

## Introduction

Four years after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Moses Mendelssohn noted in his *Morning Hours: Lectures on God's Existence* that his weak nerves had prevented him from reading the recent works in metaphysics by Lambert, Tetens, Plattner, “and even the all-crushing Kant,” works that he admitted to knowing through “inadequate reports of friends and reviews” only.<sup>1</sup>

As poor as Mendelssohn's sources may have been, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* had indeed sought to crush the assumption that the human mind can obtain a priori knowledge of things such as the soul and God. But is that ‘all’? In my opinion, Mendelssohn's worn-out but frequently cited words do not account for Kant's lifelong effort to turn metaphysics into a science. Contra Mendelssohn and the scholarship that followed in his tracks, I argue in the present book that the *Critique of Pure Reason* seeks to reform rather than abolish the metaphysical systems exemplified by the one that Christian Wolff published in 1719–20. This is to say that I consider Kant's *Critique* to dissect Wolffian metaphysics in order to discard its dogmatist assumptions and appropriate those of its elements that he took to be vital to the further enlightenment of the sciences and humanity at large.<sup>2</sup>

Since metaphysics meant something else in eighteenth-century Germany than it does in many contemporary contexts, it is useful to specify the main features of the post-Leibnizian metaphysics Kant engaged with from the time he was a student. Wolff's metaphysical system relies on the twofold division common in seventeenth-century metaphysical treatises. The first part, called fundamental science, general metaphysics, or

<sup>1</sup> Mendelssohn (1979: 5), my translation.

<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I will often refer to Wolffian and post-Leibnizian metaphysics indiscriminately. The latter term has the advantage of not excluding early critics of Wolff such as Crusius. However, since Crusius is deeply indebted to Wolff, he might be considered a proponent of Wolffian metaphysics broadly conceived.

ontology, consists in a comprehensive treatment of the concepts and principles that inform any cognition of objects whatsoever and, accordingly, cannot be treated within disciplines devoted to a particular kind of object. This part can be said to treat the determinations proper to things as such, regardless of whether they are simple or composite, mental or physical, immaterial or material. Accordingly, it was considered to prepare the ground for the second and main part. Often called special or applied metaphysics, this part consists in a comprehensive account of the determinations proper to a number of particular things, namely, the soul, the world as such, and God.<sup>3</sup> Even though Wolff drew importantly on inner observations of the cognitive activities carried out by the human mind, he held that metaphysical truths could be obtained, at least in principle, by means of the intellect alone, that is, by means of inferences based on indubitable premises.

Given this preliminary sketch, the task Kant refers to as critique in the *Critique of Pure Reason* can be clarified in somewhat more specific terms. As was suggested above, critique, for Kant, is a matter of sifting the wheat from the chaff. This means with regard to the first part of Wolffian metaphysics, I will argue, that Kant embraced the idea of a discipline devoted to the concepts and principles presupposed in any cognition of objects, but shed the assumption that these cognitive elements amount to determinations of things. Put briefly, Kant's reform of former ontology consists in restricting the scope of these cognitive elements to possible objects of experience.

My take on Kant's critique of the second part of Wolffian metaphysics is perhaps more controversial. As I see it, Kant aimed to preserve what he took to be the rational core of the metaphysical disciplines devoted to the soul, the world as such, and God. Drawing on his critique of Wolffian ontology, he merely rejected the assumption that the treatment of these ideas and their determinations amounts to the cognition of *objects*. Kant's main reason to hold on to reformed versions of the rational psychology, general cosmology, and natural theology elaborated by his predecessors was

<sup>3</sup> See Wolff, DP 56, 73, 99. Wolff here and elsewhere does not use a term such as 'special metaphysics,' but only refers to the particular disciplines that fall under it. In his commentary on his own German writings, Wolff notes in relation to his *German Metaphysics*: "I consider metaphysics . . . , if it is to be truly comprehensive, to include 1. the foundational science or ontology . . . ; 2. the doctrine of spirits or pneumatology . . . ; 3. the general doctrine of the world or cosmology . . . ; and 4. the natural knowledge of God or theology" (AN 4). See Vollrath (1962), Mora (1963), Sala (1988), and Ficara (2006: 83–106) for accounts of the intricate history of the distinction between general and special metaphysics up to Wolff and Baumgarten. See Baum (2015) for a helpful overview of Kant's conception of metaphysics.

his belief that the rational core of these disciplines must undergird the efforts on the part of philosophy to further the moral improvement of mankind and quell threats stemming from currents such as skepticism and materialism (cf. Bxxv, Bxxxiv).

Accordingly, the chapters that follow challenge not only the assumption that the *Critique of Pure Reason* destroyed metaphysics, but also the more widespread one that it established a ‘metaphysics of experience’ and eradicated any ‘transcendent’ metaphysics. The term ‘metaphysics of experience’ is mostly used to refer to Kant’s investigation into the conditions of possibility of empirical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> However, apart from the fact that Kant does not use the terms ‘metaphysics of experience’ and ‘transcendent metaphysics,’ I hold that they obscure the logic behind his arguments in a number of ways.

First, the term ‘metaphysics of experience’ obfuscates the affinity between, on the one hand, the account of the categories and their corresponding principles elaborated in the Transcendental Analytic and, on the other hand, the content of Wolffian ontology.

Second, the term does not account for the two strands of which the Transcendental Analytic consists. This part of the *Critique* not only provides an account of the concepts and principles constitutive of any type of cognition, but also investigates if and how the human mind can obtain a priori cognitions of objects at all. Kant needs to answer the latter question, I contend, in order to determine to what extent, or under which conditions, metaphysics can achieve the a priori cognitions of objects it has always aspired to, that is, a priori cognitions that pertain either to any thing whatsoever or to things such as the soul and God. Evidently, I do not deny that the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic provide an account of the conditions of possibility of experience. I will argue, however, that this account is not so much an end in itself as a means to get clear on the conditions under which metaphysics can be “brought onto the secure path of a science” (Bxxiii). Seen from this vantage point, the Transcendental Analytic and Transcendental Dialectic are not concerned

<sup>4</sup> The term was introduced by Paton. Contrasting Kant’s “metaphysic of experience” and “the speculative metaphysics of the past,” Paton (1936a: 72) takes the former discipline to be carried out in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic. He calls it a metaphysics because he mistakenly identifies it with the discipline that Kant at Bxviii calls “metaphysics in its first part.” As I will argue in Chapter 2, Section 2, this passage is concerned with the first part of Kant’s projected metaphysical system. The term ‘transcendent metaphysics’ is used by Kemp Smith (1923: 19). Both terms obtained wide currency through Strawson (1966).

with different topics, but elaborate a critique of general metaphysics and special metaphysics, respectively.

Third, I hold that the term ‘transcendent metaphysics’ is unhelpful as well, and this for a reason already mentioned above: the term obscures Kant’s intention to carry out a reform of both main parts of former metaphysics. Clearly, as far as the negative strand of Kant’s critique is concerned, the Transcendental Dialectic analyzes in great detail what goes wrong if metaphysics seeks to obtain a priori cognitions of quasi-objects such as the soul, the world as such, and God. As far as its positive strand is concerned, there is agreement on Kant’s affirmation of the ideas that refer to these quasi-objects as regulatory principles. However, few commentators have seriously considered Kant’s plan, outlined in the Architectonic, to elaborate a metaphysical system the structure of which largely corresponds to Wolff’s and Baumgarten’s. For the most part, this plan is either ignored or regarded as a remnant of Kant’s pre-critical dogmatism that inexplicably resurfaces in a work presumed to have cut all ties to Wolffian metaphysics.<sup>5</sup>

Since my reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* hinges importantly on Kant’s stated intention to publish a comprehensive metaphysical system, a few more remarks on this issue are in order. In both versions of the Preface and Introduction, Kant unambiguously presents the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a work intended to prepare the ground for such a system. On his conception of metaphysics, he writes in the 1781 Preface, the discipline “is the only one of all the sciences that can rightly expect to be able to reach . . . completion.” The metaphysics he envisions can be completed, he asserts, because it

is nothing but the inventory of everything we possess through pure reason, ordered systematically. . . . Such a system of pure (speculative) reason I hope myself to deliver under the title *Metaphysics of Nature*, which will be . . . incomparably richer in content than this critique, which had first to display its *sources and conditions of its possibility*, and needed to clear and level a ground that was completely overgrown.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See A841–47/B869–75. As far as Anglophone literature is concerned, Kemp Smith set the tone by noting that the Architectonic “is of slight scientific importance, and is chiefly of interest for the light which it casts upon Kant’s personality.” He adds that Kant’s account of the various parts of the system “are for the most part not his own philosophical property, but are taken over from the Wolffian system” (1923: 579). More recent literature will be considered in Chapter 8.

<sup>6</sup> Axx–xxi, emphasis mine, translation modified; cf. Bxxxvi, Bxliii–xliv, A11–12/B25–26. Further relevant passages will be discussed in Chapter 8.

It is noteworthy that Kant here considers the *Critique of Pure Reason* to be concerned with the conditions of possibility not of experience but of metaphysics.

For reasons that will be discussed in due course, Kant never carried out his plan. However, various texts, including the *Critique* itself, provide material that makes it possible to reconstruct the outline of Kant's projected "system of pure reason."<sup>7</sup> According to the Architectonic, Kant intended to divide his metaphysical system into a theoretical and a practical part, called metaphysics of nature and metaphysics of morals, respectively.<sup>8</sup> Like most of the Architectonic, the passage cited above addresses the theoretical part of the system alone. I would like to stress, however, that Kant uses the term 'metaphysics of nature' in a very broad sense. The part of the system to which it refers was to contain both an ontology and disciplines concerned with nature qua object of outer sense, the soul qua object of inner sense, the world as such, and God (A845–46/B873–74). Kant held that versions of the latter disciplines, however minimal, must be preserved not only because of the regulative function of the ideas of reason, but also for the sake of morality: the practical part of the system must rely on the results obtained in the theoretical part, and, conversely, the practical part provides these results with a content – or objective reality – that theoretical reason itself is unable to procure.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1787 Preface, Kant not only reiterates his ambition to publish a metaphysical system, but explicitly relates his projected system to Wolff's:

The *Critique* is the preparatory work (*vorläufige Veranstaltung*) required for the advancement of a rigorous metaphysics as science, a science that must necessarily be carried out dogmatically and, complying with the strictest requirement, systematically, hence in the manner of the schools (*schulgerech*); for this requirement is one that metaphysics may not neglect, since it takes it upon itself to carry out its task wholly a priori and thus to the full satisfaction of speculative reason. In the execution of the plan that the *Critique* prescribes, i.e., in the future system of metaphysics, we will have to follow the strict method of the famous Wolff, the greatest among all dogmatic philosophers.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See A11/B25, A204/B249, A841/B869.

<sup>8</sup> A841/B869. Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of the Natural Sciences* (1786) can be considered to elaborate the first part of what the Architectonic calls rational physiology (A845/B873), but Kant's own remarks on the status of this work are somewhat equivocal. I discuss this problem in Chapter 8, Section 4.1.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Bxx–xxi, A641/B669, A807–8/B835–36. <sup>10</sup> Bxxxvi, translation modified.

Clearly, passages such as these are hard to square with the assumption that Kant intended, if not to destroy metaphysics completely, at least to reduce it to the account of the conditions of possibility of experience put forward in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Transcendental Analytic*.

Given Kant's stated aim to elaborate a metaphysical system, I hold that he in the *Critique of Pure Reason* primarily engages with Wolff and Baumgarten, whose works he had studied more thoroughly than those of Leibniz or Descartes. As is well known, throughout his long career Kant mostly used Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* (1739) for his classes on metaphysics. However, I consider the negative strand of his critique to be ultimately aimed at an assumption common to Leibniz, Wolff, and the metaphysical tradition as such, namely, the assumption that knowledge of objects can be obtained by the intellect alone.

The fact that Kant's projected system never saw the light of day has contributed importantly to the prevailing trend among commentators to marginalize or ignore Kant's remarks on the subject and treat the *Critique of Pure Reason* as an end in itself. This holds true not only of the *Architectonic* but also of the *Transcendental Doctrine of Method* of which it is part. Even though the structure of this final main part of the work is rather elusive, I take it to contain important clues as to the larger context of Kant's critical project.

Kant's remarks on the relation between critique and system in the *Doctrine of Method* cohere with his presentation of the aim of the *Critique* in the two Prefaces and the Introduction. None of the passages on this subject refers to conditions of possibility of experience. Rather, Kant considers the "main question" at stake in this work to be the question as to "what and how much the understanding and reason can know free of all experience," in other words, the question as to what can be known a priori (Axvii). Examining the human mind in view of this question, the *Critique* is said to be concerned with the "decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics as such, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Kant notes that metaphysics "stands or falls" with the solution to the problem as to how we can make judgments about objects independently of experience, that is, judgments that are synthetic and a priori (B19). The examples taken from physics and mathematics (B14–18) clearly serve the purpose of determining

<sup>11</sup> Axii, cf. A11/B25, Bxxii. In the same vein, Kant considers transcendental logic to "determine the origin, extension, and objective validity" of the cognitions "by means of which we think objects completely a priori" (A57/B81, translation modified).

whether metaphysics is capable of “extending its a priori cognition synthetically” (B23) and, thus, of determining “how metaphysics is possible as a science.”<sup>12</sup>

But if the *Critique* aims to identify the conditions under which Wolffian metaphysics can become a science, one might ask why Kant compares its task to the revolution achieved by Copernicus (Bxxii). Does not this suggest he took his critical philosophy to be completely novel? In my view, however, Kant’s comparison concerns his decision to restrict the domain of his propaedeutic investigation to the cognitive elements that allow the human mind to turn representations into objects of cognition at all. This “reversal,” as he calls it (Bxvi), does not entail there is no continuity between the version of metaphysics that the *Critique of Pure Reason* subjects to critique and the version Kant intended to elaborate on its basis. Indeed, the *Prolegomena* puts into perspective Kant’s alleged break with the past by asserting that the *Critique* undertakes “a complete reform or rather a rebirth of metaphysics” that nothing will be able to halt.<sup>13</sup> As will be argued in Chapter 8, Kant’s projected metaphysics would have resembled its pre-critical counterparts not only in terms of its overall structure but also in terms of its content. On this account, the view that Kant gradually weaned himself from Wolffian metaphysics up to the point of abandoning it altogether is unwarranted.

The present work uses Kant’s implicit and explicit engagement with Wolffian metaphysics as a foil to interpret the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a work intended to turn metaphysics such as it was known to him into a science. Given this focus, the approach defended in this book deviates from many past and present accounts of the work. Regardless of the numerous tangled controversies among twentieth-century and contemporary commentators, most accounts concentrate on the investigation into the conditions of possibility of experience carried out in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Transcendental Analytic*. This approach can be traced back to at least Cohen’s *Kant’s Theory of Experience*, published in 1871, and neo-Kantianism more generally.

According to Cohen, the *Critique of Pure Reason* seeks to ground Newtonian physics by identifying those “elements of consciousness” that

<sup>12</sup> B22, cf. A10, Prol, 4:274.

<sup>13</sup> Prol, 4:257. The German term is *Reform*. Passages that likewise refer to Kant’s intended reform of metaphysics, using this term, include 4:258 and (in the Appendix) 373 and 382. In a letter to Bernouilli dated November 16, 1781, Kant refers to Lambert’s invitation, in 1765, to “collaborate on the reform of metaphysics” (10:277, cf. Kant to Lambert, December 31, 1765, 10:57).

are “sufficient and necessary to establish and ground the fact of science.”<sup>14</sup> Whether or not the role Cohen granted to Newton is accepted, the assumption that the main aim of the *Critique* consists in accounting for the a priori principles of empirical science informs a large range of more recent commentaries.

For example, in *The Bounds of Sense*, Strawson values Kant’s investigation into “that limiting framework of ideas and principles the use and application of which are essential to empirical knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Allison’s widely shared epistemological reading considers the *Critique* to demonstrate that human knowledge is based on epistemic conditions “without which our representations would not relate to objects.”<sup>16</sup> Tacitly identifying this knowledge with experience, Allison takes Kant to be concerned with the a priori elements constitutive of the latter. While this claim is, of course, not false, I maintain that what Allison and others fail to see is that Kant conceived of the categories and the principles of the pure understanding as instances of a priori cognition that first and foremost need to be scrutinized for their own sake and, ultimately, for the sake of determining to what extent metaphysics can avail itself of these instances.

The assumption that the *Critique* turns on the a priori elements of empirical knowledge also informs recent so-called metaphysical approaches to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>17</sup> Drawing on Strawson and Guyer, among others, proponents of this approach frame Kant’s text in view of questions and terms derived from the analytic tradition. Thus, in her *Manifest Reality: Kant’s Idealism and His Realism*, Allais presents what she calls a “moderate metaphysical interpretation” (2015: 8). In line with classical scholarship, she considers Kant’s *Critique* to contain a “metaphysics of

<sup>14</sup> See Cohen (1871/1987: 108). Cohen’s reading of Kant is discussed in more detail in De Boer and Howard (2019). In this article, we also examine the so-called metaphysical readings of Kant elaborated in the 1910s and 1920s, including Heidegger’s, which took issue with neo-Kantianism.

<sup>15</sup> Strawson (1966: 18, cf. 44).

<sup>16</sup> Allison (2004: 11). See Ameriks (2000: 59) for a similar view. Ameriks has taken a more controversial stance in other works, arguing that Kant’s critique of Wolffian metaphysics went hand in hand with the effort to preserve some of its ideas and doctrines. The present work shares common ground with his in this regard. However, since Ameriks’s studies are mostly concerned with the Transcendental Dialectic (Ameriks 1982/2000) and Kant’s lectures on Baumgarten (Ameriks 1992), it is unclear how he conceives of the relation between the two strands of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that he deals with in his various works.

<sup>17</sup> More generally, I consider the very opposition between metaphysics and epistemology to be misguided if used in relation to Kant. As was mentioned above, what is currently meant by metaphysics differs substantially from the discipline Kant was familiar with. The term ‘epistemology’ refers to a discipline not known to Kant either, although elements of it were elaborated in Wolffian logic and empirical psychology.



experience” (6). Unlike Paton and others, however, she uses the term ‘metaphysics’ to denote “what philosophers generally mean by the term today,” which is to say that she takes Kant’s investigation to be “concerned with the nature of reality.” More specifically, she considers Kant’s account to be metaphysical in that it seeks to determine, for example, whether “every event has a cause” or the extent to which spatiotemporal objects are mind-independent.<sup>18</sup>

While Allais convincingly rebuts a number of alternative accounts, I disagree with her apparent view, shared by many contemporary scholars, that the arguments put forward in the *Critique of Pure Reason* can be understood without reference to the immediate historical context within which they were developed.<sup>19</sup> As regards the content at stake in the debate in which she is engaged, moreover, I do not believe that Kant’s arguments essentially concern the triangular relation between the a priori elements of the human mind, its representations of the things it encounters by means of the senses, and mind-independent things that must somehow be posited even though they cannot be known. Put in contemporary terms, the present book, rather, focuses on Kant’s meta-metaphysical concerns, even if one of the challenges of the *Critique* will precisely turn out to be the intricate relationship between Kant’s first-order account of the a priori elements of any type of cognition and his second-order investigation into the conditions under which metaphysics’ use of such elements is warranted.<sup>20</sup>

Focusing as it does on the problem of metaphysics presented in the introductory sections of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, my reading has more affinity with the metaphysical interpretations defended in the 1910s and 1920s by authors such as Pichler, Wundt, Heimsoeth, and Heidegger.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of their disagreements on particular issues, they consider the *Critique* to be continuous with Wolffian general or special metaphysics.

<sup>18</sup> Allais (2015: 7). Most commentators would agree, against Allais, that Kant rather seeks to determine what it means to employ a principle such as ‘all events have a cause’ in the sciences and/or metaphysics at all.

<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the reading elaborated in the chapters to come also avoids labels such as realism, anti-realism, phenomenalism, idealism, and skepticism.

<sup>20</sup> What I call ‘first-order metaphysics’ refers to former general and special metaphysics as well as to the reformed versions of these disciplines that Kant intended to elaborate in a comprehensive fashion in his projected system. These disciplines are contrasted with what I take to be the main aim of the *Critique*, namely, Kant’s second-order investigation into the very possibility of first-order metaphysics.

<sup>21</sup> See Heimsoeth (1924/1956), Wundt (1924), and Heidegger (1929/1997). In his pioneering work, published in 1910, Pichler argues that Wolff’s ontology and Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* are both concerned with the “rules of the pure thinking of an object” (Pichler 1910: 73–74, cf. 4).

However, since their readings are largely shaped by their opposition to neo-Kantianism, they tend to err on the other side, namely, by downplaying the distance between Kant and his German predecessors. Apart from more specific hermeneutical problems with their works, these authors therefore no less than their opponents tend to misconstrue the goal of Kant's intended reform of metaphysics. Notwithstanding the insightful elements contained in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, I hold that this is also true of Heidegger's account of the *Critique* as a work concerned with the inner possibility, ground, or foundation of metaphysics rather than with a thoroughgoing critique of its premises.<sup>22</sup>

Where relevant, more recent approaches to Kant will be discussed in the chapters that follow. I merely want to note at this point that *Kant's Reform of Metaphysics* ties in with two relatively new trends in Kant scholarship, namely, to pay heed to the immediate intellectual context from which Kant's philosophy emerged and, more specifically, to interpret his writings in light of Wolff and Baumgarten's logical and metaphysical treatises. Yet since studies that do so tend to focus on Kant's early works, his lectures on Baumgarten, or a specific aspect of the *Critique*, they as yet have had little impact on the very framing of Kant's critical endeavor.<sup>23</sup> The present book

<sup>22</sup> While my approach to Kant is indebted to Heidegger's as regards the main direction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I disagree with a number of features of his interpretation, including his focus on the subjective elements of the Transcendental Deduction, his account of the imagination, and the idea of transcendence he projects onto Kant's text. Moreover, his initial remarks on Kant's engagement with the Wolffian tradition do not have any clear bearing on the work as a whole. On my assessment of Heidegger's reading of Kant, see De Boer (2015) and De Boer and Howard (2019).

<sup>23</sup> Studies that interpret the *Critique of Pure Reason* by taking recourse to Wolffian logic include Longuenesse (1998), Lanier Anderson (2015), and Lu-Adler (2018). A number of recent publications testify to the growing interest in Kant's engagement with the metaphysics of his German predecessors, including translations into German and English of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*, a collection of essays on Kant's lectures on metaphysics (Fugate 2019), and a collection on Baumgarten and Kant (Fugate and Hymers 2018). However, very few of the essays in the latter volume deal with the *Critique of Pure Reason* and none of them takes into consideration the Transcendental Analytic or Kant's projected system. See Heimsoeth (1924/1956), Fulda (1988), Grondin (1989), Ameriks (1982/2000, 1992), Zöllner (2004), Ficara (2006), and Baum (2015), among others, for earlier studies that underscore Kant's indebtedness to Wolffian metaphysics or interpret Kant's innovations in light of the latter. Elaborating on a number of Kant's German predecessors, Watkins (2005) focuses on an issue relevant to metaphysics – causality – rather than the question concerning the possibility of the discipline as such. However, I agree with his emphasis on the continuity between Kant's early works and the *Critique* (cf. 182). Dyck (2014) likewise tackles Kant's engagement with Wolff and his followers in relation to a particular metaphysical discipline rather than the problem of metaphysics as such. Moreover, his excellent study is concerned with the Transcendental Dialectic rather than the Transcendental Analytic.

seeks to redress this situation by reinterpreting the *Critique of Pure Reason* in light of Kant's engagement with Wolff and the tradition he initiated.

As I hope has become clear from the discussion so far, I intend to frame the *Critique of Pure Reason* in a way that brings out the unity of its various elements. This is to say that I reject the tendency among earlier commentators, including Kemp Smith, to identify particular strands of the work as critical and dismiss others as relicts of Kant's allegedly dogmatic writings. Of course, it cannot be denied that the *Critique* brings together insights developed over more than a decade. Yet those who see the work as a patchwork of seemingly incongruous elements fail to see the pattern by dint of which they constitute elements of a whole. In this regard, we can take a cue from one of Kant's early letters to Herz:

Insight into the matters at hand cannot be compelled or precipitated by force, but requires quite a long time, since one *examines one and the same concept intermittently and with regard to many relations and in as many contexts as possible*.<sup>24</sup>

Evidently, Kant in this passage reflects on the way he proceeded during the years leading up to 1771. Yet I hold that, in a similar way, the *Critique* examines a single problem from a number of complementary perspectives, namely, the problem concerning the conditions under which metaphysics is possible as a science.

Discussing a number of these perspectives in depth, the present book considers each of them to uncover an aspect of Kant's proposed solution. However, I largely abstract from Kant's practical philosophy, from the teleological orientation of his theoretical as well as practical works, and, more generally, from works published after the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>25</sup> As far as the *Critique* itself is concerned, the eight chapters of which the present book consists deal most extensively with the Transcendental Analytic. A more than marginal discussion of the Transcendental Aesthetic and the chapter known as the Metaphysical Deduction is beyond its scope. What I do treat is outlined in the remainder of this introduction.

Chapter 1 elaborates on the historical context within which Kant developed his critique of early post-Leibnizian philosophy. It presents the pertinent elements of Wolff's highly influential metaphysics and theory

<sup>24</sup> Kant to Herz, June 7, 1771 (10:122, emphasis mine, translation modified).

<sup>25</sup> See Dörflinger (2000) and Fugate (2014) for illuminating studies of the teleological orientation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and his critical works in general. The holistic interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy provided by Sweet (2013) likewise stresses the role of reason's end-directedness.

of cognition as well as the main thrust of Crusius's critique of Wolff. Since I consider Kant's critique to target both Wolff, Crusius, and those who followed in their wake, the chapter also discusses the main tenets of Crusius's own metaphysics and the controversies that resulted from efforts among early post-Wolffian philosophers to reconcile Leibnizian monadology and Newtonian physics.

The second chapter seeks to clarify, against the background of the first, how Kant in the late 1760s and early 1770s came to conceive of the aim and main arguments of what was to become the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I focus in particular on Kant's evolving understanding of the act of critique and the criteria on which this act must rely in order to distinguish the viable core of metaphysics from its unfounded assumptions. The heart of the chapter consists in an analysis of the *Inaugural Dissertation*. Unlike most commentators, I highlight the critical impetus of this pivotal treatise by arguing that the specific criterion it employs to curb the ambitions of metaphysics – intellectual purity – is directed against an assumption common to Wolff, Crusius, and early post-Leibnizian philosophy in general. Moreover, I put into perspective the alleged break between the *Dissertation* and the *Critique* by arguing that this early instance of critique is preserved in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Evidently, the *Critique* also marks a break with the earlier works: the new form of critique introduced in the Transcendental Analytic seeks to establish that any a priori cognition of objects rests on pure intuition. Preparing the ground for Chapter 8, I contend that these two complementary types of critique do not entail the impossibility of metaphysics, but specify the conditions under which the discipline might be turned into a science.

Chapter 3 addresses the relationship between the various tasks carried out in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by analyzing Kant's multifaceted use of the term 'transcendental.' Challenging the received view, I argue that this term does not primarily denote Kant's investigation into the conditions of possibility of experience, but has a much broader scope. I maintain that Kant's seemingly divergent accounts of the subject hinge on his conception of transcendental philosophy proper and transcendental critique as first-order and second-order branches of transcendental cognition, respectively. Drawing on a brief account of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history of the term 'transcendental,' I seek to show that Wolffian ontology and transcendental philosophy proper have more in common than is widely assumed: both disciplines can be said to provide a comprehensive account of the cognitive elements presupposed in any cognition of objects. I argue that the novelty of the *Critique* consists primarily in the

second-order investigation into metaphysics that Kant calls transcendental critique. The chapter concludes by examining Kant's criticism of the way his predecessors and contemporaries understood the terms 'ontology' and 'transcendental philosophy.' In this context, I also consider his understanding of the intricate relationship between first-order and second-order transcendental cognition.

Chapter 4 is devoted to one of the most contentious elements of the *Critique*, namely, Kant's account of the thing in itself. From the late 1780s onward, many commentators have argued that Kant contradicts himself by claiming both that things in themselves cannot be known and that they cause our sense perceptions. In order to resolve the tangle that Kant's account has produced, I dissociate his remarks on the objects that affect our senses from his use of the term 'thing in itself' and its cognates in the context of his critique of Wolffian and post-Wolffian metaphysics. In the latter context, I argue, the term refers to things that can be thought but cannot constitute objects of cognition. I show that Kant's account of the thing in itself in this sense and, hence, the distinction between phenomena and noumena, allows him at once to limit the scope of former ontology to possible objects of experience and to affirm the ideas of the soul, the world as such, and God as noumena that can be thought but not known.

Focusing on its 1781 version, Chapter 5 interprets the Transcendental Deduction in light of Kant's overall investigation into the conditions under which metaphysics is possible. Whereas most commentators take the text to be mainly concerned with the conditions of possibility of empirical cognition, I seek to demonstrate that the various strands of Kant's tortuous investigation primarily aim to identify the conditions under which categories can be used to produce objects of a priori cognition as such. On Kant's account, categories can contribute to the production of such objects only if they function as a priori rules for the thoroughgoing unification of successive representations, which is not the case if they are used to determine alleged objects such as the soul, the world as such, and God. Thus, I contend that the transcendental deduction passes a balanced judgment on Wolff's unqualified affirmation of the possibility of a priori cognition of objects and Hume's unqualified rejection of the same.

Chapter 6 seeks to establish that Kant's account of the schematism of the pure understanding yields the same result as the transcendental deduction, but does so by approaching the question concerning the legitimate use of categories from the angle of time qua pure form of intuition. On my reading, Kant conceives of transcendental schemata and categories as different instances of the a priori rules that determine how the mind can

unify a manifold at all. Since transcendental schemata present these rules as ways of unifying successive representations, they can be said to constitute the sensible condition of any a priori cognition of objects. I take Kant to argue that Wolffian metaphysics ought to use categories independently of this condition in order to establish itself as a purely intellectual discipline and, hence, that a priori judgments about the soul or God do not amount to cognitions of objects.

Zooming out, Chapter 7 turns to a section of the *Critique* in which Kant seeks to account for the ultimate premises of his critique and intended reform of metaphysics, namely, the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic entitled “On the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection.” Using Leibniz’s monadology as a prism, this section contains Kant’s most systematic critique of the ontologies known to him. Kant conceives of this critique as a variety of transcendental reflection that is guided by four pairs of concepts, including sameness and difference. In order to contextualize this account, I briefly discuss Wolff and Baumgarten’s treatment of these concepts. Commentators generally assume that the activity called transcendental reflection is carried out in the *Critique* alone. I contend, by contrast, that Kant distinguishes the version of transcendental reflection that informs the ontology of his predecessors from the critical version enacted in the *Critique*. On this basis, I outline Kant’s understanding of the difference between a Leibnizian employment of the concepts of reflection and his own.

Chapter 8, finally, is devoted to the positive goal of Kant’s reform of the theoretical part of metaphysics, namely, the system of pure reason he intended to elaborate on the basis of the propaedeutic investigation carried out in the *Critique*. On my account, the latter investigation aims to redirect the intellectual activity carried out by pure reason from quasi-objects such as the soul and God to the totality of a priori elements that any cognition of objects presupposes. Drawing on the outline provided in the Architectonic and other relevant texts, I maintain that Kant’s critique of Wolffian metaphysics paves the way not only for a reformed version of general metaphysics or ontology but also for a reformed version of special metaphysics. As regards the latter, I argue that the *Critique* does not preclude the possibility of a comprehensive account of the purely intellectual determinations of the ideas of reason themselves and, hence, is much less detrimental to former special metaphysics than is generally assumed. Thus, the chapter seeks to bring out the common ground of Kant’s projected system and the metaphysical systems put forward by Wolff and Baumgarten. I conclude the chapter by arguing that his later accounts of

his intentions in this regard do not deviate from the plan outlined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

I hope to shed new light on Kant's pivotal work, in sum, by framing the text not in view of epistemological questions that took center stage after Kant, but in view of the past to which he responded and the future such as he envisioned it.