

IMMANUEL KANT

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*Theoretical Philosophy  
after 1781*

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## *Translator's introduction*

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The *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* is the preeminent synopsis in the history of philosophy. Kant completed it about fifteen months after the *Critique of Pure Reason* was published. He wanted to present his critical philosophy concisely and accessibly, for “future teachers” of metaphysics. He also wanted to convince his fellow metaphysicians “that it is unavoidably necessary to suspend their work for the present,” until they have determined “whether such a thing as metaphysics is even possible at all” (4:255).<sup>1</sup> Although the *Critique* “always remains the foundation to which the *Prolegomena* refer only as preparatory exercises” (4:261), Kant nonetheless hoped that the shorter work would be used to assess the critical philosophy “piece by piece from its foundation,” serving “as a general synopsis, with which the work itself could then be compared on occasion” (4:380).

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant distilled his critical inquiry into the General Question, “Is metaphysics possible at all?” (4:271), which he in turn interpreted as a question about the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition (4:275–6), or cognition through pure reason (that is, independent of sensory experience). To answer the General Question, Kant first asked how synthetic *a priori* cognition is possible in two areas where he considered it actual: pure mathematics and pure natural science. He found that this possibility (and actuality) could be explained only by positing cognitive structures that the subject brings to cognition, as forms of sensory intuition and categories of the understanding. But this explanation can hold only for synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects of possible experience. Kant could not see how forms of intuition or categories grounded in the knowing subject could yield *a priori* cognition of items beyond sensory experience, such as God, the human soul, and the world as it is in itself, which were the objects of traditional metaphysics. Since he could see no other way to achieve synthetic *a priori* cognition of such things, he concluded that traditional metaphysics is impossible. Its objects lie beyond the boundary of human knowledge. Yet Kant also held that such objects, while not determinately cognizable, are in some way thinkable. A boundary line implies a space beyond it, in this case, a region of unknowable intelligible beings, perhaps including a freely acting human soul that spontaneously initiates causal sequences.

Many consider the *Prolegomena* the best introduction to Kant’s philosophy. Kant so liked parts of the Preamble and the General Questions

that he introduced them, with little modification, into the Introduction to the second or B edition of the *Critique*. Nonetheless, some commentators doubt that the *Prolegomena* captures the main points of the *Critique*, arguing that it begs the question against Humean skepticism.<sup>2</sup> Others counter by asking whether Kant's arguments were actually directed toward a general skeptical challenge of the sort attributed to Hume.<sup>3</sup> Such questions will be raised but not settled in this Introduction, which examines the origin of the *Prolegomena*, outlines its method of exposition, surveys its structure in relation to the first *Critique*, provides a context for Kant's statements about Hume, describes the work's reception, and discusses texts and translation.

I

ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE *PROLEGOMENA*

Kant completed the Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* in April, 1781, and on July 22 he presented a bound volume to his friend and former student Johann Georg Hamann.<sup>4</sup> By August he had sent his publisher a proposal for an abstract or summary of the big book. This shorter work was intended to make his challenge to metaphysics accessible to a wider audience than the *Critique* was reaching.

The *Critique* was the product of nine years of sustained labor, and the fulfillment of a project to evaluate metaphysical cognition that Kant had mentioned in 1765.<sup>5</sup> In it, Kant sought to decide "the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general," and to determine its "sources," "extent," and "boundaries" by evaluating the ability of human cognition to answer traditional metaphysical questions (A xii). If he succeeded, "there should not be a single metaphysical problem that has not been solved here, or at least for whose solution the key has not been offered" (A xiii).

Kant was disappointed by the *Critique's* reception. In the April Preface he described the work as "dry" and "scholastic" (A xviii). Presumably he had already had complaints from Hamann, who was reading the book in proof and with whom he spoke often. On April 8, Hamann wrote to Kant's publisher, Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, that after reading the first thirty signatures he believed "few readers would be equal to the scholastic content." On April 20 he wrote to Kant's former student J. G. Herder that the book "all comes down to pedantry and empty verbiage."<sup>6</sup> Kant soon learned that other readers were having difficulty. On May 1, Kant had written to Marcus Herz in Berlin, asking him to arrange presentation copies for Moses Mendelssohn, C. G. Selle, and Herz himself, and a dedicatory copy for Karl Abraham von Zedlitz, the Prussian minister of education. Sometime after June 8 he wrote to thank Herz for his efforts, expressing regret at the news that Mendelssohn had "put the book aside," since he was relying on Mendelssohn, J. N. Tetens, and Herz himself to

explain his theory to the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup> Kant predicted that at first “very few readers” would study his *Critique* thoroughly, and that few would understand it.<sup>8</sup> As he explained, “this kind of inquiry will always remain difficult; for it includes the *metaphysics of metaphysics*.”

In this same letter Kant mentioned a plan “according to which even *popularity* can be gained” for his results.<sup>9</sup> On August 18, 1781, Kant sent his publisher Hartknoch a proposal for an *Auszug*, that is, an abstract or epitome, of the *Critique*. The letter is lost, but Kant’s plan can be reconstructed. Writing in August and September, Hamann describes Kant’s willingness to “bring out a popular abstract of his *Critique*, even for laypersons,” and his talk of “an abstract of his *Critique* to popular taste” and a “brief abstract” of a “few printed sheets.” On October 23, Hamann reported to Hartknoch that some, including Kant, described the new project as an “abstract,” others as a “reader on metaphysics.” He continued to inquire about Kant’s “abstract,” “reader,” or “textbook.”<sup>10</sup> On November 19, 1781, Hartknoch, replying to Kant’s lost letter, instructed that “if the abstract of the *Critique* should, as I doubt not, be finished, please send it to the printer Grunert in Halle, who printed the big work. And kindly notify me as soon as the manuscript has been sent” (Ak 10:279).

On January 11, 1782, Hamann reported that Kant thought the “small work” would be finished by Easter. In the following week’s *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, for January 19, 1782, there appeared an anonymous review of the *Critique*. Kant was upset by it. In response he wrote an Appendix to the *Prolegomena* (4:372–80) and made other additions – including at least Notes II and III to the First Part, which distinguish Kant’s transcendental idealism from Berkeley’s idealism. On February 8, Hamann asked after the “small supplement” to the *Critique*, and on April 22, 1782, reported the title “Prolegomena for a still to be written metaphysics.”<sup>11</sup> Kant was nearly finished when a second review, more to his liking, appeared in the *Gotthaische gelehrte Zeitungen* for August 24, 1782. He had seen it by mid-September, and his brief response in the Appendix (4:380) presumably caused little delay in sending the final copy to the printer. The work appeared in the spring of 1783. Hartknoch later acknowledged that the printer had been slow.<sup>12</sup>

The materials reviewed thus far establish that Kant began his new work between August, 1781, and January, 1782, but they do not reveal which work it was. Do the various descriptions refer to a single work as it evolved, or did Kant have three separate works in mind – a popular presentation, an abstract for contemporary metaphysicians and future teachers, and a textbook of metaphysics – only one of which appeared in 1783?

The reported “textbook” or “reader” on metaphysics was not the abstract or *Prolegomena*. The intervening title reported by Hamann, “*Prolegomena einer noch zu schreibenden Metaphysik*,” suggests that Kant

thought of it as prolegomena to his own projected metaphysics. In the A Preface Kant said he was planning a “metaphysics of nature,” that is, a “system of pure (speculative) reason” (A 21).<sup>13</sup> Not long after the *Prolegomena* appeared, Kant wrote to Mendelssohn that he still hoped to complete “a textbook of metaphysics according to the critical principles mentioned, having all the brevity of a handbook, for use in academic lectures” (August 16, 1783, Ak 10:346). His correspondents pressed for the “metaphysics of nature,” and in 1786 Kant published the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, which he considered preparatory.<sup>14</sup> Kant’s full metaphysics of nature never appeared, but in 1785 C. G. Schütz suggested that the first *Critique* contained future textbooks of metaphysics “virtually.”<sup>15</sup>

The relation of the *Prolegomena* to the rumored “popular abstract” is less clear. In 1878 and 1904, Benno Erdmann argued, on epistolary and internal textual grounds, that by the summer of 1781, Kant had decided to write, and perhaps started, a popular presentation of his views, but that he soon abandoned popularity in favor of a work directed at philosophers and teachers of philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Erdmann held that a draft of this “abstract” was complete when the Göttingen review appeared in January, 1782, after which Kant found two reasons to revise it. First, in response to the review itself, he wanted to refute the charge of Berkeleyan idealism. Second, Erdmann contended that since at this time Hamann was emphasizing Hume’s influence on the critical philosophy, Kant wanted to distinguish his contribution from Hume’s.<sup>17</sup>

Erdmann believed that he could differentiate the additions made in response to these factors from the original draft, and his 1878 edition of the *Prolegomena* set the presumed additions in smaller type, enclosed by brackets.<sup>18</sup> These portions contain every mention of Hume. On Erdmann’s hypothesis, Kant’s remarks on Hume through the Second Part responded to Hamann’s labeling him a “Prussian Hume” due to his negative conclusions about metaphysics.<sup>19</sup> Kant wanted to show that beyond agreeing with Hume about dogmatic metaphysics, he alone had seen that a survey of the boundaries of human reason was needed and could be achieved by examining the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition. Kant’s comments on Hume’s *Dialogues* in the Third Part were added to show that despite granting Hume’s arguments against theism, his philosophy did not prohibit thought of God as cause of the world.<sup>20</sup>

The Kant philologist Emil Arnoldt wrote a scathing response to Erdmann’s 1878 work, denying that Kant had written anything before January, 1782, and asserting that Kant started work only in response to the Göttingen review.<sup>21</sup> A young Hans Vaihinger soon revealed crucial defects in Arnoldt’s evidence, leaving no clear indication of what Kant might have written prior to January, though Hamann’s reports make it likely he was at work in 1781.<sup>22</sup>

In any event, we may agree with both Erdmann and Arnoldt that whatever Kant's intentions about a popular work, the *Prolegomena* was written for fellow philosophers. Kant himself says the work was meant to allow "future teachers" of metaphysics (4:255, 383) not only to understand and assess the critical philosophy, but also to discover metaphysics itself "for the first time" (4:255). It would do so by remedying the obscurity of the large book. He feared that the *Critique* would be misunderstood because readers would skim through rather than thinking through it, and because of its dryness, obscurity, prolixity, and opposition to "all familiar concepts" (4:261). He dismissed complaints of "lack of popularity, entertainment, and ease," but confessed to a "certain obscurity" partly stemming from the "expansiveness" of the *Critique*. The *Prolegomena* would "redress" this obscurity, with the *Critique* remaining the "foundation" to which it would refer as "preparatory exercises" (4:261, see also 274). The short work is a "plan" of the larger work, allowing one "to survey the whole" and "to test one by one the main points at issue" in the new science of critique, and allowing Kant to improve his exposition (4:263). It follows the "analytic method" as opposed to the synthetic method of the *Critique* (4:263, 274–5, 278–9). Despite the difference in method, Kant (as already noted) offered the *Prolegomena* as a "general synopsis, with which the work itself could then be compared on occasion" (4:380). It could serve as a "plan and guide for the investigation" of the *Critique* (4:381), and as a replacement for the Deduction and Paralogisms.<sup>23</sup>

Kant intended the *Prolegomena* "to present the essential content of the *Critique*" (4:280). It was not to be truly popular, "for laypersons," but was to reach a wider audience of philosophers. While writing it, Kant confessed that he was unable to "give ease" to his presentation.<sup>24</sup> Shortly after publication, he wrote to Garve that "popularity cannot be attempted in studies of such high abstraction" (August 7, 1783, Ak 10:339). An early reviewer correctly judged the intended audience of the *Prolegomena* to be that of the *Critique* itself, that is, "speculative thinkers," especially those "who concern themselves with metaphysics" or "who intend to write a metaphysics."<sup>25</sup>

## II

### THE ANALYTIC METHOD

According to Kant, the most fundamental difference between the *Prolegomena* and the A *Critique* is that the first follows the analytic method, the second the synthetic method (4:263, 274–5, 278–9). A contrast between analytic and synthetic methods (or regressive and progressive methods) was regularly discussed in medieval and early modern philosophy, in connection with mathematics, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. These discussions did not yield uniform, precise



definitions.<sup>26</sup> The features widely attributed to each method were that analysis proceeds from consequent to ground, or from whole to part, and synthesis from ground to consequent, or part to whole. Analysis may start from something given in experience, or merely assumed as given, and seek its proof or explanation, while synthesis starts from abstract definitions and principles. Analysis and synthesis were described as, respectively, methods of discovery and of proof, and as contrasting methods of exposition.

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant attributed two features of the synthetic method to the *Critique*. First, as regards method of exposition, the big book “had to be composed according to the *synthetic method*, so that the science [viz., transcendental philosophy] might present all of its articulations, as the structural organization of a quite peculiar faculty of cognition, in their natural connection” (4:263). It examined first the “elements” of pure reason and then the “laws of its pure use” (4:274), moving from parts to whole and from ground to consequent. Second, as regards the source of conviction, he could accept nothing as given “except reason itself” and so had to “develop cognition out of its original seeds without relying on any fact whatever” (4:274). He had to argue directly for his account of the elements and laws of pure reason. The analytic method of the *Prolegomena* proceeded differently on both counts, starting from something known and familiar and proceeding to discover its elements or grounds. The method was nonetheless intended to justify the discovered elements or grounds, in this case by showing that Kant’s theory of synthetic *a priori* cognition is the only possible account of the knowledge we actually possess.

The applicability of this methodological distinction to the *Prolegomena* might be challenged. If the *Prolegomena* were fully analytic, it would “ascend” to the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments by starting from actual instances of judgment. But instead it lays out definitions and distinctions in the Preamble, including those between analytic and synthetic judgments and between *a priori* and *a posteriori* cognition.

In order to evaluate Kant’s use of this methodological distinction, one must determine what was being synthetically articulated or analytically discovered. In the Preface to the *Prolegomena* Kant mentions two projects immediately before introducing the phrase “analytic method”: settling the “possibility of metaphysics” (4:260), and presenting the “new science” of critique (4:262). These projects are related, for the latter science was to settle the former question. According to Kant, metaphysics is possible only if its objects can be cognized through pure reason. To assess this possibility in the *Critique*, he constructed an elaborate theory of cognition involving the senses, understanding, and reason, their relations, and the associated classes of representation (intuitions, concepts,

and ideas). It is this theory of cognition, and its implications for the possibility of metaphysics, that is to be “ascended to” (and thereby justified) in the *Prolegomena*. The shorter work will “rely on something already known to be dependable, from which we can go forward with confidence and ascend to the sources, which are not yet known, and whose discovery will not only explain what is known already, but will also exhibit an area with many cognitions that all arise from these same sources” (4:275). It will start with mathematics and natural science as bodies of actual, given, dependable, and uncontested synthetic cognition *a priori*. With respect to these, the question is not *whether* such cognition is possible, but *how* it is possible (4:275), or indeed how “alone” it is possible (4:276, note). The *Prolegomena* is to establish analytically the main outlines of Kant’s theory of cognition and the main results of his transcendental philosophy: the theory that space and time are forms of intuition, the necessity of the categories for the experience of objects, the limitation of synthetic *a priori* cognition to the domain of experience, the role of ideas in transcendental illusion, and the notion of noumena lying beyond the boundary of possible knowledge, thinkable but unknowable. These results are then used to evaluate the possibility of metaphysical cognition according to the previous analysis of its structure (as synthetic *a priori* cognition), set out (synthetically) in the Preamble.

Kant organized the *Prolegomena* around four questions. The first two ask how pure mathematics and pure natural science are possible. The third examines the possibility of “metaphysics in general” – not the science of metaphysics, but the natural inclination of the human mind to pursue metaphysics (4:279). The fourth question asks, “How is metaphysics as a science possible?” (4:280).

Only the first three parts of the *Prolegomena*, corresponding to the first three questions, follow the analytic method. Kant signaled the close of his “analytic” treatment in the Third Part (4:365), offering his subsequent response to the fourth question as a “Solution to the General Question of the *Prolegomena*.” To match the first three questions, Kant took three things to be “actual” in his investigations. The first two, pure mathematics and pure natural science, provide the basis for his discovery of how (alone) synthetic *a priori* cognition is possible – that is, only if the forms of intuition and the categories serve as conditions for all possible experience. Consequently, synthetic *a priori* cognition is not possible for the transcendent objects of metaphysics. The third thing that Kant took to be actual was the “natural disposition” to metaphysics (4:279), that is, the naturally given tendency of human beings to pose metaphysical questions concerning the putative objects of pure reason. Here, Kant sought to explain reason’s natural tendency to claim synthetic *a priori* knowledge, even when unjustified, and to show how reason is able to form ideas, however problematic, of God, the soul, and the world as a

whole.<sup>27</sup> The finding that cognition or knowledge does not extend beyond the boundary of possible experience does not preclude the thought (or existence) of objects beyond that boundary. The ideas of reason allow intelligible beings – including God as necessary cause of the sensible world and the soul as a freely acting simple substance – to be thought, even if they cannot be cognized as objects (4:344–7, 351–6). Finally, having completed his “analytic” argument, Kant “solves” the question of how metaphysics is possible as a science – namely, through study of the critical philosophy (4:365).

### III STRUCTURE OF THE WORK IN RELATION TO THE FIRST *CRITIQUES*

In the twentieth century, little work was done on the *Prolegomena* and its relation to the first *Critiques*.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, Kant himself intended the *Prolegomena* to summarize and improve upon the main results of the A *Critique*, and he incorporated parts of it into the B *Critique*.

The Preface to the *Prolegomena* sets the task of evaluating the possibility of metaphysics and contains Kant’s most celebrated allusions to Hume (4:257, 260). The Preamble and General Questions lay out fundamental Kantian distinctions and introduce the analytic method. These three sections correspond to parts of the Preface, Introduction, and Method of the A *Critique*. Discussions of the relations among analytic judgments, the principle of contradiction, and the synthetic foundations of metaphysics and mathematics, which appeared far into the A *Critique* (in the Analytic of Principles, A 149–54, 159–60, 163–4/B 188–93, 198–9, 204–5), are helpfully brought forward into the Preamble.

The First, Second, and Third Parts of the *Prolegomena* correspond respectively to the Transcendental Aesthetic, the Transcendental Analytic, and the Transcendental Dialectic. The First Part focuses on the possibility of pure mathematical cognition *a priori*. Since mathematics is fundamentally intuitive rather than discursive, and since its results are apodictic, it can be founded only on synthetic *a priori* construction in intuition, in accordance with the human forms of intuition, space and time. Consequently, pure mathematics is restricted to possible objects of experience. Notes I–III in the *Prolegomena* seek to show the advantages of Kant’s transcendental idealism for explaining the objective validity of geometry (see A 46–9/B 63–6), and to distinguish his form of idealism from the skeptical idealism of Descartes and the visionary idealism of Berkeley (see B 69–71).

The Second Part offers a newly formulated argument for the conclusions of the Deduction, using terminology not found in either edition

of the *Critique*, including the notion of “consciousness in general” and a distinction between “judgments of perception” and “judgments of experience.” It draws on the Analytic of Principles (A 155–60/B 195–9), the Amphiboly, the Distinction between Phenomena and Noumena, and the Doctrine of Method (A 760–9/B 788–97).

In §§14–26, Kant asks how pure natural scientific cognition, that is, cognition of universal natural laws, is possible. Such cognition could not apply to things in themselves, he reasons, because these could not be cognized *a priori* without any contact with them; but if we had contact with them through experience, that could provide only *a posteriori* cognition and so could not yield the necessity required of laws of nature. Focusing on the law of cause, he restates the problem as that of explaining the possibility of objectively valid experience of objects. He contends that such experience presupposes that the law of cause (and others) hold *a priori* for all possible experience. Using a contrast between merely subjective judgments of perception (such as, that we see the sun shining on the stone and then the stone feels warm) and universally valid judgments of experience (such as, that the sun warms the stone), he argues that the universal validity demanded by the latter can be achieved only if the categories (as derived from the logical table of judgments) are brought to experience by the subject, so as to render the judgment not merely subjectively valid, but valid for “consciousness in general,” that is, not just here and now and for me, but for everyone and at all times. The categories serve as conditions for all possible (objectively valid) experience. This account of the possibility of *a priori* cognition of universal laws of nature restricts such cognition to objects of experience as opposed to things in themselves (see A 155–60/B 195–9). Kant then makes some observations on the tables of judgments, categories, and principles (§§21–6, 39).

In §§27–31, Kant takes up “Hume’s doubt,” that is, Hume’s challenge to reason to give an account of “by what right she thinks: that something could be so constituted that, if it is posited, something else necessarily must thereby be posited as well” (Preface, 4:257). Kant agrees with Hume that reason cannot see how the concept of cause (or substance, or community) could apply to things in themselves. But he claims to have discovered that both the concept and the law of cause can be cognized *a priori* if they are restricted to the domain of possible experience, to phenomena as opposed to noumena. The understanding, by its nature, tries to extend the categories beyond possible experience; only a scientific (i.e., systematic) self-knowledge of reason can show where the understanding can apply the law of cause *a priori* and where it cannot, and so prevent it from being led into dogmatic assertions about things in themselves of the sort that Kant (as Hume) wanted to undermine (see A 760–9/B 788–97). The results of these sections are then extended via

the distinction between phenomena and noumena (§§32–5) and discussion of the relation between the principles of experience and the laws of nature (§§36–8; see A 126–8, and subsequently B 159–65).

The Third Part provides a brief survey of the main parts of the Dialectic, summarizing the Paralogisms and the Antinomies, and simply referring to the Ideal of Pure Reason for the critique of theology. In §56, General Note, and §§57–60, Conclusion, Kant argues that a successful critique of pure reason reveals the boundaries of pure reason and the proper use of reason beyond them. Critique limits the understanding to possible experience. It shows that reason cannot decisively answer questions about the ultimate constituents of the world (whether they are simple or not), its spatial and temporal boundaries, or the existence and nature of the soul and God. But reason is permitted to seek *systematic unity* in the appearances as a whole, and *to think* God and the soul – though not determinately, and so not as proper objects of cognition. Reason, being convinced that materialism is inadequate to explain the appearances, is permitted to “adopt the concept” of the soul as an immaterial being (4:352). In an extended discussion of Hume’s *Dialogues*, Kant argues that Hume is right that we cannot know the theistic concept, but denies that this precludes us from using that concept to view the world as if it were created by an all-wise being. Kant permits analogical application of the concept of cause in this case. The value of Hume’s skepticism as a response to dogmatism, and the need for the critical philosophy to determine the true boundary of reason, had been discussed in the Method (A 758–69/B 786–97).

The Solution and programmatic parts of the Appendix assert that genuine metaphysical cognition is possible only through Kant’s critical results. These discussions correspond to parts of the Discipline of Pure Reason (A 738–57/B 766–85) and are reflected in the B Preface (B xxiv–xxxvii).

Despite such correspondences, the *Prolegomena* differs significantly from the *Critique*, if only because of its brevity. There are also differences in emphasis, due in part to adoption of the analytic method and in part to the clarity that comes with restatement. The *Prolegomena* provided a more forceful statement of Kant’s project to evaluate the claims of metaphysics than had the A edition. Nonetheless, in the A Preface Kant had set the task of evaluating the claims of metaphysics to achieve cognition apart from experience (A xii), and in the A Introduction he had emphasized the importance of discovering “the ground of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments” (A 10/B 23). Further, while the *Prolegomena*, in accordance with the analytic method, assumed the actuality of geometrical cognition, it had previously been asserted in the A *Critique*. Kant there argued from the need to account for the apodictic certainty of geometry to his conclusion that space is a subjective form of intuition

(A 24, A 38–41/B 55–8, A 46–9/B 64–6).<sup>29</sup> As is well known, Kant reorganized the B Aesthetic to expand and emphasize this discussion, creating a separate section on geometry (B 40–1). Given the foreshadowing of the argument in A, its subsequent expansion in B need not be seen as a distortion of the original argument. Rather, Kant may have decided that the argument from the actuality of geometry deserved greater emphasis.

Kant drew on the General Questions in restating his critical aims in the B Introduction (B 19–22). In doing so, he silently introduced the analytic method into parts of the B *Critique*. Thus, the Introduction contained the four Main Transcendental Questions (not labeled as such), together with the assumption that pure mathematics and pure natural science are actual (B 20). Further, Kant ended the revised Aesthetic by recalling the General Question on the possibility of synthetic *a priori* propositions (B 73). And in material added to the First Section of the Deduction in B, he rejected the “empirical” derivation of the categories attributed to Locke and Hume because it “cannot be reconciled with the reality of the scientific cognition *a priori* that we possess, that namely of *pure mathematics* and *pure natural science*, and is therefore refuted by the fact” (B 127–8). The question of whether this change in strategy “begs the question” against the Humean skeptic depends on what Kant believed Hume to have challenged, as is broached in the next section.

Much of the extant philosophical work on the relation between the *Prolegomena* and the first *Critiques* has addressed the relation between the A and B Transcendental Deductions and the Second Part of the *Prolegomena*. In that part, Kant started from the supposition that we have *a priori* knowledge of universal laws of nature, including the causal law and the law that substance persists, and then treated the question of the possibility of such laws as a question about the conditions for universally valid judgments of experience. Interpreters have wondered whether the resultant argument, its distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience, and its appeal to “consciousness in general” in relation to universal validity, provide insight into the Deductions themselves.<sup>30</sup> Some things are clear. The argument in the Second Part avoids the details of cognitive processes as discussed in the “subjective” portion of the A Deduction. The argument is cast entirely in terms of the necessary conditions for experience and the role of categories therein. The search for the conditions of experience is found in both the A and B Deductions. Neither includes the precise terminology of the *Prolegomena*, but both argue that the categories are necessary for universally valid experience. The technical terminology of a “unity of apperception,” found in both Deductions, receives only scant (and unexplained) use in the *Prolegomena* (4:318; also 4:335, note). But talk of “connection” or “unification” in a “consciousness in general” plays a corresponding role (4:300, 304–5, 312). While neither Deduction includes a

terminological contrast between (merely subjective) “judgments of perception” and (universally valid, objective) “judgments of experience,” both try to show how merely subjective sensory appearances, or perceptions, can be rendered objective (A 89–90/B 122–3; B 159–61). To decide how well the Second Part captures the point of either Deduction, one would need to specify the intended functions of the Deductions in Kant’s philosophy, something on which there is no agreement.

IV

KANT’S RELATION TO HUME

The most celebrated sentence in the *Prolegomena* is: “I freely admit that the remembrance of *David Hume* was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy” (4:260). This sentence, together with Kant’s description of “Hume’s problem” concerning causation, were constant signposts for Kant interpretation in the twentieth century. All the same, there is no agreement on what Kant remembered, when he did so, or how he understood Hume’s challenge.

Some things are known about Kant’s relation to Hume.<sup>31</sup> Hume’s *Enquiries* and essays were translated into German in the mid-1750s by Johann Georg Sulzer in Berlin, and Kant had read them by the early 1760s. It is unlikely that this initial reading was what interrupted his slumber. Although Kant was alive to empiricist and skeptical challenges to metaphysics during the 1760s, in his *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) he held that intellectual cognition of an intelligible world – the sort of cognition claimed by traditional metaphysics – was possible. In that work Kant asserted the ideality of space and time as forms of intuition, a position he took over into the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. But he also held that an intelligible world of things in themselves might be cognized through its form, the causal relation. This use of the causal relation to think intelligible beings as a ground for the sensible world would seem to be what Hume’s challenge interrupted. Indeed, within a year of his *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant presumably read Hamann’s partial translation of the conclusion to Book I of Hume’s *Treatise*, published in the *Königsberger Zeitung* for July 5, 1771. In 1772 there appeared a German translation of Beattie’s attack on Hume, with ample quotations from the *Treatise*.<sup>32</sup>

Kant’s “remembrance” has received more attention than his later reading of Hume while writing the *A Critique* and the *Prolegomena*. In late summer of 1780, Hamann gave Kant a draft of his abbreviated translation of Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Kant looked through it immediately and soon asked to read it again.<sup>33</sup> Having nearly completed

the *Critique*, he was prepared to appreciate Hume's skeptical challenge to the argument from design, particularly the problems with theological anthropomorphism and with using the principle "like effects prove like causes" to infer a being outside experience. Hamann suppressed his translation when he learned of a rival one, by Karl Schreiter with annotations by Ernst Platner, which appeared at the Leipzig book fair for Michaelmas, 1781. Kant owned a copy by December.<sup>34</sup>

Kant clearly took a new interest in Hume during this time. In the *A Critique*, Hume's name occurs only six times, all in the Doctrine of Method (A 745–6/B 773–4; A 760–9/B 788–97; A 856/B 884). In the *Prolegomena* it appears twenty-seven times. Hume is portrayed as inspiring the critical philosophy through his challenge to dogmatic metaphysics. The *B Critique* contains three new references to Hume, in the Introduction (B 5, 19–20) and the Deduction (B 127–8).

It is often assumed that Kant regarded Hume not only as challenging the causal concept in metaphysics, but also as skeptically attacking natural science and even ordinary perception. This interpretation relies heavily on Kant's statements in the *Prolegomena*. It is not suggested by the *A Critique*, where the skeptical idealist is described as a "benefactor" of human reason who forces acceptance of transcendental idealism (A 377–8), where Hume is portrayed as attacking application of the causal concept in theistic metaphysics (A 760/B 788), and where skeptical challenges to dogmatic metaphysics are helpful preparation for critique (A 761/B 789; A 769/B 797).<sup>35</sup> Further, even in the *Prolegomena* Hume is seen as presenting his challenge specifically to metaphysics, and the new passages in the *B Critique* have Hume rightly questioning metaphysical attempts to use causal reasoning to transcend experience (B 119–20) and failing to realize that his account of cognition is refuted by the synthetic *a priori* cognition we actually possess (B 5, 19–20). Of course, in the Second Part of the *Prolegomena* Kant speaks of "removing" Hume's doubt. Though Kant is sometimes portrayed as here "replying to the skeptic" in a general way, he might instead be seen as specifically answering Hume's challenge to reason's right to use the concept of cause *a priori*. Did Kant think of Hume's challenge as posing a general skeptical threat to knowledge, including natural science? Or did he see Hume as posing a challenge primarily to metaphysical cognition, a challenge upon which Kant would build? Was Hume Kant's ally in attacking dogmatic metaphysics, and his inspiration toward providing a more adequate theory of the conditions and boundaries of experience, or was he a skeptical enemy to be thwarted? Upon these questions turns an understanding not only of Kant's relation to Hume, but also of the motivation and goal of the critical philosophy itself, in its speculative branch. One thing is certain. The *Prolegomena* must figure largely in any study of Kant's perception of and response to Hume.



RECEPTION OF THE *PROLEGOMENA*

In the Solution, Kant expressed hope “that these *Prolegomena* will perhaps excite investigation in the field of critique” (4:367). He subsequently suggested to Garve that the work might make clear some main points of the *Critique*, which would shed light on other points, until eventually the whole was understood (August 7, 1783, Ak 10:338). His hopes were soon fulfilled.

The most negative early assessment of the *Prolegomena* was by Johann Schultz, who wanted to clarify Kant’s philosophy through his own *Exposition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* of 1784. Schultz allowed that the *Prolegomena* contained “an estimable elucidation of [Kant’s] *Critique*” and that it “spread much welcome light over the system of the author,” but he reported that “it almost seems that one hardly recoils any less from the *Prolegomena* than from the *Critique*.”<sup>36</sup> The first published review of the *Prolegomena*, by Johann Christian Lossius, was also mixed. It contained a largely accurate overview of the work, along with some critical remarks that revealed a failure to understand Kant’s argument for the synthetic status of metaphysics. Lossius complained of the long sentences and suggested that Kant might have written more clearly in Latin or French, since his German required translation even for German speakers. But he allowed that Kant had “fully reached his aim that through these *Prolegomena* the overview of the whole, and the understanding of that quite remarkable and deeply thought work, be markedly facilitated,” and he granted that both works “belong among the most remarkable of our time.”<sup>37</sup>

Also in 1784, H. A. Pistorius published a thorough and accurate review of the *Prolegomena* in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*. At first hesitant “to make an abstract from an abstract,” Pistorius proceeded because of the work’s “rare importance,” its “analytic method,” its comparative clarity, and its responses to objections.<sup>38</sup> The review captured the purpose of Kant’s argument, recognizing that transcendental idealism was a consequence of his critical investigation, the main point of which concerned the possibility of metaphysics and the boundary of pure reason. Pistorius suspected that Kant was resting his claim that the table of categories was complete on the de facto results of previous logic, an empirical source that could not support an allegedly *a priori* result. He also questioned the “derivation” of the ideas of pure reason from the three forms of the syllogism.<sup>39</sup>

By 1785 it could no longer be said that the learned public was “honoring” the critical philosophy with its silence (4:380). The appearance of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* spurred interest in Kant, but work on his critique of reason was already in motion, stirred by the

*Prolegomena*. Johann August Heinrich Ulrich's *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae* appeared at the Easter book fair and soon attracted notice. Although Ulrich was not seeking to develop a Kantian metaphysics, he did want to acquaint students more closely with Kantian ideas.<sup>40</sup> He adopted and explained the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, the existence of synthetic *a priori* propositions, the distinctions among sensibility, understanding, and reason, the doctrine that space is the form of outer sense, and the distinction between mathematical and philosophical methods.<sup>41</sup> While accepting the categories as pure concepts of the understanding, he challenged the completeness of Kant's table and denied that the categories are limited to possible experience.<sup>42</sup> Also in 1785, Tiedemann evaluated and rejected Kant's limits on metaphysics, drawing liberally from the *Prolegomena* as well as the *Critique*.<sup>43</sup> Schütz, who helped found the pro-Kantian *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in Jena, used his review of Schultz's *Exposition* to focus on the *Critique* itself, with reference to the *Prolegomena*. By the 1790s, Kant interpretation was a regular industry, spawning handbooks, dictionaries, and monographs. The *Prolegomena* received due attention in these works.<sup>44</sup> Although receiving only intermittent attention from subsequent scholars, it remains the standard introduction to Kant's theoretical philosophy.

## VI

## NOTE ON TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

The translation has been made using a reprint of the original *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1783; reprint, Erlangen: Harald Fischer Verlag, 1988) and Karl Vorländer's edition, as revised (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1976); on occasion, Benno Erdmann's edition in *Ak*, vol. 4, has been consulted. As is customary, the page numbers of *Ak* are shown in the margins of the translation. Vorländer's edition, completed after *Ak*, collects significant textual variants from many previous editions (and provides other useful information). Vorländer followed the Vaihinger-Sitzler "galley switching" thesis in reorganizing the text of the Preamble and the first General Question. Vaihinger argued, on internal grounds and by comparison to the B *Critique*, that a portion of text was transposed from §2 into §4 during the printing of the Preamble and the first General Question; Sitzler further argued that two galleys of 100 lines were switched.<sup>45</sup> The emended text is not without minor problems (in response to which a paragraph break has been added), but it is much improved over editions without the emendation.

Previous translations of the *Prolegomena* fall into three lines. The first translation, by John Richardson (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1819), is uniformly disparaged and was not consulted. John P. Mahaffy and

John H. Bernard (2nd ed., London: Macmillan, 1889) relied somewhat on Richardson. Paul Carus (3rd ed., Chicago: Open Court, 1912) revised Mahaffy; Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950) revised Carus; and James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977) revised Beck. Ernest Belfort Bax (2nd ed., London: Bell and Sons, 1891) made an independent translation, as did Peter G. Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953), achieving admirable quality. I have also made a new translation, sometimes consulting the earlier works, especially Lucas and Beck.<sup>46</sup>

The original editions of the *Prolegomena*, like the *B Critique*, contained no table of contents. Later German editions reconstructed the table from the section headings embedded in the text, which otherwise was printed in continuous fashion without page breaks to mark divisions (save between Preface and Preamble). Bax and Carus provided no table; Mahaffy, Beck, Lucas, and Ellington offered reconstructions. Their tables agree in structure, with the following exceptions. Mahaffy, Beck, and Ellington place the two sections headed General Question (§§4–5) within the Preambles; and Beck and Ellington treat the Conclusion: On Determining the Boundary of Pure Reason as a major division, while all others include it within the Third Part. From study of an original edition and consideration of the functions of the parts, I agree with Ak, Vorländer, and Lucas in rendering the General Questions as a major division and placing the Conclusion in the Third Part.

The present version is a variant of my edition in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. It contains more extensive critical apparatus than would have been useful in that edition. I have revised my translation of *schwärmerisch* and related words in descriptions of Berkeley's idealism, adopting "visionary" as the adjective, and I have rendered *Bedeutung* as "significance" or "signification" when used to describe the lack of application for the categories outside possible experience. When supplying German words, I show declination and follow original orthography.

I have departed from some translators in rendering *sinnliche Anschauung* as "sensory intuition," rather than "sensible intuition." This choice accords with Kant's own advice about the related terms *intelligibel* and *intellectuel* (below, §34n), the first of which he restricted to "intelligible" objects (those able to be cognized by the intellect), as opposed to "intellectual" cognitions (cognitions belonging to the intellect as a faculty). Although "sensual intuition" would be the most literal translation for *sinnliche Anschauung*, it brings its own ambiguities, so I have used "sensory" when the adjective *sinnlich* is used to indicate the kind of cognition rather than to describe an object as being capable of being sensed (i.e., "sensible"). I have followed standard practice in rendering *Sinnlichkeit* as "sensibility." It might as well or better be translated as "sense," or "faculty of sense." "Sense" was used in eighteenth-century English-language

philosophical writings to refer to the senses as a cognitive faculty or power.

In many cases there are similarities in word roots that Kant could play upon, but that do not carry over to English. Thus, in translating *Vernunftschluss* (literally, “inference of reason”) as “syllogism,” the connection between the faculty of reason and the syllogism is lost. The word *Satz* is particularly rich in such connections. It is typically rendered as “proposition,” but in connection with the antinomies as “thesis,” and in *Satz des Widerspruch* as “principle” (in the phrase “principle of contradiction”). The word *Grundsatz* is often translated as “principle,” although “fundamental proposition” or “basic principle” would be more literal. Because Kant sometimes classifies *Grundsätze* as a subclass of *Principien*, a relation elided by translating both as “principles,” I sometimes use the more literal alternatives. A similar problem arises with *gesunder Menschenverstand* and related terms. Kant sometimes played on its literal meaning, “healthy human understanding.” But in Kant’s time (as now) it was translated as “common sense,” which is how I have rendered it.

I have followed as much as possible Kant’s original punctuation for giving propositions, marking foreign words, and showing emphasis. Kant set propositions off with colons, as in, “the proposition: that substance remains and persists, . . .”; in such cases, the proposition usually ends at the first comma, semicolon, or period. On rare occasions when he used quotation marks I have followed; these have been found to be word-for-word quotations from a source only in §56 (Kant’s note) and the Appendix (quoting the Garve–Feder review). In the first edition, Latin and French words were set in roman type, against the gothic of the German; I have used italics for Latin, French, and Greek words, against the roman of the main text. Italics also show emphasis, where Kant used bold type and letter spacing. For book titles, the italics have usually been added. Kant rarely marked book titles typographically, and he played on the fact that the German counterparts to “critique of pure reason” and “prolegomena” can be used both as ordinary nouns for a type of critical activity or a kind of written work, and as titles for his own writings. Other emphasis follows the first edition. Vorländer and Ak, following current German typography, emphasize all names of persons; the first edition did not, and it has been followed without further note. Bold font shows Kant’s double stress, and his stress on *Noumena* in its germanized form (originally printed in gothic rather than roman), found in the Third Part.