

Editorial

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Introduction to the Topical Issue “Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic: A Re-Evaluation”

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The *Transcendental Dialectic* was for a long time an insufficiently studied section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is surprising, given that division two of the *Transcendental Logic* forms the largest part of Kant’s first *Critique*. Concentrating on the destructive side of Kant’s critical project, Kant’s critics and interpreters seem to have established an exegetical paradigm that left his positive account of transcendental ideas and metaphysics out of focus. In recent decades, however, there has been a wave of re-evaluation of the structure and function of the *Transcendental Dialectic*. The “other side” of the *Transcendental Dialectic* and the role of metaphysics in science and more generally have rightfully claimed their place among the most central topics in Kant research. The topical issue *Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic: A Re-Evaluation* aims at contributing to this paradigm shift. The goal is to highlight the capacity of the *Dialectic* to raise metaphysical problems based on Kant’s critical project and ultimately to emphasize its potential for current debates. The focus of our discussion of the *Transcendental Dialectic* is on the introduction, the first book, and the appendix, but also on the function that the second book plays in this context.

This issue covers many aspects of the basic topics and recent debates on Kant’s *Transcendental Dialectic*:

Rudolf Meer reconstructs Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis’ *principle of least action* as one of the numerous historical sources for Kant’s regulative use of reason. Starting with *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* and referring also to *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, he explores the specific status of teleological principles in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*.

Michael Lewin examines nine correlated marks that constitute the Kantian concept of reason as *the faculty of ideas*: (1) faculty, (2) rational, (3) the narrower sense, (4) intermediate inferences, (5) ideas (seven kinds), (6) principles, (7) uses, (8) interests and ends, and (9) unity. The conceptual structure is centered around (5).

James Kreines argues for the so-called *Dialectic-first approach* to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant’s critical argument against rationalist metaphysics presupposes positive claims about reason and the unconditioned in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. The overall project of the first *Critique* can be understood better if one does not draw assumptions about its aims from any other sections.

The subject of the article by Mario Caimi is the passages from A299/B355 and A305/B362 of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He shows that the “the real use of reason” (*usus realis*) proves itself as an unavoidable condition for the regulative use of ideas as well as a condition for the production of a critical metaphysics.

Stefan Klingner considers the question of how Kant’s derivations of metaphysical concepts from the nature of pure reason and from the transcendental ideas work. In doing so, he reconstructs not merely the leading ideas of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology, but the origin of the entire *a priori* vocabulary of the *metaphysica specialis*.

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The central problem in the article by Gabriele Gava is to understand what assuming “regulatively” means. To answer this question, he characterizes the status of ideas and principles, and argues that assuming regulative ideas involves assuming false propositions when assuming them means assuming that a “totality of appearances” is given.

At the core of the publication by Annapaola Varaschin is Kant’s distinction between collective and distributive unity. To explain the meaning of these terms, she refers to the *Nachlass* on metaphysics and the writings on right in which Kant employs them in more detail.

Martin Bunte shows why the *Transcendental Dialectic* is more than an addendum to the core business of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It provides the key to the entire critical philosophy by exhibiting reason itself as the ultimate founding principle in the form of its idea.

Based on an examination of the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, Robert König qualifies the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the first *Critique* as an act of practical reason. Thereby the act of experience can be conceived as a unity of theoretical and practical reason.

Kristian Schäferling suggests an interpretation of Kant’s treatment of the antinomies of pure reason based on Quentin Meillassoux’s theory of the absolute contingency of necessity.

On Kristoffer Willert’s reading, Kant is a semantic anti-realist about cosmo-metaphysical judgments.

Marcus Willaschek responds in his contribution to the articles of Mario Caimi, Gabriele Gava, and Michael Lewin, who criticize some of the views he puts forward in his book *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

It is the hope of the editors that the contributions collected here will provide further stimulation to engage more deeply with the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. We therefore do not see the topical issue as the conclusion of a discussion, but rather as an interim evaluation.