only some ideas of pure reason are quasi-given concepts, i.e., whether there are not also made ideas. In what follows, I will argue that some ideas of pure reason are quasi-given concepts from which further ideas can then be derived. This two-step procedure is similar to that of deriving predicables from categories. Most importantly, this procedure allows Kant to fulfill one important claim of his “Transcendental Dialectic,” namely to explain the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary of the *metaphysica specialis*.

2 The origin of the transcendental ideas in pure reason

The character of the transcendental ideas as quasi-made concepts leads to some problems in the reconstruction of their derivation.⁵¹ It is true that Kant explicitly emphasizes the analogy between the derivation of the transcendental ideas and the derivation of the categories.⁵² However, the transcendental ideas cannot be derived by mere “reflection on appearances.”⁵³ Since they do not refer to appearances but to the already categorically determined “material for inferring,”⁵⁴ their derivation must be more complex than that of the categories. Without going into all the difficulties here, I will outline Kant’s derivation of the transcendental ideas in essential points in what follows so we can better understand their quasi-made character.

Kant discusses the transcendental ideas as well as their “system” in the second and third sections of the “First Book” of the “Transcendental Dialectic.”⁵⁵ In the last section, he writes:

No objective deduction of these transcendental ideas is really possible, such as we could provide for the categories. For just because they are ideas, they have in fact no relation to any object that could be given congruent to them. But we can undertake a subjective introduction to them from the nature of our reason, and this is to be accomplished in the present chapter.⁵⁶

Accordingly, Kant claims to have derived the transcendental ideas “from the nature of our reason” – even if only “subjectively.” In order to understand this “subjective introduction” (*subjective Anleitung*), however, it must first be found in the text – Kant’s hint that it has “also been done in the present chapter” does not help much. For “Book I” does not contain “chapters” (*Hauptstücke*) at all, but only “sections” (*Abschnitte* – which in other “books” are “sections” of “main pieces”). So, does the phrase “present chapter” refer to the entire three “sections” of “Book I” or merely to the third section in which the quotation is found?⁵⁷ On inspection, three passages in particular seem to be candidates for the derivation we are

⁵¹ The derivation of transcendental ideas continues to be much debated in research. Caimi, “Deducción;” Klimmek, *System*, 17–50; Lewin, *System*, 57f. and 79f.; Meer, *Grundsatz*, 78–91, 103–11; and Willaschek, *Sources*, 170–85 have been helpful for this text.

⁵² See *KrV* A 321.

⁵³ *KrV* A 310.

⁵⁴ *KrV* A 310.

⁵⁵ See *KrV* A 321–38.

⁵⁶ *KrV* A 336. I differ here from the translation by Guyer and Wood (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 407). In the original German text, Kant writes “Hauptstück,” which Guyer and Wood otherwise translated as “chapter.”

⁵⁷ Meer (*Grundsatz*, 188) considers the quoted passage “dislocated” because it “does not refer to the prosyllogistic derivation of the concepts of reason, which, however, is thematic in this section” (my translation). In contrast, it can be argued that in the preceding paragraph, Kant holds out the prospect that the “following chapter” (*folgendes Hauptstück* – Guyer/Wood translate: “following sections”; see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 406) will answer the question of the various “modi of pure rational concepts” (*KrV* A 335). Insofar as Kant here with “Hauptstück” probably means “book” (i.e., “Book II: The Dialectical Inferences of Pure Reason”), the “present chapter” (*gegenwärtiges Hauptstück*) in A 336 is also to be read as “book” – and thus refers to

seeking: (A) A 321–323 (the first five paragraphs of “Section II”); (B) A 329–332 (the last three paragraphs of “Second II”); (C) A 333f. (the first three paragraphs of “Section III”).

All three text sections are introduced similarly in that in each case reference is made to the specific “form of [the] syllogisms” (*Form der Vernunftschlüsse*) or the “logical form of rational cognition” (*logische Form der Vernunftkenntnis*) – analogous to the “logical form of a judgment”⁵⁸ in the deduction of the categories.⁵⁹ Interestingly, the beginning of (C), which is obviously a recapitulation of the preceding section, mentions, in addition to the reference to the form of syllogisms, a reference to the ascent of pure reason “from conditioned synthesis ... toward unconditioned.”⁶⁰ This fits Kant’s remarks in (A) and (B) insofar as, for the derivation, (A) aims primarily at the “function of reason in its inferences” (*Funktion der Vernunft bei ihren Schlüssen*)⁶¹, and (B), on the other hand, primarily aims at the “ascending series of syllogisms” (*aufsteigende Reihe der Vernunftschlüsse*).⁶² Accordingly, Kant states at the end of his considerations in (A) and (B): “There will be as many concepts of reason as there are species of relation represented by the understanding by means of the categories. There are, therefore, just as many species of syllogism”;⁶³ “the series of premises ... must still contain totality of the condition ...; and the whole series must be unconditionally true if the conditioned ... is supposed to count as true.”⁶⁴ Consideration (C), on the other hand, ends with a specification of different classes of ideas: “Consequently, all transcendental ideas will be brought under three classes.”⁶⁵ Therefore, it seems appropriate to reconstruct the derivation of the transcendental ideas taking into account all three passages.

(A) A 321–323: From the Form of Syllogisms to Pure Concepts of Reason

According to the beginning of this passage in A 321, “the form of the syllogisms” is the “origin” of transcendental ideas (i). A hint on how they can be derived from this origin is given by Kant with the reference to the application of the form of syllogisms “to the synthetic unity of the intuitions under the authority of the categories” (ii).

(i) Already in the second section of the second part of the “Introduction” (“On the logical use of reason”), Kant states that all syllogisms (*Vernunftschlüsse*) have three components: a rule (*Obersatz, major*), a cognition to be subsumed under the condition of the rule (*Untersatz, minor*), and a determination of the cognition through the predicate of the rule (*Schlußsatz, conclusio*).⁶⁶ Since in all syllogisms the major premise expresses a certain *relation* between the respective cognition (expressed in the minor premise) and its condition (stated in the major premise), the syllogisms are to be classified according to the threefold relational function: (a) categorical syllogism – relation between the subject and its marks (“inherence”), (b) hypothetical syllogism – relation between reason and consequence (“dependence”), and (c) disjunctive syllogism – relation between parts in a whole (“concurrence”).⁶⁷ Thus, in the example with the conclusion “Students are mortal,” the relevant relation in each case is in (a): that between “Students are human beings” and the condition “being human” qua “being mortal” (condition is inherence); in (b): that between “Students are human beings” and the condition “If they are human beings, then they are mortal” (condition is ground); and in (c): that between “Students are not immortal” and the condition “They must be either mortal or immortal” (condition is combination in a complete whole). The issue here, then, is not a possible transformation of one type of conclusion into the other, but the respective specific determination of the

“Book I.” The “subjective instruction” is then precisely the derivation of the transcendental ideas, which Meer (*Grundsatz*, 84) also correctly locates in “Book I.”

⁵⁸ KrV A 79.

⁵⁹ KrV A 321, 329, 333; see *Prol* 4:330.

⁶⁰ KrV A 333.

⁶¹ KrV A 321.

⁶² KrV A 331.

⁶³ KrV A 323.

⁶⁴ KrV A 332.

⁶⁵ KrV A 334.

⁶⁶ See KrV A 304; *Logik* § 58.

⁶⁷ See KrV A 304, 336; *Logik* § 60.

relation between the content of the minor premise and the condition stated in the major premise. Already here (at the end of the section on the “logical use of reason”), Kant emphasizes that starting from a conclusion “given as problem” (*Konklusion als ein Urteil aufgegeben*), major premises for syllogisms – and indeed for all of the three different kinds – can be searched for, and that a manifold of cognitions can thereby be systematized by species–genus scheme to a “highest unity.”⁶⁸

(ii) Following his resumption of the idea of the (threefold) form of syllogisms at the beginning of (A), Kant directs the attention to the major premise in (all kinds of) syllogisms. For in the respective major premise, the respective “predicate” is “thought ... in its whole domain under a certain condition.”⁶⁹ In our example, this means (a) that “mortal” applies to all human beings; (b) that “mortal” applies to “students” if they are all human beings; (c) that all “students” are either “mortal” or “immortal”. Accordingly, the predicate “mortal” has a scope that is precisely determined by the particular condition. Taking up this observation, Kant straightforwardly concludes in the following:

This complete magnitude of the domain, in relation to such a condition, is called universality (*universalitas*). In the synthesis of intuition this corresponds to allness (*universitas*), or the totality of conditions. So the transcendental concept of reason is none other than that of the totality of conditions to a given conditioned thing.⁷⁰

So, the “universality” of the major premise is now associated with the “allness”/“totality” – in case it is no longer about the logical use of reason (i.e., inferring from a principle that is generally valid by specifying a certain condition), but about the pure use of reason. For, according to Kant in the corresponding section of the “Introduction,” in the pure use of reason, it is precisely the question whether reason here refers to objects and not merely “gives to given cognitions a certain form.”⁷¹ Should pure reason refer to objects, then its peculiar function in the syllogisms would have to concern not only the strict “universality” under a respective condition (major premise), but the “totality” of the things falling under the respective predicate (in our example: “being mortal”) or their ground (“being human” as reason for “being mortal”) or their location in a complete division (either “being mortal” or “being immortal”). The objectification consists in the thinking of objects to which predicates are attributed in their entirety, or objects which contain complete series of grounds or complete divisions of predicates. The application of the category of allness turns the logical relations between subject and predicate, ground and sequence, and part and whole into determinations of specific objects. The respective object of pure reason would then be “an unconditioned, first, for the categorical synthesis in a subject, second for the hypothetical synthesis of the members of a series, and third for the disjunctive synthesis of the parts in a system.”⁷² Corresponding to the three forms of syllogisms, the “totality of conditions” is thus presented as (a) the totality of marks of a subject, (b) the totality (of the series) of ground–sequence relations, and (c) the totality (of the system) of all positive predicates. Kant thus holds that for the use of pure reason, the mere logical universality is presented as an objective allness (concerning the “synthesis of intuitions”). The (presumed) concepts of reason thus present not merely a unity, but a “plurality ... as a unity.”⁷³ To what extent the concept “unconditioned” comes into play here becomes clearer in the following, namely in (B).

(B) A 329–332: From Conditioned to Unconditioned Synthesis

In the second relevant part of the text, Kant first again points out the analogy of the derivation of transcendental ideas from the form of syllogisms to the derivation of categories from the form of judgments. And in what follows, he first merely points out the peculiar mode of cognition of syllogisms – as in the second paragraph of (A). But then he says: “We easily see that reason attains to a cognition through actions of the understanding that constitute a series of conditions.”⁷⁴ Kant explains what he means using the

⁶⁸ KrV A 304f.

⁶⁹ KrV A 322.

⁷⁰ KrV A 322.

⁷¹ KrV A 305.

⁷² KrV A 323.

⁷³ KrV B 111.

⁷⁴ KrV A 330.

example of a categorical syllogism (which is here referred to the one above in square brackets) and then draws his conclusion:

Thus suppose I arrive at the proposition “All bodies are alterable” [=‘all students are mortal’] only by beginning with the more remote cognition (in which the concept of a body [=‘of the student’] does not occur, but that contains the condition of this concept) that “Everything composite is alterable” [=‘all humans are mortal’], and go from this to a closer proposition standing under the condition of the former: “Bodies are composite” [=‘the students are humans’]; and then from this finally to a third proposition, conjoining the more distant cognition (“alterable” [=‘mortal’]) with the one lying before us: “Consequently, bodies are alterable” [=‘the students are mortal’]; then I arrive at a cognition (a conclusion) through a series of conditions (premises).⁷⁵

Thus, Kant is no longer concerned here with the specific form of the major premise (as in (A)), but with the specific mode of cognition claimed with the execution of syllogisms, which produces a cognition (in the conclusion) “through a series of conditions (premises).” In the next step, Kant makes clear that this “series of conditions” in turn makes possible a “series of inferences, that can be continued to an indeterminate extent either on the side of the conditions (*per prosyllogismos*) or on the side of the conditioned (*per episylogismos*).”⁷⁶ Thus, for example, on the one hand, for the major premise “All humans are mortal” (“on the side of the conditions”), another major premise could be sought (for example, “All animals are mortal,” etc.), on the other hand, the conclusion “All students are mortal” (“on the side of the conditioned”) could serve as a major premise for further conclusions (for example, “All addressees of the study regulations of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Kaliningrad are mortal”). However, only one of the two directions of conclusion is relevant for the use of pure reason, namely the “ascending series of syllogisms,” since here it is presupposed “that all members of the series are given on the side of the conditions (totality in the series of premises), because only under this presupposition is the judgment before us possible *a priori*.”⁷⁷ Thus, in the ascending series of conclusions of reason, the presupposition of an unconditioned qua “totality in the series of premises” is in cases of inference always in play.⁷⁸ How this “totality” is to be imagined more precisely remains open here according to Kant.⁷⁹

(C) A 333f.: From Concepts of the Unconditioned to Unconditioned Objects

Kant explicitly points out the two points mentioned here – first: the three functions of reasoning and second: the complete determination of the conditions presupposed on the side of the premises – in the first paragraph of (C). They are the “origin” of the transcendental ideas.⁸⁰ If the concepts inferred from this origin are to have “objective validity,” that is, if they are to be “correctly inferred concepts,”⁸¹ which refer to objects as “cognitions” (*cognitiones*)⁸², there is still one step missing. At the beginning of the second paragraph, it says: “Now what is universal in every relation that our representations can have is (1) the relation to the subject, (2) the relation to objects, and indeed either as appearances, or as objects of thinking in general.”⁸³ Accordingly, all representations (*Vorstellungen*) refer either to the subject or to an object. This distinction is then thought together with that of the threefold determination of relation: “If we combine this subdivision with the above division, then all the relation of representations of which we can make either a concept or an idea are of three sorts: (1) the relation to the subject, (2) to the manifold of the object in

⁷⁵ *KrV* A 330f.

⁷⁶ *KrV* A 331.

⁷⁷ *KrV* A 331.

⁷⁸ Only one further point is to be presupposed: the truth of the totality of all premises. Since the truth of the conclusion depends on the truth of the premises, but all premises must be considered as (at least potentially) given, the totality of all premises must also be true – and indeed “unconditionally true,” since its truth value is by definition not subject to any further condition (see *KrV* A 332).

⁷⁹ Below, I discuss how this “totality” is thought more specifically, with the example of the idea of rational psychology (Section 3.1).

⁸⁰ See *KrV* A 333.

⁸¹ *KrV* A 311.

⁸² See *KrV* A 320.

⁸³ *KrV* A 333f.

appearance, and (3) to all things in general.”⁸⁴ Here, we are now concerned only with those representations that are “concepts” or “ideas,” that is, nonintuitive objective perceptions.⁸⁵ They can stand in a relation “to the subject,” “to the manifold of the object in appearance,” or “to all things in general.” Kant then specifies further (in the third paragraph): “Now all pure concepts have to do generally with the synthetic unity of representations, but concepts of pure reason (transcendental ideas) have to do with the unconditioned synthetic unity of all conditions in general.”⁸⁶ In contrast to categories (like ideas also pure concepts), which describe the different kinds of synthesis of representations, manifolds of intuition(s), and also mere concepts, the transcendental ideas aim at the “unconditional synthetic unity of all conditions in general.” Kant thinks he has shown this in (A) and (B) with the reference to a “totality of conditions.” Applying this aspect of totality to the threefold distinction of all (nonintuitive) cognitions, it follows that:

Consequently, all transcendental ideas will be brought under three classes, of which the first contains the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject, the second the absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearance, the third the absolute unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general.⁸⁷

With this Kant means to have determined all (speculatively possible) objects of transcendental ideas in general. The totalities projected in (A) and (B) are here firstly thought as objects of cognition, and secondly a complete classification of these objects is given.⁸⁸ The derivation of the transcendental ideas is thus completed. But whether the transcendental ideas actually have objective validity, i.e., whether the objects designated by them are something actually distinguished by reason (and not merely subjectively necessary hypotheses, etc.), must be shown by the examination of the corresponding “inferences of pure reason” (“Book II”).

The sketch provided here of the derivation of the transcendental ideas makes clear why the transcendental ideas are in part given and in part made concepts. Like the categories, they are derived from the nature of thought. Just as, according to Kant, the functions of judgment are something given to us that we cannot again justify or derive, the functions of inference are something that belongs to the nature of reason and are given to us. But while the functions of judgment in a metaphysical deduction can serve as a “clue” to the derivation of the categories without any great difficulty, the three forms of syllogisms alone are not yet sufficient for the derivation of transcendental ideas. For reason does not refer directly to a manifold of intuition. But this is necessary in order to assign an objective sense to the concepts derived from the respective functions. In the case of the derivation of the transcendental ideas, the lack of the missing reference to intuition is compensated by the fact that the totality of the conditions to a given unconditioned is put in place of the manifold of intuition.⁸⁹ It is only by this workaround that concepts can be generated from the forms of inferences of reason, which (seem to) designate particular objects (whereby it remains open whether these objects actually exist). However, the totality of conditions used partly results from a prosyllogistic procedure, so that the transcendental ideas are understood by Kant not as reflected concepts but as inferred concepts.

In Kant’s derivation of the transcendental ideas, three steps can therefore be roughly distinguished: first, the highlighting of a threefold determination of relations in syllogisms as the origin of specific concepts of reason; second, the reference to the possibility of a twofold sequence of syllogisms, whereby only the sequence of conditions also presupposes totality; together with the three different forms of syllogisms, the idea of three different totalities arises; and third, the identification of the objects of the thought concepts of totality as presumed objects of cognition.

⁸⁴ *KrV* A 334.

⁸⁵ See *KrV* A 320.

⁸⁶ *KrV* A 334.

⁸⁷ *KrV* A 334.

⁸⁸ The third step is therefore not necessary for the derivation of the three ideas of special metaphysics. But it is necessary to conceptualize these ideas as objects of knowledge. For this, Kant obviously uses a division of representations that other philosophers do not have to share. But it allows him to explain systematically the tripartite structure of special metaphysics.

⁸⁹ See again *KrV* A 322.

3 The psychological ideas of pure reason

The reconstructed derivation of the transcendental ideas leads to the thought of three different “totalities,” which are derived from the form of syllogisms and are taken as objects of cognition. Kant assigns three transcendental concepts to them: the “concept of a subject that contains nothing manifold,” “the concept of absolute totality in the series of conditions for a given appearance,” and the concept of “the totality of conditions for thinking objects in general.”⁹⁰ They indicate the objects of the “transcendental doctrine of the soul (*psychologia rationalis*),” the “transcendental science of the world (*cosmologia rationalis*),” and the “transcendental cognition of God (*theologia rationalis*)”⁹¹ – in short, the ‘soul,’ ‘world,’ and ‘God.’ As concepts of objects, they are to be determined by the categories.⁹² From the categorial determination result further concepts, which Kant also calls transcendental ideas, and which justify his talk of “three classes” of transcendental ideas.⁹³ These transcendental ideas provide the basic vocabulary of the three metaphysical sciences mentioned. Moreover, they can be used to generate further concepts of pure reason, so, according to Kant, the transcendental ideas are the basis for the entire vocabulary of the three parts of the *metaphysica specialis*.

I will briefly sketch in the following step (Section 3.1) how the production of transcendental ideas works in the case of rational psychology. I will then take Kant’s suggestion that from these ideas “spring all the concepts of the pure doctrine of the soul”⁹⁴ and try to reconstruct the production of the derived ideas of rational psychology (Section 3.2).

3.1 Transcendental idea(s) of rational psychology

The sketch above of the derivation of the transcendental ideas has pointed out three essential steps which we should also find at work in the case of the transcendental ideas of rational psychology. The derivation goes as follows:

- (i) The first step is the correlation to one of the forms of syllogism in order to state the “origin” of the concepts of rational psychology. Here, the categorial syllogism is relevant, which is characterized by the fact that the major premise is a categorial proposition, i.e., a relation of inherence is thought. As we have seen, for the derivation of concepts of reason from this relation of inherence, a “totality of conditions” must be thought as a “totality” of features of a subject.
- (ii) The second step fixes this thought of the “totality” of features of a subject. In the case of the categorial syllogism, it is not immediately obvious how in an ascending series of syllogisms an ever more general premise and finally a pure concept of reason are found in this regard.⁹⁵ The prosyllogistic procedure here merely leads to more and more general concepts of the logical subject, none of which, however, constitutes an “unconditional subject,” i.e., a subject that could not itself function as a predicate again. Only the notion of a thing would remain, from which all properties have been abstracted (“the concept of the substantial,” *Substantiale*).⁹⁶ But how should the idea of a specific “totality” be

⁹⁰ KrV A 340, similarly 323, 334.

⁹¹ KrV A 334f.

⁹² Categorial determination, according to Kant, is the minimum for objective sense, that is, for the thinking of an object (see, e.g., KrV A 97, B 146; KpV 5:136).

⁹³ See KrV A 334, 340. – Whether the transcendental concepts of the three totalities of thought (i.e., “soul,” “world,” and “God”) or only the concepts of the categorial determinations of these totalities are to be called “ideas” is not important here. Kant himself is not clear on this point.

⁹⁴ KrV A 345.

⁹⁵ For a detailed account of the derivation of the transcendental ideas of rational cosmology and rational theology through a series of prosyllogisms, see Caimi, “Deducción,” 463–86.

⁹⁶ KrV A 414; see Serck-Hanssen, “Nutzen,” 63f.

derived from this notion? Kant himself, in his derivation of the cosmological ideas, explicitly identifies this “substantial” with the “transcendental subject,”⁹⁷ and at the beginning of the Paralogisms chapter, he refers directly to the transcendental concept of “I think.”⁹⁸ And indeed, in a certain sense, “I think” fulfills the condition of giving a kind of “totality in the series of premises”⁹⁹ in the case of a series of categorical prosyllogisms. For all concepts are representations of a thinking subject: the “I think” is “the vehicle of all concepts in general”¹⁰⁰ and the “I as subject ... cannot again be thought as the predicate of some other subject.”¹⁰¹ This representation is nothing other than the “transcendental concept of a subject that contains nothing manifold,”¹⁰² for all definite predicates are abstracted from, and only its pure predicatability is thought. Since in an ascending series of syllogisms to every more general premise the “I think” can be added again, the transcendental concept of a subject thus corresponds exactly to the sought concept of a most general subject. Thus, when pure reason seeks a “totality” of all possible “conditions” in categorical inferences, it finds this completeness in the relation of all concepts to “mere apperception.”¹⁰³

- (iii) But the “I think” must not only designate the “transcendental unity of self-consciousness”¹⁰⁴ if it is to be the foundation for rational psychology. And as emphasized above, the mere thought of a specific totality is not yet sufficient to be called a transcendental idea. Rather, in a third step, this totality must still be taken as an object of cognition. That the totality relevant here refers to the subject already became clear in the reconstructed second step. There are then still two tasks open to make the “I think” a specific object of cognition: It has to be determined by categories – like any object of cognition – and its objective reality has to be demonstrated – due to the lack of reference to intuitions. The first task is fulfilled by the “topics of the rational doctrine of the soul.”¹⁰⁵ The second task would have to be fulfilled by correct inferences of pure reason¹⁰⁶ – and it is Kant’s claim to have shown the “fallacy”¹⁰⁷ of rational psychology meticulously in the chapter on the paralogisms.

Since this second task no longer belongs to the topic of concept formation under the guidance of pure reason, I will not discuss it further here.¹⁰⁸ The “topics” (*Topik*), on the other hand, is important for us here, since the four “transcendental predicates”¹⁰⁹ of “I think” are listed there. Since the thought of the specific totality of categorical reasoning is supposed to designate a particular object of cognition, with this thought “first a thing, I as a thinking being, is given.”¹¹⁰ Accordingly, at the top of the “topics” is the characterization of the thinking being by the category of substance, then follow the characterizations of it as “simple,” as “numerically identical,” and as existing (independently of other objects) “in space.”¹¹¹ The exact correlation of the respective categories is not further justified by Kant in the context of the “topics.” It is obviously oriented first of all to the determinations of the “soul” by contemporaneous rational

⁹⁷ KrV A 414; see *Prol* 4:334, KrV A 346.

⁹⁸ KrV A 341.

⁹⁹ KrV A 331.

¹⁰⁰ KrV A 341.

¹⁰¹ *Prol* 4:334; see Serck-Hanssen, “Nutzen,” 65.

¹⁰² KrV A 340.

¹⁰³ KrV A 343.

¹⁰⁴ KrV B 132; A 107f.

¹⁰⁵ KrV A 344.

¹⁰⁶ See KrV A 397.

¹⁰⁷ KrV A 341.

¹⁰⁸ See in detail, for example, Grier, *Doctrine*, chap. 5; Klimmek, *System*, 117–62; Dyck, *Psychology*, chaps. 3–6; and Willaschek, *Sources*, 188–202.

¹⁰⁹ KrV A 343.

¹¹⁰ KrV A 344.

¹¹¹ KrV A 344.

psychology.¹¹² Most importantly, this correlation remains incomprehensible without Kant's further explanations in the Paralogisms chapter. And indeed, in the second edition, Kant gives a decisive clue right at the beginning: It is the "analysis of the consciousness of myself in thinking in general" that is "falsely held to be a metaphysical determination of the object [=the soul]."¹¹³ This "analysis" leads by means of the "modi of self-consciousness" (as "mere functions," not already as "categories"¹¹⁴) to four "identical" (analytic) propositions: "in every judgment I am always the determining subject";¹¹⁵ "the I of apperception, consequently in every thought, is a single thing [*Singular*]";¹¹⁶ I am identical with myself "in everything manifold of which I am conscious";¹¹⁷ "I distinguish my own existence, that of a thinking being, from other things outside me."¹¹⁸

If these "trivialities"¹¹⁹ are used to determine by categories that which the thought of the specific totality of categorical reasoning takes as an object, then the result is the characterization of "I think" as a simple, identical substance that exists independently of other objects in space.¹²⁰ Thus, for the production of the transcendental ideas of rational psychology, a further step beyond the above three general steps is needed: the use of the results of an analysis of self-consciousness, which, however, are not merely understood as platitudes of transcendental logic, but as characterizations of a specific object – precisely of a "thinking being."

The fact that Kant has made good progress here on the way to explain the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary of rational psychology can be shown quite well. For at least the characterization of the thinking being as a simple substance that exists independently of other objects in space is familiar in German rational psychology of the eighteenth century.¹²¹ Accordingly, the *psychologia rationalis* in Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* begins with a statement of the "nature of the human soul" (*natura animae humanae*), where substantiality, simplicity, and its existence in space are emphasized at the very beginning.¹²² Crusius' quite differently conceived "Pneumatology" starts from the beginning with "spirits" (*Geister*) that are *eo ipso* substances distinct from the body.¹²³ That they nevertheless exist in space and that they are simple is essential for Crusius, and he devotes extensive discussions to both features.¹²⁴ And Feder, who is comparatively reserved about metaphysical speculations, also presupposes the substantiality of the soul in his exposition of the "Pneumatology" and considers its "simplicity" to be the most

¹¹² On Kant's definition of the origin of the concept and predicates of the soul in the context of the rational psychology of his time, see Dyck, *Psychology*, chaps. 2 and 3, and Tester, *Metaphysics*, chap. 1. To prevent a possible misunderstanding: This does not mean that Kant uses the respective categories because he would have found it that way in textbooks, or that he even does it arbitrarily. Rather, Kant explains the correlations in the following chapters (by confusing analytical insights into the structure of self-consciousness with the objective cognition of a certain object) – but not in the "topics."

¹¹³ KrV B 409.

¹¹⁴ KrV B 406f.

¹¹⁵ KrV B 407.

¹¹⁶ KrV B 407.

¹¹⁷ KrV B 408.

¹¹⁸ KrV B 409.

¹¹⁹ Klimmek, *System*, 137.

¹²⁰ The last characterization is not yet a characterization as immaterial or spiritual, as Rosefeldt, *Ich*, 136; or Willaschek, *Sources*, 188f. mistakenly assume. The modal characterization aims solely at the property of being able to exist independently of spatial things. The properties "immaterial" and "spiritual" require even more features than this. Kant therefore presents them in the following as derived concepts of reason.

¹²¹ In the following, I only refer to the textbooks on metaphysics by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Christian August Crusius, and Johann Georg Heinrich Feder. Since these authors belong to different philosophical traditions and, moreover, Kant was familiar with their textbooks, this seems legitimate to me. I will also concentrate on mere references and will not pay further attention to the differences in the doctrines of substance in the three authors.

¹²² Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §§ 742, 745. The simplicity of the soul is not explicitly mentioned by Baumgarten in rational psychology. In § 746, however, where Baumgarten emphasizes the incorruptibility of the soul, he calls it "indivisible" (*indivisibilis*). Above all, the simplicity of the soul already results from the fact that it is substance (see Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 156).

¹²³ Crusius, *Entwurf*, §§ 429, 430.

¹²⁴ Ibid., §§ 431, 473.

important feature.¹²⁵ Only the characterization as an “identical” being does not come up explicitly in these texts. The reason for this is that Kant distinguishes “identity” and “personality” (*Persönlichkeit*) here in the rational–psychological context. Since Kant presents personality as a derived concept of reason,¹²⁶ I will return to it in Section 3.2.

3.2 Derived ideas of rational psychology

With the “topics of the rational doctrine of the soul,” besides the concept of a subject that does not contain anything manifold (= soul), four further concepts of reason are obtained: the concept of the substantiality of the soul, the concept of the simplicity of the soul, the concept of the identity of the soul, and the concept of the existence of the soul that is independent of other spatial objects. Directly following the “topics,” Kant explains that further concepts of reason can be derived in turn from these concepts:

From these elements, at least through composition, spring all the concepts of the pure doctrine of the soul, without any other principle being cognized in the least. This substance, merely as an object of inner sense, gives us the concept of immateriality; as simple substance, it gives us that of incorruptibility; its identity, as an intellectual substance, gives us personality; all these points together give us spirituality; the relation to objects in space gives us the interaction with bodies; thus it represents the thinking substance as the principle of life in matter, i.e., as a soul (*anima*) and as the ground of animality, and this – limited by spirituality – is immortality.¹²⁷

According to this claim, further concepts of rational psychology can be produced by mere “composition.” In order to understand this claim better and to make it somewhat plausible, the six “compositions” can be reconstructed in a first step – in the most possible closeness to the text and paying attention only to the “elements” and their “composition” – as follows (where: 1 = “soul as substance”; 2 = “soul as simple”; 3 = “soul as identical”; 4 = “soul as existing independently”; + = “composed with”):

- (a) “[t]his substance, merely as an object of inner sense, gives us the concept of immateriality”: 1 + inner sense = immateriality;¹²⁸
- (b) “[t]his substance ... as simple substance ... gives us [the concept] of incorruptibility”: 1 + 2 = incorruptibility;
- (c) “[the] identity [of this substance], as an intellectual substance, gives us [the concept of] personality”: 1 + 3 = personality;
- (d) “the relation [of this substance] to objects in space gives us [the concept of] the interaction with bodies; thus it [=pure doctrine of the soul] represents the thinking substance as the principle of life in matter, i.e., as a soul (*anima*) and as the ground of animality”: 1 + 4 = interaction (*Kommerzium* – as principle of life);
- (e) “all these points [=immateriality, incorruptibility and personality] together give us [the concept of] spirituality”: (a) + (b) + (c) = spirituality;¹²⁹
- (f) “this [=as the ground of animality] – limited by spirituality – [gives us the concept of] immortality”: (d) + (e) = immortality.

¹²⁵ Feder, *Logik*, § 47 of *Metaphysik*.

¹²⁶ See *KrV* A 345.

¹²⁷ *KrV* A 345.

¹²⁸ Heimsoeth, *Dialektik*, 90, however, sees in (a) the composition of the elements 1 and 4. This is not only implausible in view of the wording of the text. Rather, the composition of 1 and 4 occurs only somewhat later (see (d)) and results in the property “existing in interaction [*commercium*] with a body.” Heimsoeth then cannot reconstruct this property as the result of a special composition but sees it “given with the fourth of the elements” (91, my translation).

¹²⁹ See *Fortschritte* 20:309. Heimsoeth, *Dialektik*, 90f., even explains (e) with the passage from the late *Preisschrift*.

Taking this reconstruction as a starting point, a general observation can be pointed out in a second step. Of the six derivations, (b), (c), and (d) are said to be combinations of 1 with the other elements, i.e., 2, 3, and 4. The last two derivations (e) and (f), on the other hand, are combinations of already derived concepts, whereas (f) even contains a concept (spirituality) derived from derived concepts. All these five derivations therefore consist of more or less simple compositions of the original elements – “without any other principle being cognized in the least.” The first derivation (a), however, seems to be an exception, insofar as here the first element (soul as substance) is thought “as an object of inner sense.” So, it is not composed with one of the other elements, but with inner sense. With this, however, it is only emphasized that the substance thought here is a thinking being and as such could also only be accessible to inner sense.¹³⁰ But with that it also cannot be anything material, perceptible through the outer senses.¹³¹ It is therefore to be called non-corporeal (“immaterial”).

In a third step, the other derivations can also be considered one by one. However, they are in need of explanation. The most unproblematic derivation is certainly the second one (b): Every simple substance is by definition imperishable (also: incorruptible, indestructible). It does not matter whether it is conceived as material or immaterial – even an absolutely simple body would be incorruptible.¹³² The concept of corruption (*corruptibilitas*) used here is that of a “division” (*Zerteilung*, *divisio physica*) or “separation” (*Zertrennung*) of the parts,¹³³ which obviously cannot be applied to an absolutely simple thing. The conceptual composition here is thus merely a connection of the concept of substance with the concept of the simple.

The third derivation (c), on the other hand, is more difficult, at least in a terminological respect. Apart from the fact that “personality” is presented here as a derived concept, but at a later point is apparently used synonymously with “identity” (i.e., element 3),¹³⁴ the interjection “as an intellectual substance” is remarkable. For obviously a composition of “substance” (element 1) and “identity” (element 3) would not yet lead to “personality” in the sense of an identity extending over time, of which this substance is also conscious.¹³⁵ An identical substance could just as well be a material substance, and then the feature “personality” would not be attributed to it. Therefore, the concept of substance used here must explicitly be that of an intellectual substance, that is, a thinking substance that possesses a “*memoria intellectualis*.”¹³⁶ If a thinking substance is aware not only of its particular states, but also of its identity in changing states, then it possesses a corresponding faculty, which is called “personality” in early modern philosophy.¹³⁷ The composition here is thus the connection of the concept of (thinking) substance with the concept of identity, so that this substance is conscious of its states and its identity.

The fourth derivation (d) is problematic, since on the one hand, the concept of an “interaction with bodies” (*Kommerzium mit Körpern*), and on the other hand, the concept of a “principle of life” results from it. As far as the concept of interaction with bodies is concerned, it seems to be only about the composition of the concept of substance (element 1) with the property of something which exists in space but independent of spatial things (element 4). This composition results in a thing which is not spatial itself, but is in connection with spatial things (bodies). What is in question here is the exact nature of the connection in which the thinking substance, distinct from spatial things, stands with bodies. Kant does not problematize this question – a classical controversial issue in the metaphysics of philosophy in early modern times –

¹³⁰ Of course, according to Kant, the substance of the soul is also not accessible to inner sense as an object of cognition (see already *KrV* A 22).

¹³¹ According to Kant, the concept of matter is composed of the concepts “extension” (*Ausdehnung*) and “impenetrability” (*Undurchdringlichkeit*; see *KrV* A 618). Both concepts are not applicable to objects of inner sense.

¹³² See *Met-L1* 27:271; on this, see Klemme, *Philosophie*, 303.

¹³³ See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 746, further §§ 164, 165; Crusius, *Entwurf*, § 474, further §§ 107, 108.

¹³⁴ See Kant’s exposition of the third paralogism in the first edition (*KrV* A 361ff.).

¹³⁵ *KrV* A 362.

¹³⁶ Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 641.

¹³⁷ See, e.g., Locke, *Essay*, II.27; Wolff, *Psychologia*, § 743. For a detailed discussion of Kant’s references to Lockean and Wolffian accounts of personality, see Tester, *Metaphysics*, chap. 3.

further here, but in using the term “commercium” merely gives the indication that the thinking substance stands in a “real community”¹³⁸ with bodies. Moreover, he specifies the thinking substance directly here as “principle of life” or as “ground of animality.” Thus one would have to speak of a living thing if a thinking substance exists and can interact with material things. This corresponds at least to the views of traditional German metaphysics.¹³⁹ With regard to Kant, this is on the one hand plausible, since it corresponds to his relevant precritical considerations.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, it becomes particularly clear here that Kant is merely trying to reconstruct given terms from mainstream philosophy. For he himself defines the concept of life in his critical philosophy by using the concept of the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*) and the concept of law (*Gesetz*) and precisely no longer in the terms of the metaphysics of substances.¹⁴¹

The fifth derivation (e) also seems to be rather unproblematic. Because in it the concepts of immaterial substance, incorruptibility, and personality are connected (“composed”) with each other. The concept of the spiritual is consequently defined using the predicates “immateriality,” “incorruptibility,” and “personality.” But as clear as this definition may look, it seems to be arbitrary. Baumgarten, for example, defines “spirit” simply as intellectual substance (*substantia intellectualis*),¹⁴² which is already given by the derivation (c). If one adds the common premise that matter cannot think,¹⁴³ then the other two predicates “immateriality” and “incorruptibility” could also be directly inferred. However, the concept of spirit (*Geist*) is defined, for instance, by Crusius in such a way that it refers to a substance that can also think and will independently of its connection to the body.¹⁴⁴ And indeed, even in the late *Preisschrift*, Kant himself defines “spirit” as a soul which can continue to live (think and will) even without connection to the body.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the concepts of immateriality and incorruptibility are added to the concept of a person, making this derivation comprehensible as well.

Finally, the sixth derivation (f) can be reconstructed insofar as it starts from the concept of “interaction with bodies” (result of (d)), but this is “limited.” According to the traditional view, only those living beings are immortal whose “ground of animality” is a spiritual substance. To this belongs the quality of personality, which is denied to animals.¹⁴⁶ It is true that animals also have life, since their body is connected with an immaterial and incorruptible soul. However, it is only the feature of personality, consequently spirituality, which distinguishes a soul as “immortal,” such that the thinking substance can also exercise its abilities (to think and to will) independently of its connection with the body. Thus the composition here is that between the concept of a thinking substance connected with bodies and the complex concept of a spiritual substance according which the second is not only understood as a type of the first (like “human” and “animal”), but also a separation of the thinking substance from the body is considered. And only in the case that the thinking substance is a spiritual substance, can it continue to exercise its abilities and in this respect be called immortal.

Having discussed the different derivations, in a fourth step we can ask about the special status of the concepts produced here. Since they are produced by certain compositions of those concepts which are listed in the “topics,” they must be clearly regarded as made concepts. And since the elements mentioned in the “topics” are *a priori* concepts, these derived concepts of reason are made *a priori* concepts. In this respect they are like predicables, which are produced by compositions from the categories. Unlike the predicables, however, the elements from which the derived concepts of reason are composed are not “ancestral

¹³⁸ KrV A 214.

¹³⁹ See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §§ 777, 780; Crusius, *Entwurf*, § 458.

¹⁴⁰ See *Träume* 2:327; *Met-L1* 27:283f.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., *KpV* 5:9; by contrast, see *Met-Dohna* 27:671, on this Heimsoeth, *Dialektik*, 91.

¹⁴² See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 402.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, § 742; Crusius, *Entwurf*, §§ 472, 429.

¹⁴⁴ Crusius, *Entwurf*, §§ 434, 471.

¹⁴⁵ *Fortschritte* 20:309.

¹⁴⁶ See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 594; Crusius, *Entwurf*, 434; Feder, *Logik*, § 56 of *Metaphysics*. According to Crusius, the souls of “non-rational animals” can also be called “spirits.” But they are “more imperfect” (*unvollkommener*), since “consciousness, reason and immortality” cannot be attributed to them (Crusius, *Entwurf*, § 434, my translations).

concepts" (*Stammbegriffe*),¹⁴⁷ but predicates of the supposed object of an inferred concept. This concept is indeed produced on the basis of the "nature" of reason. But the assumption that the object of this concept actually exists is based on a false inference.¹⁴⁸ In the case of predicables, on the other hand, there is at least the possibility of granting them objective reality by examples in experience.

Nevertheless, the comparison with predicables is helpful in at least two respects:

First, both the case of the predicables and the case of the derived concepts of pure reason show that Kant continues the traditional view of the formation of concepts from a few basic concepts. From given *a priori* concepts, further *a priori* concepts are to be produced by compositions. While in the case of predicables these derived concepts are made directly from a combination of the categories; however, the elements for the production of the derived concepts of reason are concepts already "inferred" and produced by categorial determination. As in the case of the predicables, however, Kant gives only vague hints as to how exactly the respective production ("composition") works, so the specific derivations remain unclear.¹⁴⁹ Already in the case of the predicables, the derivations seem to be complex and do not follow a single principle. This also applies as we have seen to the production of the derived concepts of reason, since the respective elements to be composed are not always used in the same sense. Moreover, Kant's explanation of composition as "synthesis of a manifold of what does not necessarily belong to each other"¹⁵⁰ is so general that it does not help much. As in the case of predicables, therefore, there is nothing left to do but to consider the particular derived concepts and Kant's references to their elements carefully and to ask how the composition functions in the respective case more precisely.¹⁵¹

Second, the special systematic function of the predicables can be found in a certain sense in the derived concepts of reason as well. This is because the predicables are first relevant for a "complete system of transcendental philosophy,"¹⁵² that is, a reconstruction of the vocabulary of ontology of traditional metaphysics.¹⁵³ Moreover, the predicables play an important role for particular sciences, providing, for instance, the basic concepts for the metaphysics of nature or the metaphysics of law.¹⁵⁴ Thus, on the one hand, predicables have an integrating function, as Kant wants to use them to show that he can derive all common ontological concepts from his table of categories. On the other hand, some predicables also have a constructive function, insofar as their *a priori* character serves Kant to work out "metaphysical foundations" for certain domains of objects. This second function cannot, of course, belong to the derived concepts of reason in the same sense, since their elements are already mere ideas, i.e., problematic concepts. And Kant wants to show in the "Transcendental Dialectic" precisely that the traditional *metaphysica specialis* is an impossible project.

In contrast, the derived concepts of reason certainly fulfill the first function – at least with respect to the example of rational psychology. For just as the traditional ontological vocabulary is not exhausted in Kant's twelve pure concepts of understanding, traditional rational psychology is not concerned only with the determination of "I think" as a simple, identical substance independent of other objects. Rather, it is precisely the spirituality of the substance of the soul that is thematized in rational (as opposed to empirical)

¹⁴⁷ KrV A 81.

¹⁴⁸ Kant summarizes this false inference concisely in the second edition of the first *Critique*: "What cannot be thought otherwise than as subject does not exist otherwise than as subject, and is therefore substance. Now a thinking being, considered merely as such, cannot be thought otherwise than as subject. Therefore, it also exists only as such a thing, i.e., as substance" (KrV B 410).

¹⁴⁹ For the predicables, Kant holds that "with the mere mention" of them he "can be satisfied in a merely critical essay" (KrV A 82). The same might be true for the derived concepts of reason.

¹⁵⁰ KrV B 201.

¹⁵¹ On Kant's theory of predicables, which has received little attention so far, see the various reflections and attempts at reconstruction in Plaass, *Theorie*, 68ff.; Gloy, *Theorie*, 153ff.; Cramer, *Urteile*, 154ff. and 197ff.; Brouck, *Besitzlehre*, 71ff. and 123ff.; Dörflinger, *Leben*, 171ff.; Hiltcher, "Rekonstruktion;" and Klingner, *Theorie*, 99–118.

¹⁵² KrV A 81.

¹⁵³ See KrV A 82.

¹⁵⁴ See Plaass, *Theorie*; Brouck, *Besitzlehre*.

psychology.¹⁵⁵ The soul as spirit is essentially characterized in rational psychology by the predicates “immateriality,”¹⁵⁶ “incorruptibility,”¹⁵⁷ and “personality.”¹⁵⁸ The connection of the soul with the body and its function as an animating principle are central themes of the philosophical accounts of traditional metaphysics.¹⁵⁹ And the reflections on the immortality of the soul are the climax or crowning conclusion of rational psychology.¹⁶⁰ If one adds Kant’s understanding of rational psychology, which follows Baumgarten and according to which rational psychology deals with those concepts that “are derived from the concept of the soul by a longer series of inferences of reason” (*ex notione animae longiori rationum serie deducit*),¹⁶¹ then one can rightly claim that he can explain the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary specific to rational psychology. This explanation leads from one of the logical functions of reason, through the production of the concept of an absolute subject, to concepts denoting the features of such a subject. Most of these concepts are produced by a combinatorial procedure that combines categorical elements – similar to the case of predicables.

4 Conclusion – and the question: what is it good for?

In his “Transcendental Dialectic,” Kant presented a criticism of the *metaphysica specialis*, which, however, is not reduced to the proof of the faultiness of more or less common arguments of rationalistic metaphysics. Rather, an essential part of this criticism is the proof that the special concepts of the three parts of the *metaphysica specialis* have their origin *exclusively* in the nature of pure reason. For it is only if this proof succeeds that Kant can justifiably claim that the considerations of the rationalistic metaphysicians are not mere follies. According to him, they are rather the result of a misunderstood search of reason for something “unconditioned.”

As we have seen, the proof that the metaphysical concepts have their origin in the nature of pure reason includes several steps: first, the complex derivation of transcendental ideas as thoughts of certain objects that are not objects of experience; second, the application of the categories in order to be able to think determined objects with the transcendental ideas as well; and third, the production of further metaphysical concepts from the concepts obtained by the first two steps, with which the objects of thought are to be further determined. At least in the example of Kant’s criticism of rational psychology, it thus became clear that for Kant the metaphysical concepts are not arbitrarily made-up concepts.¹⁶² Rather, they can be reconstructed from the material which is available to pure reason. Although they are not “given” *a priori* concepts like the categories, they nevertheless belong to the *a priori* inventory of human reason.

¹⁵⁵ Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 743; also Crusius, *Entwurf*, § 434.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., § 757; Ibid., § 471.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., § 746; Ibid., § 474.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., § 756 with reference to §§ 641, 754. Crusius does not use the concept “personality” in the “Pneumatology.” But according to him, too, a spirit is distinguished by an understanding (*Verstand*) and by a consciousness of its own identity (Crusius, *Entwurf*, §§ 441–442). And Crusius, too, uses “person” to refer to a simple, thinking substance (ibid. § 24). The predicates “spirituality” (*spiritualitas*), “intellection” (*intellectualitas*), “personality” (*personalitas*), “simplicity” (*simplicitas*), and “incorruptibility” (*incorruptibilitas*) are enumerated by Baumgarten in § 756 of the *Metaphysica* as essential properties (*essentialia*) of the human soul, and Kant probably refers to this enumeration. One property listed by Baumgarten there is not mentioned by Kant in his criticism of rational psychology: freedom (*libertas*). Kant’s theoretical discussion of freedom falls within his criticism of rational cosmology (see in detail Ludwig, *Fortschritte*, 87–106).

¹⁵⁹ See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §§ 740, 750, 761ff.; Crusius, *Entwurf*, §§ 432, 433, 458.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., §§ 776–81; Ibid., §§ 482–4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., § 503 (my translation). Dyck, *Psychology*, chaps. 2 and 3, works out in detail that Kant in the Paralogisms chapter of the first *Critique* goes beyond Baumgarten – and even Crusius – with his demand for pure apriority of rational psychology and its far-reaching separation from empirical psychology (see esp. *KrV A* 343f.).

¹⁶² For Kant’s criticism of rational cosmology and rational theology, this would have to be shown separately. Hints at least can be found in *KrV A* 411–8 and *A* 580.

Finally, by demonstrating the faultiness of the various inferences that use the special concepts of pure reason, Kant shows that the *metaphysica specialis* cannot be a science. Thus, in conclusion, the question arises as to what Kant has gained by proving the *a priori* origin of the concepts of pure reason. For such a proof does not seem to be necessary to expose the inferences of the *metaphysica specialis* as dialectical. To give at least some further indications of the constructive function of the derivation of all special concepts of rational psychology, two points should be noted:¹⁶³

First, Kant grants rational psychology a disciplining role. It can save the philosopher from “soulless materialism” as well as from “spiritualism that must be groundless for us in life.”¹⁶⁴ Of course, the impossibility of knowledge of the soul and its properties is especially relevant here according to which both a reduction of the mental to matter and a reduction of matter to something mental are quite uncertain claims. But the special concepts of rational psychology also seem to have some relevance here. Regarding “materialism,” according to Kant, it is above all the “simplicity” of the thinking subject that cannot be explained in a physical manner.¹⁶⁵ Regarding “spiritualism,” on the other hand, it is the reference to the dependence of inner sense on the persistence of outer sense, i.e., the interaction of soul and body, which opposes the claim of a complete independence of the immaterial soul from the body.¹⁶⁶

Second – and probably more crucial – rational psychology (as a discipline) also has a certain role to play in Kant’s practical reading and continuation of metaphysical ideas. Here, of course, it is the concept of the immortality of the soul that is central. It is true that a speculative proof of “the necessary continuation of our existence”¹⁶⁷ is not possible according to the criticism of rational psychology. However, Kant famously insists on the possibility of moral–teleological arguments for the immortality of the soul.¹⁶⁸ And indeed, at least in his exposition of the argument for immortality in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant uses the relevant derived concepts of pure reason: it is the “the existence and personality of the same rational being continuing endlessly” that is called “immortality” and is a “postulate of pure practical reason.”¹⁶⁹ To be sure, the argument here itself already depends on the moral quality or the capacity for freedom of the human being – a point that Kant then emphasizes in particular in his later expositions of the immortality theorem.¹⁷⁰ However, the content of the concept of immortality is still that of a spiritual being that continues to exist even after separation from a body.

The example of rational psychology thus demonstrates quite well that concept formation under the guidance of pure reason continues to be influential in Kant’s philosophy even after the destruction of rationalist metaphysics. This documents Kant’s procedure of assimilating and continuing previous metaphysical theories and their vocabulary in a modified way, especially in a place where he is seemingly merely a destroyer, in the “Transcendental Dialectic.”

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¹⁶³ I will not discuss the regulative function of the transcendental ideas here.

¹⁶⁴ *KrV* B 421; see *KrV* A 379f. and *KU* 5:460f.

¹⁶⁵ *KrV* B 419. In the first edition of the first *Critique*, on the other hand, Kant refers to the remark that “if I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear, as this is nothing but the appearance in the sensibility of our subject and one mode of its representations” (*KrV* A 383). This consideration no longer appears in the second edition.

¹⁶⁶ *KrV* B 420.

¹⁶⁷ *KrV* B 426.

¹⁶⁸ See *KrV* B 425f.; *KpV* 5:122–4; *KU* 5:469f.; on the various arguments, see Hahmann, “Weg.”

¹⁶⁹ *KpV* 5:122.

¹⁷⁰ See *Verkündigung* 8:417; *Fortschritte* 20:295, 300f. and 309; further *KU* 5:473f.

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