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Transcendental Presuppositions and Ideas of Reason

Abstract: In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant seems to present the “transcendental deduction” of the (subjective) purposiveness of nature whose necessity he had denied in the Appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The so-called First Introduction to the *CJ* promised two transcendental deductions of the (objective) purposiveness of nature, which the published text did not deliver. This paper analyzes the arguments of the *CPR*-Appendix showing that each of its two parts discusses a different sort of deduction. The fact that Kant at various times envisioned at least five very different deductions in the same context is taken as an occasion to rethink the project that Kant sketches in the Appendix to the *CPR*.

Keywords: transcendental deduction, ideas of reason, transcendental presupposition, regulative principles

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In the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV) Kant begins to deal with the large gap between the categorial anchoring of the possibility of experience as such and the knowledge of empirical laws of nature. This project is continued (or re-booted, depending on your interpretation) in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* (KU). In the Appendix to the Dialectic Kant introduces a number of ideas of reason whose regulative use can guide research and support the systematization of knowledge but which also claim to be more than merely subjective heuristics: These ideas claim to be somehow necessary and/or objectively valid and therefore are possibly in need of a transcendental deduction. Kant seems in the first part of the Appendix to deny that they can be given such a deduction only to provide one off the cuff in the second part; he even characterizes this throwaway as the “completion of his critical project” [*Vollendung des kritischen Geschäfts*] (KrV, B 698) – which is then accomplished in one page. We are basically told to view the world as if it were structured according to the idealizations of science: “this is the transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason” [*dieses ist die transscendentale Deduction aller Ideen der speculativen Vernunft*] (KrV, B 699). Kant scholarship has found these

two sections of the KrV extremely perplexing and tends to appeal to Kant's later reworking of these arguments to help understand them.

Kant returned to this problem with new resources (reflective judgment) in the Introduction to the KU, where he gives a transcendental deduction of the purposiveness of nature for our systematic explanations that is much easier to follow than his presentation in the Appendix. In an earlier version of this Introduction to the KU, which he suppressed but later passed on to his disciples, Kant did not attempt a transcendental deduction of the subjective purposiveness of nature, but he did there promise to provide *two* such deductions of *objective* purposiveness in the main text of the "Critique of Teleological Judgment" itself. Neither was ever delivered. All told then, there are *five* transcendental deductions mentioned in the context of regulative principles: one is considered in the KrV Appendix, but its necessity is denied, and one is purportedly delivered there; two are promised as full-scale, analytic-filling arguments in the (unpublished) "First Introduction" to the KU (see EEKU, AA 20: 251); and one is actually delivered in the (published) Introduction to the KU. This apparent need for transcendental deductions and Kant's vacillating answer to this need are indications of a serious problem in Kant's argumentation. Why is it so important that the unity favored or demanded by science be transcendently deduced?

First, a brief reminder about the technical meaning of *deduction*: Although some recent literature on the deductions has the tendency to talk about Kant's "deducing" [*deducieren*] various concepts, this is misleading because such formulations are using an eighteenth-century legal term as if it were a current philosophical term. In the Transcendental Deduction section of the KrV, Kant makes it clear that a deduction is more like a legal brief than an argument *more geometrico*. Dieter Henrich (1984, 1989) has explored the legal background and technical meaning of the term *deduction*, but it can also be found in contemporary encyclopedias: *Zedlers Lexicon*, a standard and fertile eighteenth-century source of Wolfian wisdom, lists *deductio* as the civil-law term whose correlate in criminal law was *defensio*. 'Transcendental deduction' should be taken to refer to any reasoned justification or defense of the transcendental status of a concept or principle. But even in this less demanding sense, the transcendental deduction provided in the KrV Appendix is almost universally acknowledged not to be very strong.

The Appendix to the Dialectic

The Dialectic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is mainly about the trouble we can get into by using concepts of reason as if they were concepts of the understanding. These so-called “ideas” – specifically: soul, world, God – are analyzed in three chapters on the dialectical inferences of reason in which we learn about the dangers of their use, or at least of their misuse. Then, in the Appendix to the Dialectic Kant turns around and begins to recycle these hazardous materials, arguing that precisely because reason’s proclivity to overstep boundaries is *natural*, there must be some purpose behind this proclivity. He takes the position that empirical science is very lucky that we have these dangerous ideas because they are not only useful for scientific research, but perhaps even normatively constitutive of the scientific enterprise. However, on the whole, the basic perspective of this Appendix, especially the first part, is not so much: What do I need in order to pursue science? but rather: How can I productively employ this stuff that I cannot get rid of anyway? Kant asks not merely what science would be missing without the ideas, but also to what use they can be put, since we have them anyway; and they seem to be necessary to our cognitive activities. The all-embracing theme of the Appendix is *unity* – the unity of the understanding, of nature, of concepts, of laws. *Purposiveness* is also often mentioned in the second part of the Appendix, but it is not clear that it is the same subjective purposiveness of nature for our cognitive activities that later plays a role in the Introduction to the KU. Rather it seems to be intended as a purposive unity of nature itself, independent of our cognitive activities: what Kant later called objective purposiveness.

Up to this Appendix to the KrV we really have no reason to suspect that something that is in any way considered to be *transcendental* need not also be *objective* and *constitutive* as well: up to then whatever was transcendental had always also been both constitutive and objective. Admittedly in the first book of the Dialectic Kant did make some distinctions in the concept of *necessity* such that the transcendental ideas are in a sense necessary for reason without being objective in the sense of constitutive of objects. And later, in the Antinomy chapter, practical reason is said to introduce “a kind of necessity and a connection with grounds which does not occur anywhere else in nature.”¹ Thus at least the notion of necessity is no longer coupled to exceptionless generality and the constitution of objects. It is also true that Kant made some similar sounding distinctions when dealing with the Principles of Pure Understanding [*Grundsätze*] such that the

1 KrV, B 575: “[...] eine Art von Nothwendigkeit und Verknüpfung mit Gründen [...], die in der ganzen Natur sonst nicht vorkommt”.

Analogies and the Postulates were merely regulative for intuition, but constitutive of experience. In the Appendix, however, the three concepts – transcendental, objective, constitutive – begin to come apart. Space, time, and causality are conditions of the possibility of (the objects of) experience for discursive understandings dependent on sensibility, and thus they may be called transcendental. For finite, limited understandings forced by reason to seek unity, the conditions of the possibility of actual coherent experience and satisfactory scientific explanation may be more specific. A completely chaotic world with unlimited empirical regularities or no regularities at all could still be spatial and causally determined, but without some unity or system in the world, we – as cognitive subjects – would not get very far. These latter conditions, however, are no longer constitutive of the objects of experience. To the extent that the conditions of the possibility of such experience are also called *transcendental*, the term has indeed changed its meaning. The transcendental purposiveness of nature for our cognitive activities, introduced in the KU, for instance, is not considered by Kant to be constitutive of the objects of experience, even if it might be a condition of the possibility of actual scientific experience.

In Part 1 of the Appendix, Kant introduces a group of ideas of reason that are used regulatively, but have no apparent connection to the Transcendental Ideas discussed in the preceding three chapters of the *Dialectic* itself. These (new) ideas are explicated and taken to be critically acceptable even without a transcendental deduction. However in Part 2, the three original transcendental concepts of reason known from special metaphysics (soul, world, God) are then given a deduction (apparently of some lesser kind). In this Appendix, Kant begins what turned out to be a long quest (culminating in the *Dialectic* of Teleological Judgment) for regulative principles or heuristic maxims, which although not constitutive of experience or of the objects of experience, are nonetheless in some strong sense objective, necessary and binding for our understanding. Some things are taken to be inevitably necessary, though merely regulative; these are not just subjective proclivities: they are epistemically, not psychologically necessary.

The argument that Kant makes in the Appendix is almost universally acknowledged to be rather obscure, and there is nothing near a consensus in the literature as to what its point is. In fact, the literature seldom even asks why the Appendix has two parts (exceptions: Zocher 1956, Brandt 1989), and some of the best analyses discuss only the first part without commenting in any way on this restriction. And since Kant in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* seems to cover much the same ground as he does in the first part of the Appendix (albeit with different terminology), it is also unclear whether he later changed his mind and abandoned the position of the Appendix or improved/revised it to make it stronger. Because we know that Kant later differentiates a new kind of judgment,

reflective or reflecting judgment, it is hard to avoid a teleological reading of the Appendix such that it is interpreted as the *predecessor* of the Introduction to the KU – either in the sense of a forerunner which prepares the way for reflective judgment or in the sense of an impediment that must be negated and overcome in order to reach the more advanced position. The first reading looks for resources in the text for what is yet to come or for adumbrations of or motivations for a later argument that is thought to be more successful. The second reading looks for weaknesses in the argument that demand a change. There does seem to be some agreement in the literature at least that Kant in the Appendix is unsuccessful in grounding his principle of unity. Some (Grier, Teufel) believe Kant intended to ground only the hypothetical use of the ideas and for this purpose a transcendental illusion is sufficient. Most assert that his intention was to ground more than just this (Brandt, Geiger), some assert that he did not want to *ground* anything at all (Horstmann).² Without hoping to be able to exclude the Introduction to the KU completely, I want in the following to keep the teleology under control as much as possible while interpreting the Appendix. I shall try to read the first part as making sense without a deduction and the second part as making sense with one.

In the *Prolegomena* (§ 60) Kant provides some hints about how to read the Appendix. The two parts are significantly different in status. The first part concerns serious metaphysics; the second part is “supererogatory” [*überverdienstlich*] and cannot be demanded of metaphysics proper. Kant refers to both parts of the Appendix as “scholia” that deal with the “practical benefit that a purely speculative science may have” [*der praktische Nutzen, den eine blos speculative Wissenschaft haben mag*] (Prol, AA 04: 363). Such topics, he tells us, are suitable for experts but are not intended for amateurs [*Liebhaber*]. For some reason Kant discusses the second part of the Appendix first, touching explicitly on each of the three Transcendental Ideas; this discussion of the supererogatory second part is much more extensive than that of the first part, which is said to be “more closely related to the contents of metaphysics.” The principles that this part introduces cause some difficulties, Kant reports, because they seem to claim to determine the understanding a priori and to be constitutive of experience:

For there [Appendix part 1] certain principles of reason are put forward that determine the order of nature a priori, or rather determine the understanding a priori, which is supposed to search for the laws of this order by means of experience. These principles seem to be con-

² A survey of the disunity of the literature can be found in Godlove 2013.

stitutive and law-giving with respect to experience, though they spring from mere reason, which cannot, like the understanding, be regarded as a principle of possible experience.³

These principles, which are here said to seem *constitutive*, were denied a transcendental deduction in the KrV, and given one later in the KU. The supererogatory second part of the Appendix, on the other hand, does claim to contain a sort of transcendental deduction, but the deduction does not deal with the same principles.

Appendix Part I: a deduction denied

The first part of the Appendix is titled “On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason”. In this part of the Appendix, Kant stresses the fact that there is nothing wrong with the ideas of reason as such but merely with their transcendent use. Just as the understanding unifies the objects of experience under concepts so, too, can reason unify the manifold of concepts by means of ideas. We may thus recycle the dialectical ideas of reason by using them regulatively for the unification of the concepts used by the understanding. Since reason really has as its object only the understanding and the proper use of the understanding (see KrV, B 672), it will never, if properly used, be applied directly to empirical objects in the world. Thus the “objective reality” of such ideas cannot be grounded in a material object or any system or process in the empirical world.

Reason is the realm of the normative, not the factual, and the objects of the ideas that reason produces or collects are not things or facts but ideals or norms that the understanding is supposed to pursue. An idea of reason is not the concept of an object (e.g., a system) but rather an epistemic norm similar to such scientific concepts as (pure) earth, water, air, etc., none of whose objects actually exist in the pure form. That is, these terms have no objective reality; they do not refer to actual things in the material world in the sense that other sortal terms can refer; but nonetheless we speak of them as if we were referring to something real. These ideas are norms that, though they do not refer, nonetheless seem to have some sort of representational content.

³ ProL. AA 04: 364: “Denn da werden gewisse Vernunftprincipien vorgetragen, die die Naturordnung, oder vielmehr den Verstand, der ihre Gesetze durch Erfahrung suchen soll, a priori bestimmen. Sie scheinen constitutiv und gesetzgebend in Ansehung der Erfahrung zu sein, da sie doch aus bloßer Vernunft entspringen, welche nicht so wie Verstand als ein Princip möglicher Erfahrung angesehen werden darf.”

An idea of reason is the basis for the pursuit of a *system* of knowledge as opposed to a mere aggregate of collected concepts and rules. Reason takes the big picture of nature as a whole and an idealized picture of individual things and events. Understanding, on the other hand, is more mundane and narrowly focused on connecting the things in front of its nose. Kant distinguishes (see KrV, B 672) two notions of unity: (1) a *distributive* unity, which is what the understanding could accomplish on its own and consists merely of an aggregate of concepts; and (2) a *collective* unity, acquired with the aid of reason, whereby the concepts are integrated into a coherent system. This notion of collective unity is also explicated in the *Prolegomena* in terms of “completeness” [*Vollständigkeit*] of experience (see Prol, AA 04: 328.08). This is the sort of unity or system whose germs must be “performed” in the *Critique* (see Prol, AA 4, 328.09–10).

Kant uses the example of pure material forms from chemistry not only to illustrate the epistemic norms, which reason imposes on our understanding (not on nature) as we attempt to investigate particular objects, but also to exemplify the epistemic norms guiding us as we systematize our knowledge. Somewhat strangely, he offers us an analogy to the law of the lever for chemistry. The various materials are divided into three groups: the *earths* are acted upon by the *salts and acids* by means of *water and air*, just as a *load* is moved by a *force* by means of a *machine* (lever, windlass etc.). The reduction of chemical taxonomies to mechanical taxonomies displays the influence of reason seeking unity (see KrV, B 674).

Kant’s point here seems to be that the use of such norms itself is only rational if certain circumstances are taken to hold. His arguments ought equally to apply to other cases that are not merely descriptive and classificatory: for instance, to uniform acceleration, which (as he explains in the Introduction to the second edition of the KrV) is only imperfectly realized by Galileo’s inclined plane. We can view Galileo’s approximately round bronze ball rolling ever faster down the parchment-lined chute to be a uniformly accelerated point mass sliding down a frictionless plane. It is as if a highest intelligence had created the world, not necessarily to accord exactly with our experimental norms, but to accord with them ever better, the better we learn how to experiment. In this case the norm of experimental practice is identical to an idealized description of nature’s laws. Galileo’s actions are rational on the assumption that there is, in some normative sense, such a thing as uniform acceleration, though we need not assert that genuinely uniform acceleration is or can be a real object of experience. Likewise, although there are no pure chemical substances, nonetheless the concepts of pure substances, like earth, air, fire and water can be used to ask about the relative contribution of each in any empirical phenomenon.

The hypothetical use of reason postulates a norm of systematic unity of knowledge, but this remains a *logical* principle, not a *transcendental* principle:

reason insists that we look for a hidden unity or uniformity among the phenomena – even if we have already seriously tried and failed. The subjective unity of a system is not merely a heuristic for research, justified by its success in acquiring new knowledge or in integrating existing knowledge. Logical principles, while not constitutive of the object of research, are methodologically (normatively) binding for and supportive of empirical research. But when we use these *logical* principles, we make a *transcendental* presupposition; that is, the method is only really rational on the assumption that nature is, approximately, the way it is presupposed to be. The logical principle deals with the understanding, prescribing how it should behave, but the transcendental presupposition is about the world and thus about the possibility of experience.

In fact it cannot even be seen how a logical principle of rational unity among rules could obtain unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the object itself, is assumed *a priori* as necessary.⁴

And Kant asserts that “we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary” [*wir müssen [...] die systematische Einheit der Natur durchaus als objectiv gültig und nothwendig voraussetzen*] (KrV, B 679). Thus, it is clear that we have to do with a principle that is regulative, not constitutive, but somehow claims to be transcendental, objectively valid and necessary. While these principles are sometimes called ‘heuristic’ by Kant, they are not methodological suggestions justified by utility or success in practice. They are normatively constitutive of the rationality of scientific practice itself.

Kant finds this kind of transcendental presupposition already available for use in the tradition of metaphysics or, as he puts it, “hidden in an admirable way in the principles of the philosophers” [*auf eine bewundernswürdige Weise in den Grundsätzen der Philosophen versteckt*] (KrV, B 679). He deals with three⁵ such (logical) principles: *homogeneity*, *specification* and *continuity*. Each logical principle has a corresponding transcendental presupposition, which reason takes into account in its attempts to get the understanding to order the objects of experience. Furthermore, these principles of systematic unity can also be seen in concrete examples of scientific unification (for instance, the varying orbits of the

4 KrV, B 678f.: “In der That ist auch nicht abzusehen, wie ein logisches Princip der Vernunfteinheit der Regeln stattfinden könne, wenn nicht ein transscendentales vorausgesetzt würde, durch welches eine solche systematische Einheit, als den Objecten selbst anhängend, *a priori* als nothwendig angenommen wird.” The Guyer/Wood translation of *stattfinden* has been modified to make it conform to their translation of it at KrV, B 681f. cited below.

5 Kant says neither that there are only three, nor that there could be more than three.

planets turn out to be elliptical and other celestial motions are described by other conic sections). Besides these, there are also three *interests of reason* in empirical research, each of which generates a corresponding principle or maxim. Thus, there are five interconnected concept-triplets, which receive slightly varying formulations. The table below tries to catalog the names Kant gives to the principles depending on whether they are viewed as subjective/regulative or objective or from the perspective of the interests of reason.

Logical principles, transcendental presuppositions and interests of reason

<i>Logical principle</i> B 685–686	<i>Transcendental presupposition</i> B 685–686	<i>Principle in experience</i> B 690	<i>Interest of reason</i> B 694–696	<i>Derived principle</i> B 694–696
homogeneity <i>Homogenität</i>	sameness of kind <i>Gleichartigkeit</i>	unity <i>Einheit</i>	unity <i>Einheit</i>	aggregation <i>Aggregation</i>
specification <i>Spezifikation</i>	variety <i>Varietät</i>	manifoldness <i>Mannigfaltigkeit</i>	manifoldness <i>Mannigfaltigkeit</i>	specification <i>Spezifikation</i>
continuity <i>Kontinuität</i>	affinity <i>Affinität</i>	relatedness <i>Verwandtschaft</i>	affinity <i>Affinität</i>	continuity <i>Kontinuität</i>

It is in regard to the third of the five versions (manifoldness, relatedness, unity – Kant transposes the order) that Kant denies that these triplets can be given a transcendental deduction. But there seems to be no philosophically interesting difference in the terminological variety of phrases.⁶ In what follows, I shall not try to give different names to the logical principles and their transcendental presuppositions or to the regulative principles and their constitutive correlates.

Surprisingly, the three official transcendental ideas of reason (soul, world, God) are never mentioned, and it is not clear that they are even meant to provide a background, much less do any work, in this part of the Appendix. There are thus exactly three principles of genus and species, which have no apparent connection or analogy to the three transcendental ideas. Kant then suggests the following: If you have a species, look for the genus and for higher genera; if you have a genus, look for the species and for lower subspecies; when you take both together, look for the continuity in transitions. These three ideas or rules for empirical research are then formulated and explicated in various ways: (1) as subjective (logical) principles or maxims (of unity) that reason uses to guide the understanding in

⁶ Grier (1997) and Teufel (2014) would presumably dispute this.

empirical research; (2) as the transcendental presuppositions of these principles or as their “counterparts” (Teufel 2014) in the real world; (3) as the *interests* of reason that generate the principles in the first place. The three principles of reason are not merely heuristic recommendations about how to carry out research; they are norms that are generated by the interests of reason and prescribed to the understanding as it seeks knowledge. In following these prescriptions of reason, the understanding makes the corresponding transcendental presuppositions about the world, which are not constitutive but nonetheless objective.

One influential reading of the Appendix interprets the distinction between the subjective and the objective (logical and transcendental) formulations as expressing the same fundamental distinction that underlies the entire Dialectic. Michelle Grier (2001, 119–122) argues that Kant sees these principles as transcendental only in the sense that they are based on transcendental illusion. She isolates two principles behind the entire Dialectic:

- (P1): Find for the conditioned knowledge given through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion (see KrV, B 364).
 (P2): If the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, a series which is itself unconditioned, is also given (see KrV, B 364).

The logical principles are said to express P1 and the transcendental principles express P2. Reason, Kant tells us in the Dialectic, has the tendency to take things as *given* [gegeben] which are in fact only *given as a task* [aufgegeben]. Grier argues that no valid transcendental principle of unity is needed for the systematization of science: the (necessary) illusion of such unity, like the imaginary focus of our reflection in the mirror, is enough to keep science going. Not surprisingly, an interpretation of the Appendix along these lines leads one to view the Appendix as a failure to ground the transcendental presuppositions and thus to view the Introduction to the KU as a second try at the same thing with better resources (Teufel 2014). Both Grier and Teufel read the first part of the Appendix as analogous to the discussion of the unconditioned in the Introduction to the Dialectic and thus take it to diagnose a conflation of what is given-as-a-task with what is given.

I find this approach unconvincing because P2 is just not at issue in the (first part of the) Appendix. The unity of the concepts of the understanding demanded by reason does not postulate anything as given. The transcendental presupposition is just that: a presupposition that we have to make if our unifying activities are to be rational. It makes no sense to order and classify things or concepts that are not *thought* to be ordered or at least classifiable. This does not however mean that our ordering activities cannot fail because the world cannot be without order. Kant explicitly envisions the case in which the differences are so great that we can

find no similarity at all among the phenomena. In that case, he says, not even the *methodological* principle would hold. However, fallibilism is not skepticism: we do register occasional minor successes. In this sense, the fact that we use the logical principles at all indicates that the transcendental presuppositions cannot be completely off the mark. Thus since unification of experience does in fact occur, we may presuppose – at least as long as we rationally pursue our methodological principle – some unity among the concepts and laws that the understanding uses to cope with nature.

If among the appearances offering themselves to us there were such a great variety [...] that even the most acute human understanding, through comparison of one with another, could not detect the least similarity [...], then the logical law of genera would not obtain at all [...]. The logical principle of genera therefore presupposes a transcendental one if it is to be applied to nature [...]. According to that principle, sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree a priori), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible.⁷

Here Kant once again (see KrV, B 678f. above) asserts that if the transcendental presupposition were completely wrong, we would not even use the methodological principle: the *logical* principle would not obtain. And from the fact that the logical principle does “obtain” we can be sure that the transcendental presupposition has some kind of objective validity.

This also means that an ordering activity would be *prima facie* irrational on the opposite assumption, that its object is inappropriate. Kant is dealing with the rationality of the pursuit of systematic knowledge. Rational enterprises can of course fail: for instance, if the presupposition is incorrect. And even if our ordering activities were only applied to concepts in science (which would not be *science* if it did not constitute a system), they could still fail in case the understanding just does not in fact produce science or anything better than a mere aggregate of concepts. What is at stake here is not truth but rationality; and rationality demands collective unity.

7 KrV, B 681f.: “Wäre unter den Erscheinungen, die sich uns darbieten, eine so große Verschiedenheit [...] daß auch der allerschärfste menschliche Verstand durch Vergleichung der einen mit der anderen nicht die mindeste Ähnlichkeit ausfindig machen könnte [...], so würde das logische Gesetz der Gattungen ganz und gar nicht stattfinden [...]. Das logische Princip der Gattungen setzt also ein transscendentales voraus, wenn es auf Natur [...] angewandt werden soll. Nach demselben wird in dem Mannigfaltigen einer möglichen Erfahrung nothwendig Gleichartigkeit vorausgesetzt (ob wir gleich ihren Grad *a priori* nicht bestimmen können), weil ohne dieselbe keine empirische Begriffe, mithin keine Erfahrung möglich wäre.”

These logical principles with their transcendental presuppositions (illustrated on the example of the experiential form of the principles: manifoldness, relatedness, unity) are important for the unification of knowledge and for generating a systematic order of the concepts of the understanding. But even though these principles are necessary for science and “seem to be transcendental” and have an “objective but indeterminate validity” they are denied a transcendental deduction. Even though they can

serve as a rule of possible experience, and can even be used with good success, as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating it; and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas.⁸

Apparently these regulative principles need no deduction to be normative for scientific practice, because they only *seem* to be transcendental. Experimental science, pushed on by reason, realizes ever better the pure forms in chemistry or inertial motion and uniform acceleration in physics; it proceeds “so to speak, asymptotically” as Kant says (see KrV, B 691). And the unification of scientific laws, forces and principles can be seen in the same way.

In the Appendix Kant reaffirms his position in connection with the regulative, not constitutive, use of some ideas of how to classify concepts or things. At KrV, B 692 (referring back to KrV, B 221f.) He distinguishes three ways (or at least two and a half) of being constitutive: (1) constitutive of intuition (the mathematical categories); (2) constitutive of a priori concepts (the dynamical categories); and (3) constitutive of empirical concepts. But although the principles discussed cannot have a constitutive use, nonetheless they might have some kind of objective validity for the construction or ordering of specifically empirical concepts.

In the Transcendental Analytic we have distinguished among the principles of understanding the *dynamical* ones, as merely regulative principles of *intuition*, from the *mathematical* ones, which are constitutive in regard to intuition. Despite this, the dynamical laws we are thinking of are still constitutive in regard to *experience*, since they make possible a priori the *concepts* without which there is no experience. Principles of pure reason, on the contrary, cannot be constitutive even in regard to empirical *concepts*, because for them no corresponding schema of sensibility can be given, and therefore they can have no object *in concreto*. Now if I depart from such an empirical use of them, as constitutive principles, how

⁸ KrV, B 691f.: “[...] sie gleichwohl als synthetische Sätze *a priori* objective, aber unbestimmte Gültigkeit haben und zur Regel möglicher Erfahrung dienen, auch wirklich in Bearbeitung derselbe als heuristische Grundsätze mit gutem Glücke gebraucht werden, ohne daß man doch eine transcendente Deduction derselben zu Stande bringen kann, welches, wie oben bewiesen worden, in Ansehung der Ideen unmöglich ist.” The proof that there is no deduction was presumably given at KrV, B 393 (see below).

will I nevertheless secure for them a regulative use, and with this some objective validity? And what sort of meaning can that use have?⁹

Here Kant seems to be contrasting concepts needed for experience as such with specifically empirical concepts.

In this part of the Appendix Kant is dealing not with the unity of nature or of the objects of experience but with the unity in our (system of) concepts. He makes an idea of reason into an analogue of a schema of sensibility, but with this difference: that the application of concepts of the understanding to the schema of reason is not likewise a cognition of an object, but a *rule* for the unified use of the understanding.

Kant then concludes the section by pointing out that even though the transcendental presuppositions made when applying the maxims or regulative principles may not be compatible with each other, there is no “true conflict” between the principles themselves since they only express different interests of reason. Since reason is interested in affinity, it gives the understanding a rule to seek continuity. Since reason also likes manifoldness, it gives the understanding a different rule (specification) etc. Thus, reason can provide norms for science without a transcendental justification and – as long as it remains normative – without returning to the old metaphysics criticized in the Dialectic.

Appendix to the Dialectic, Part II: a deduction delivered

In the second part of the Appendix, Kant turns around and gives a quick transcendental deduction but says it's not such a big thing because the objective validity of an Idea is different from the objective validity of a Category and does not mean

⁹ KrV, B 692: “Wir haben in der transcendentalen Analytik unter den Grundsätzen des Verstandes die *dynamische*, als bloß regulative Principien der *Anschauung*, von den *mathematischen*, die in Ansehung der letzteren constitutiv sind, unterschieden. Diesem ungeachtet sind gedachte dynamische Gesetze allerdings constitutiv in Ansehung der *Erfahrung*, indem sie die *Begriffe*, ohne welche keine Erfahrung stattfindet, *a priori* möglich machen. Principien der reinen Vernunft können dagegen nicht einmal in Ansehung der empirischen *Begriffe* constitutiv sein, weil ihnen kein correspondirendes Schema der Sinnlichkeit gegeben werden kann, und sie also keinen Gegenstand in concreto haben können. Wenn ich nun von einem solchen empirischen Gebrauch derselben als constitutiver Grundsätze abgehe, wie will ich ihnen dennoch einen regulativen Gebrauch und mit demselben einige objective Gültigkeit sichern, und was kann derselbe für Bedeutung haben?”

that it applies to objects of experience (see KrV, B 698f.). This time it is explicitly made clear that the ideas, and thus the epistemic norms, in question are the three official transcendental ideas of reason (soul, world, God), not just some useful maxims found in old philosophy books. The objective reality of the ideas consists in being schemata useful in unifying the empirical use of reason. Showing this is the transcendental justification of the ideas of reason. Kant first concedes the truth of a statement that (as he reminded us ten pages earlier at KrV, B 691) he had proved at KrV, B 393: the ideas of pure reason can have no transcendental deduction. Then he gives a transcendental deduction of a different kind.

Early on in the Dialectic after arguing that we have to approach the ideas of reason in the same way as the categories were approached in the Transcendental Deduction (see KrV, A 329/B 386), Kant denied that these ideas of reason can be given a transcendental deduction:

No *objective deduction* of these transcendental ideas is really possible, such as we could provide for the categories. For just because they are ideas, they have in fact no relation to any object that could be given congruent to them. But we can undertake a subjective *derivation* of them from the nature of our reason, and this is to be accomplished in the present *chapter*.¹⁰

Although the ideas allow no objective deduction, Kant argues that they may nonetheless be given at least a “subjective derivation”, and he promises to deliver this derivation in the course of the Dialectic. In the main body of the Dialectic, however there is no serious candidate for such a derivation.

10 First emphasis Kant, KrV, B 393: “Von diesen transscendentalen Ideen ist eigentlich keine *objective Deduction* möglich, so wie wir sie von den Kategorien liefern könnten. Denn in der That haben sie keine Beziehung auf irgend ein Object, was ihnen congruent gegeben werden könnte, eben darum weil sie nur Ideen sind. Aber eine subjective Ableitung derselben aus der Natur unserer Vernunft konnten wir unternehmen; und die ist im gegenwärtigen Hauptstücke auch geleistet worden.”

The translation of the last sentence differs significantly from the Guyer/Wood translation (differences in *italics*): I follow the Academy Edition in substituting *Ableitung* (derivation) for *Anleitung*. Guyer/Wood leave the term *Anleitung* translating it as ‘introduction’ and take *Hauptstück* to refer to a *section*, although it is elsewhere rendered as ‘Chapter’. Kant’s literal phrase “the present chapter” does not actually refer to anything since it does not occur within a chapter. The first *book* of the Dialectic, where this passage is located, is not divided into *chapters* (*Hauptstücke*), but only into *sections*, and the section in question (which ends a page later) provides no such derivation. At the beginning of the preceding paragraph (see KrV, B 392) Kant had promised to present all three transcendental ideas of reason and the fields that study them in the “following chapter” thus using the term to refer to second *book* of the Dialectic. The “present chapter” of the KrV, in which this subjective derivation is supposed to be carried out, thus probably refers to the entire Dialectic (including the Appendix).

Here in the Appendix Kant announces that since the transcendental ideas cannot be used with security without some kind of justification for this use, he intends to give them a deduction nonetheless. Presumably (as plausibly suggested by Zocher 1958) this will be the “subjective derivation” promised at KrV, B 393. The ideas are said to need a different kind of deduction because they lay claim to a different kind of objective validity, which is said to be merely indeterminate. Their reference is merely indirect.

The ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction *of the same kind as the categories*; but if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*) then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, granted that it must also diverge quite far from the deduction one can carry out in the case of the categories. *That deduction is the completion of the critical business of pure reason, and it is what we will now undertake.*¹¹

The actual argument, which is explicated in the rest of the Appendix, is brief and obscure. Kant distinguishes two ways in which something can be *given* to reason: as an object “absolutely” [*schlechthin*] or as an object “in the idea” [*in der Idee*].¹² In the first case our concepts are out to determine the object, which leads to the dialectical problems already criticized in the Dialectic. The second way of being given is apparently legitimate, although in this case it is no longer simply the understanding that is made the object of reason. The object-in-the-idea, as Kant explains it here, is not just an epistemic norm like pure water or uniform motion. It is not an idealized object, which, if it existed, would realize a norm and which we attempt to instantiate in science. Nor is it an ideal system that constructs a unity of concepts or laws that nature can be seen (or made) to fit. While the ideas of Part 1 of the Appendix, such as pure elements and unifying taxonomies, have no objective reality or reference, they do nonetheless have some kind of representational content, when referring to their intentional objects. But the ideas of Part 2 of the Appendix have no representational content at all. For instance, when God is given to reason as an object-in-the-idea, he is merely a conceptual tool that

¹¹ KrV, B 697f., emphasis PM: “Die Ideen der reinen Vernunft verstatten zwar keine Deduction von der Art, als die Kategorien; sollen sie aber im mindesten einige, wenn auch nur unbestimmte, objective Gültigkeit haben und nicht bloß leere Gedankendinge (*entia rationis ratiocinanti*) vorstellen, so muß durchaus eine Deduction derselben möglich sein, gesetzt daß sie auch von derjenigen weit abweiche, die man mit den Kategorien vornehmen kann. *Das ist die Vollendung des kritischen Geschäftes der reinen Vernunft, und dieses wollen wir jetzt übernehmen.*”

¹² The terminological distinction between an “absolute” object and an object “in the idea” determines the argument in the second part of the Appendix, but as far as I know it occurs nowhere else in Kant’s writings.

guides our pursuit of knowledge, not knowledge of God, but of *other* objects (see KrV, B 698): For instance, to say that the concept of a highest intelligence is *given in the idea* means that the concept's "objective reality" or reference consists in being a schema mediating the greatest systematic unity in our experience of the world because we view this object (the highest intelligence) as the *cause* of the constitution and connection of these other objects of experience. This is the meaning of Kant's assertion that the idea of God is heuristic, not ostensive. Then follows the "deduction" of the ideas:

Now if one can show that although the three kinds of transcendental ideas (*psychological, cosmological* and *theological*) cannot be referred directly to any object corresponding to them and to its *determination*, and nevertheless that all rules of the empirical use of reason under the presupposition of such an *object in the idea* lead to systematic unity, always extending the cognition of experience but never going contrary to experience, then it is a necessary *maxim* of reason to proceed in accordance with such ideas. And this is the transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason, not as *constitutive* principles for the extension of our cognition to more objects than experience can give, but as *regulative* principles for the systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition in general, through which this cognition, within its proper boundaries, is cultivated and corrected more than could happen without such ideas, through the mere use of the principles of understanding.¹³

This is at best a plausible argument for a kind of "subjective derivation" and if that is all that is intended it is harmless. But there is nothing even vaguely transcendental, in the original meaning of the term. The maxim can be seen as necessary in the sense that reason is compulsive in its desire for unity and systematicity and that the understanding is compelled to do reason's bidding.

As Kant makes clear in the explications that follow this deduction, the unity appealed to here is not the unity of concepts that dominated the first part of the Appendix, and it is also not a subjective purposiveness of nature for our cognitive

13 KrV, B 699: "Wenn man nun zeigen kann, daß, obgleich die dreierlei transscendentale Ideen (*psychologische, kosmologische* und *theologische*) direkt auf keinen ihnen correspondirenden Gegenstand und dessen *Bestimmung* bezogen werden, dennoch alle Regeln des empirischen Gebrauchs der Vernunft unter Voraussetzung eines solchen *Gegenstandes in der Idee* auf systematische Einheit führen und die Erfahrungserkenntniß jederzeit erweitern, niemals aber derselben zuwider sein können: so ist es eine nothwendige *Maxime* der Vernunft, nach dergleichen Ideen zu Verfahren. Und dieses ist die transscendentale Deduction aller Ideen der speculativen Vernunft, nicht als *constitutiver* Principien der Erweiterung unserer Erkenntniß über mehr Gegenstände, als Erfahrung geben kann, sondern als *regulativer* Principien der systematischen Einheit des Mannigfaltigen der empirischen Erkenntniß überhaupt, welche dadurch in ihren eigenen Grenzen mehr angebaut und berichtigt wird, als es ohne solche Ideen, durch den bloßen Gebrauch der Verstandesgrundsätze, geschehen könnte."

faculties. The unity of nature (and the purposiveness in and of nature itself that comes to dominate the later parts of the Appendix) is not relative to us. Furthermore, the system that Kant discusses is not a classificatory system of species and genera or even a system of physical laws, but rather a physical system unified by laws.

Kant takes up the three Ideas of reason one after the other, whereby it quickly becomes clear that the idea of God or a “highest intelligence” is the focus of attention. In fact the idea of the *world*, since it involves us in antinomies, is completely out of bounds. Whereas the idea of God might have objective reality (at least we can no more deny this than assert it), Kant argues that we have no reason to take the object of this idea “absolutely” since with this concept “reason could aim at nothing except its own formal rule in the extension of its empirical use” [*die Vernunft [könne] hierbei nichts als ihre eigene formale Regel in Erweiterung ihres empirischen Gebrauchs zur Absicht haben*] (KrV, B 714). The presupposition of a highest intelligence as the cause of the world system takes God merely as an object “in the idea” [*in der Idee*] (KrV, B 715):

The highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the purposive unity of things; and the speculative interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordering in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle, namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them.¹⁴

This idea of reason allows us to view the entire world system [*Weltganze*] as well as particular systems as characterized by purposive unity. This is not only often successful, but can also never be harmful. The worst-case scenario is that an expected teleological connection (*nexus finalis*) turns out to be merely physical or mechanical (*nexus effectivus*).

The point is that the idea of the supreme intelligence licenses us to view both organic bodies and the system of the world as coherent and integrated material systems. This is a much stronger claim than that made in the first part of the Appendix, which was restricted to a sort of Linnean type of classification reminis-

¹⁴ KrV, B 714f.: “Die höchste formale Einheit, welche allein auf Vernunftbegriffen beruht, ist die zweckmäßige Einheit der Dinge, und das speculative Interesse der Vernunft macht es nothwendig, alle Anordnung in der Welt so anzusehen, als ob sie aus der Absicht einer allerhöchsten Vernunft entsprossen wäre. Ein solches Princip eröffnet nämlich unserer auf das Feld der Erfahrungen angewandten Vernunft ganz neue Aussichten, nach teleologischen Gesetzen die Dinge der Welt zu verknüpfen und dadurch zu der größten systematischen Einheit derselben zu gelangen.” Guyer/Wood render *Anordnung* as *ordinance*.

cent of Kant's somewhat disdained field of natural description (*Naturbeschreibung*). The systematic unity argued for here fits much better to Kant's still favored discipline of natural history (*Naturgeschichte*). While Kant avoided the notion of purposiveness in the first part of the Appendix, it is a constant topic in the second part. Moreover, this purposiveness is not just that of the understanding and its use of concepts and laws, but also the purposiveness of nature itself. When Kant speaks of "the systematic unity, order and purposiveness of the world arrangement, which reason has to make into a regulative principle of its investigation of nature" [*systematische[.] Einheit, Ordnung und Zweckmäßigkeit der Welteinrichtung [...], welche sich die Vernunft zum regulativen Princip ihrer Naturforschung machen muß*] (KrV, B 725), he is referring not to a subjective purposiveness of nature for our cognitive activities but to an objective purposiveness within nature, which reason demands that the understanding presuppose. That is why God is an "object in the idea" for Kant. He is the "substratum" of this order. This ground of systematic unity is the objective reality or reference of the idea of God, which was given the transcendental deduction that Kant considered the "completion" of the critical project.

It is this kind of purposiveness that Kant later planned to articulate in the KU, that he still hoped to be able to justify as late as the "First Introduction" to the KU,¹⁵ and that he had to trade in for subjective purposiveness in the published Introduction. But that is another story.

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¹⁵ The last sentence of the "First Introduction" (see KU, AA 20: 251) promises a deduction of *objective* purposiveness, that Kant then abandoned.

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