

## SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT KANT'S "CLEAR QUESTION"

Alan Schwerin  
Monmouth University

Let us search for it in all the sources...

David Hume

Immanuel Kant's mid-May 1781 correspondence to his colleague, and zealous disciple, Marcus Herz, is prophetic. Written only a few weeks after the publication of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, the letter concedes that only a few will find the work intelligible. In his view, the *Critique* is difficult, and unfortunately still in need, "here and there [of] little additions and clarifications."<sup>1</sup> The text, he continues, is challenging for two related reasons: its problems appear to be intractable, and the revolutionary conceptual scheme that needs to be introduced to deal with these problems requires a "complete change of thinking in this part of human knowledge."<sup>2</sup> In time the material will become intelligible, Kant later reassures another correspondent, Christian Garve: "People will get over the initial numbness caused unavoidably by a mass of unfamiliar concepts and an even more unfamiliar language."<sup>3</sup>

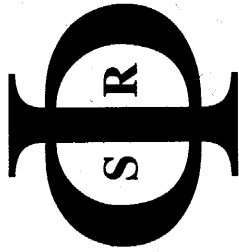
With shortcomings like these, one might be tempted to wonder whether the publication of the *Critique* was not a little premature. As it happens, Kant anticipates this concern. For instance, he informs Herz in the May 1781 letter cited above, that he has already delayed publication for many years, and that with the final formulation of his solutions to the central problems of the *Critique* there is little need to delay publication:

...I have rather let years pass by, in order that I might get to a finished insight that would satisfy me completely and at which I have in fact arrived; so that I now find nothing I want to change in the main theory....<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps his audience will struggle, but where Kant is concerned, he is now completely satisfied with his "finished insight." Fortunately for us, however, Kant does not wash his hands of the challenges posed by the *Critique*, for he provides us with a strategy to follow when dealing with his difficult text.

Not content with the mere acknowledgment of the obscurity of the *Critique*, Kant himself goes on, in his correspondence, to suggest an antidote to the initial numbness he thinks is likely to be experienced by his readers. His advice is that we first consider the *raison d'être* of his demanding work, and only later move on to study the other connecting parts. For Kant, it is imperative that we understand the question that serves

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ties, apparently, then give rise to Kant's central *Critique* problem. As Zweig points out, for many the

...letter of February 21, 1772, shows Kant's thinking at the point at which the Leibnizian aspects of the theory in his inaugural dissertation first became suspect to him. Suddenly he is troubled by the uncritical assumption he had made, that categories or "intellectual representations," which Kant had characterized only negatively as "ideas we employ that are not derived from our experience of objects," could nevertheless be supposed to agree with those objects and thus to represent things as they are. How can concepts that do not produce their objects... and that are not produced in us by the objects to which they refer... be applicable a priori to an independent reality?<sup>9</sup>

However, as important as this letter might be, it can be argued that Kant anticipates, if not provides, an alternative formulation of the problem many years before the Herz letter. As early as 1766—some fifteen years before the publication of the *Critique*, and almost six years before the Herz letter above—Kant writes to Moses Mendelssohn about a vexing problem in metaphysics that appears beyond resolution:

Since we have no [sensory] experience through which we can get to know [the powers of the soul]... one is led to ask whether it is intrinsically possible to determine these powers of spiritual substances by means of a priori rational judgments. This investigation resolves itself into another, namely, whether one can by means of rational inferences discover a *primitive* power, that is, the primary, fundamental relationship of cause to effect. And since I am certain that this is impossible, it follows that, if these powers are not given in experience, they can only be invented.<sup>10</sup>

This concern with the scope of *a priori* judgments, and the ability of the mind to grasp non-sensory phenomena—such as that which is present in causal relations—at least on the face of it, appears to anticipate the sentiments in the Herz letter above, and thus appears to ante-date the later *Critique* pronouncements on his problem. Whatever the merits of this last suggestion, it nevertheless appears that these additional expressions of the problem could be of use to scholars of the *Critique*. If it can be shown that these are similar, if not entirely equivalent formulations of the same problem, inquirers may well find them more accessible than those in the *Critique*. For the more formal public expressions of his problem, as we are about to discover, do not appear to be especially helpful. Unfortunately, the precise relationship between these different informal versions of the problems Kant is interested in, still needs to be settled. Furthermore, the question on the relationship between these informal and the formal expressions of the problem also, apparently, remains a mystery. However, this suggestion that we draw on the informal material to reconstruct Kant's view of his problem

as the source for the speculations in the *Critique*. Whatever our reaction to the rest of the work, we must begin our excursions into his ideas by considering "the main question on which everything depends."<sup>5</sup> Adopting the view that his work is a system of integrated parts—a machine, as he puts it—the comprehension of this central question will enable the artifact to function smoothly.

In a word, the machine is there, complete and all that needs to be done is to smooth its parts, or to oil them so as to eliminate friction, without which, I grant, the thing will stand still.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, this pivotal question needs to be considered early on, according to Kant, as it is at least the one component that initiates to his system of ideas will find accessible. For this step—stone, apparently, is a "question that I have stated clearly enough."<sup>7</sup>

But is this as sound an entry point to the *Critique* as Kant suggests it is? My paper is a contribution to this important issue. More specifically, I shall argue that Kant's public account of the problem he regards as the source of the *Critique*'s speculations is obscure and incoherent. For a critical investigation of some of the leading published pronouncements of his problem reveals a set of vague, confusing and disjointed statements one would be hard pressed to regard, as Kant's does, as "stated clearly enough." My inquiry focuses on the statements from two of Kant's most significant accounts of his problem: namely those found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.<sup>8</sup> But these, naturally, are not the only sources of his account of the problem on which the *Critique* rests. For one thing, his correspondence—at least his philosophical correspondence between 1759 and 1799—offers us invaluable alternative roads into his ideas. The exchanges between Kant and his colleagues are replete with references to many of the issues of interest to the Königsberg professor, most especially the problem Kant viewed as the origin of his *Critique*. I want to say a little on this additional avenue for investigation before turning to an analysis of his prime published pronouncements on the nature of his problem.

### Section One: The Less Formal Statements of Kant's Problem

There can be little doubt that there are a number of references to the *Critique* problem in Kant's correspondence. However, what is debatable, is the precise date of the earliest reference to his problem. According to a widely held view, Kant's letter to Marcus Herz on February 21, 1772 constitutes the first unambiguous evidence we have of his recognition of difficulties with his (Wolffian/Leibnizian) epistemology. These difficul-

progenitor of Kant's *Critique* problem. This lacuna has fueled the speculations of commentators attempting to understand the *Critique* and its origins.

On the one hand, discrepancies like this encourage commentators like Alfred Bumler to suggest that the impact of British thought on Kant has been exaggerated. As he sees it, there is little, if any foreign influence on Kant: "If there is any foreign influence, it is from France, not from England."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, some view Kant's (sparse) published references to Hume—let alone their absence from the unpublished philosophical correspondence—as proof that he was attempting to hide his ignorance of Hume's arguments. Perhaps the most outspoken commentator with this interpretation is William Piper:

...it was Hume's study of causality that Kant had in mind when he expressed his debt and his regard for Hume. *Kant's generous recognition of this great predecessor and opponent, however, actually disguises the insufficiency of his knowledge of him.* A reader discovers this only page by page as he wonders, first, why Kant did not face Hume's keptical explanation of humankind's belief in an external universe and, gradually, how Kant might have responded had he known about it.<sup>15</sup>

Be this as it may, the point remains that Kant does single Hume out in his attempt to articulate his *Critique* problem and its origins. So Kant, apparently, perceives at least a resemblance, if not a direct causal relationship, between his *Critique* and Hume's ideas. For this reason, at least, we ought to consider Kant's published remarks on Hume's problem in our attempt to understand the problem that allegedly serves as the source of the *Critique*.<sup>16</sup>

According to Kant, Hume's analysis has wide repercussions. Besides expressing his personal indebtedness to Hume, Kant maintains that metaphysics in general stands to gain a great deal from Hume's philosophical investigations into the problem of necessary connection. For "nothing has ever happened which could have been more decisive to its fate than the attack made upon it by David Hume..."<sup>17</sup> But this broadside against metaphysics, that is rooted in Hume's skirmishes with the problem of necessary connection, still needs to be "carefully nursed and developed," continues Kant, if "its smouldering fire" is to throw any light on the species of knowledge known as metaphysics. This, ostensibly, is the role assigned to the *Critique*—an enquiry that Kant himself depicts as "the execution of Hume's problem in its widest extent."<sup>18</sup>

How then does Kant view this issue that he deems so important? The next section of my paper is an attempt to answer this important question. While the bulk of his remarks on this issue constitute a positive portrayal of

faces yet another, and arguably the most significant hurdle: Kant places little, if any importance on his letters.

We ought to remember that Kant attached little significance to his correspondence, and, by all accounts, had no intention of either publishing his correspondence himself, or allowing others to do so. For instance, when Kant was approached by the mathematician and physicist Johann Bernoulli for copies of his correspondence with the distinguished philosopher J. H. Lambert, he could not, and would not, comply with the request. (An edition of Lambert's correspondence ultimately appeared between 1782 and 1785.) In his letter of November 1781, Kant is blunt:

You are fully justified in expecting that I would keep a copy of my letters to such an important correspondent—but unfortunately I never wrote him anything worth copying.<sup>11</sup>

Kant says this, even though he regards Lambert as "the greatest genius in Germany"—an idol with whom Kant had had a fairly active exchange of ideas. And in a short letter to Marcus Herz on the possibility of publishing Moses Mendelssohn's correspondence, Kant puts it even more pointedly: I can contribute nothing to the publication of his correspondence, since his letters to me contain nothing really scholarly, and a few general remarks of that nature do not provide material for a scholarly *opus postumum*. I ask you also to leave out any letters of mine that might turn up among his papers. They were never intended to be read by the public.<sup>12</sup>

In short, the evidence suggests that Kant's correspondence would prove an indefinite, if not illicit avenue into his *Critique* speculations. For these reasons I shall turn to issues possibly less tenebrous. We need to consider Kant's more formal articulations of his problem: namely those from his *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.

In his published accounts of the problem, Kant credits Hume with the discovery of the issue that leads to his *Critique*. On the face of it, it is Hume's discussion of necessary connection that Kant views as especially significant. In the introduction to his *Prolegomena*, for instance, he states explicitly that Hume's sceptical account of the problem of necessary connection, "was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."<sup>13</sup> That Kant ascribes this weight to Hume's analysis of necessary connection when accounting for the origins of the *Critique* is most interesting. For Hume is not accorded this role in Kant's correspondence. In fact, there Hume is hardly even mentioned by Kant. Other than a brief reference to Hume's views on induction and miracles—in a letter to J.G. Hammann on July 27, 1759—no reference exists in the philosophical correspondence, to Hume's (apparent) role as

philosophers have relied on so far in their research into Hume's problem. This approach turns out to be little more than a "convenient method of being defiant without any insight."<sup>23</sup>

The assumption present throughout this broadside from Kant against the so-called common sense philosophers seems to be that there is a correct interpretation of Hume's problem. For Kant appears to be suggesting here, albeit implicitly, that the (allegedly) unacceptable solution proposed by the common-sense philosophers has its roots in the failure of these philosophers to understand Hume's problem. And this failure, presumably, has been brought on by the adoption of an interpretative framework that is inappropriate, or incorrect. The claim that Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and Priestley have misunderstood the issue by missing "the point of the problem," with his further suggestion that the question is not as they see it, suggests that these philosophers would not have gone awry in their responses to Hume's problem had they been equipped with, and used, the means to correctly understand the problem. Had these philosophers not drawn on the conceptual framework of common sense in their enquiries, but relied on a different interpretative scheme, rather than the scheme which led to their current superficial reply, they could have developed a more insightful response to Hume's problem. So Kant's implicit suggestion, as I see it, is the proposal that certain interpretations of Hume's problem are inadequate, better incorrect, and that there is a correct way to see, and thus understand this problem. Let us set aside the fundamental issue on the viability of the view that a problem lends itself to one interpretation rather than another. This issue is too wide-ranging and complex to be explored here. However, what we can consider is Kant's own perspective on Hume's problem.

Broadly speaking, Kant provides us with two sets of formulations of Hume's problem—one of which is more accessible than the other. The earlier *Critique* accounts of the issue are general, fairly technical renditions, that turn out to say more on the potentialities of his problem than on the issue itself. On the other hand, while the versions proffered by Kant in the *Prolegomena* appear to be more specific than those presented earlier in the *Critique*, it is not clear whether or not these are all presentations of the same problem. To begin, consider the account given by Kant in his *Critique*, presented under the heading "The General Problem of Pure Reason." After extolling the virtues of gathering "a number of investigations under the formula of a single problem,"<sup>24</sup> he maintains that

...the proper problem of pure reason is contained in the question: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible?

Hume's problem, as we shall see, Kant has also characterized the issue negatively. And these two portrayals, unfortunately, do not amount to a coherent picture of Hume's problem, as I shall argue. Let us begin with a consideration of the negative notes, before looking at Kant's more extensive, though qualified, positive account of Hume's problem.

### Section Two: Kant on the Point of the Problem.

Not only does he want metaphysicians to attend to this problem, but from remarks made in the introduction to his *Prolegomena*, it appears that Kant desires they view the problem in the correct light. For where philosophers have attended to Hume's problem, they have invariably, intimates Kant, proffered solutions that are wide of the mark. Supplementing his general rebuke, alluded to earlier, that metaphysicians have hitherto accorded Hume's forays into the problem of necessary connection with indifference, Kant raises a fairly specific objection against the interpretation relied on by those philosophers that have considered Hume's problem. As he sees it, those few philosophers who have deigned to consider the issue—namely, Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley—have all misunderstood the issue that the author of the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* placed on the map:

Hume suffered the usual misfortune of metaphysicians, of not being understood. It is positively painful to see how utterly his opponents, Reid, Oswald, Beattie, and lastly Priestley, missed the point of the problem...<sup>19</sup>

Being even more specific, Kant goes on to assert that the problem, or question "was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted; but whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori*."<sup>20</sup> What is more, these philosophers have exacerbated matters by appealing to common sense to solve what they took to be Hume's problem, and consequently, have not "penetrated very deeply into the nature of reason"—the avenue that they ought to have explored in order to "satisfy the conditions of the problem."<sup>21</sup> This 'subterfuge', as Kant derogatorily puts it, that allegedly has been committed by Hume's critics, if seen in its true colours, is "but an appeal to the opinion of the multitude, of whose applause the philosopher is ashamed, while the popular charlatan glories and boasts in it."<sup>22</sup> In short, while Kant requests that Hume's problem be placed on the metaphysicians' map, he appears to be in favour of the proviso that the problem be viewed in a specific manner. And, as his remarks against the so-called common sense philosophers Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley clearly indicate, Kant has no doubts about the merits of the interpretation

However, it can be argued that this might not be the question that Kant thinks best expresses Hume's problem—and thus, that we have still not grasped Hume's problem. In the first place, this rendition does not appear to be entirely adequate, given that Hume, as Kant sees it, "believed himself to have shown that such an *a priori* proposition is entirely impossible."<sup>28</sup> If Kant is correct here on Hume's view on the status of the synthetic *a priori* proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause, it would surely be otiose to wonder how this proposition is possible. Why bother to ask how this proposition is possible when you believe that it is not possible? Unfortunately, there is a second set of objections that can be raised against the proposal on the nature of the question that Kant thinks best articulates Hume's problem. For this suggestion on the nature of Hume's problem, and derivatively of his question, can qualify as an acceptable rendition only if at least the following two conditions are met:

- indefinite and definite questions can be synonymous
- the (presumably definite) question is entirely synonymous with Hume's (allegedly indefinite) question.

For we need to remember that Kant maintains that Hume failed to envisage "the proper problem of pure reason" because he did not conceive it "with sufficient definiteness and universality."<sup>29</sup> Which suggests that the question that occupied Hume, for Kant, was not only pursued too narrowly by Hume, but given his failure to use the synthetic/analytic distinction, was indefinite to begin with. But in that case, it appears that Kant has failed to even consider, let alone to satisfy either of these requirements. So, the proposal that we determine the Humean forefather of the so-called general problem of pure reason by exploiting the ancestral relationship between the two issues, may well stop short of the sought for question, and thus its problem. For it appears that with this procedure, we do not end with an (allegedly) indefinite question—one that Kant thinks underlies Hume's metaphysical research—but with a question that draws on Kant's (allegedly) definite distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. In short, it seems that an extra step is called for, if we wish to reach Hume's question—a step from the definite to the indefinite. Unfortunately, Kant fails, so it seems, at least in his *Critique*, to show us how to take this additional step to determine the question that best captures Hume's problem. However, he has raised this issue of Hume's problem elsewhere. And as it happens, his *Prolegomena* proves less reticent on this score. Perhaps this is where we will find what we are looking for.

We have already seen that the *Prolegomena* contains a fairly definite statement of the nature of Hume's problem. For among Kant's criticisms

That metaphysics has hitherto remained in so vacillating a state of uncertainty and contradiction, is entirely due to the fact that this problem, and perhaps even the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, has never previously been considered. Upon the solution of this problem or upon a sufficient proof that the possibility which it desires to have explained does in fact not exist at all, depends the success or failure of metaphysics. Among philosophers, David Hume came nearest to envisaging this problem, but still was very far from conceiving it with sufficient definiteness and universality. He occupied himself exclusively with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*), and he believed himself to have shown that such an *a priori* proposition is entirely impossible.<sup>25</sup>

What are we to make of these remarks? As it stands, this is not a very helpful account of the problem that underlies Hume's views of necessary connection. The nearest that Kant comes here to articulating Hume's problem is when he asserts that Hume "occupied himself exclusively with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*)."<sup>26</sup> But this is a vague statement that in my view, gives us little, if any indication of Hume's problem. Even if we overlook the importation of Kant's (problematic) distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments and propositions, the question remains: what is the precise nature of this apparent preoccupation of Hume's with the synthetic proposition alluded to here by Kant? More particularly, what is the question that Kant thinks so occupied Hume?

It can be argued that the passage cited above from the *Critique*, while admittedly silent about the specifics of Hume's question, at least contains material that can be used to construct a likely Kantian response to the interpretative question raised above. For Kant intimates here that the question that expresses Hume's problem is a less precise and universal formulation of a question that has been made explicit in the *Critique*: namely, the question "How are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible?" While denying that Hume envisaged this, apparently "the proper problem of pure reason,"<sup>27</sup> Kant has suggested that Hume could have succeeded in discovering this problem. But for his preoccupation "with the synthetic proposition regarding the connection of an effect with its cause," and his failure to be more definite—and in this context, this is likely to be Hume's failure to draw on the analytic/synthetic distinction—Hume might have succeeded where others had failed. Given these views on the relationship between the so-called proper problem of pure reason and Hume's problem, Kant's implicit suggestion then appears to be that Hume's problem can be expressed by the question, "Are *a priori* synthetic judgments on the connection of an effect with its cause possible?"

aspects of Hume's problem? Is it, as I have maintained above, one of logical subserviency? That is to say, is Kant claiming that the question, on the possibility of the concept *cause* being "thought by reason *a priori*," is of prime concern to Hume, and that the other two issues, though logically related, are subsidiary? Or are all three of equal concern for Hume, according to Kant? Or is it perhaps some other ranking? His use of the phrases 'consequently' and 'implying' in the passage quoted above from the *Prolegomena* strongly suggests, I submit, that for Kant the component issues of Hume's problem form a hierarchy, with the first issue cited as the most fundamental issue. But, if Kant is claiming that this issue is the central component of Hume's problem, his subsequent remarks on the nature of Hume's problem prove puzzling, to say the least. For Kant asserts—immediately after his tripartite account of the problem that allegedly concerns the author of the *Treatise*—that Hume's prime focus, better his *exclusive* focus, is on an issue that appears to be very different from any of those already articulated. This shift becomes apparent when we realize, to our dismay, that Kant now goes on to suggest that Hume is exploring the (separate) question of the origin of the concept *cause*. Hume, according to Kant, is considering this question, *and no other question*, when he deals with his problem:

The question was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted, but whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori* ... This was Hume's problem. *It was solely a question concerning the origin, not concerning the indispensable need of using the concept.*<sup>32</sup>

To say the least, this is very confusing! Having just outlined what appears to be a tripartite account of Hume's problem, Kant goes on to boldly assert that Hume is focused exclusively on one question. So what is it? Does Kant believe that Hume's is a compound problem requiring the resolution of three questions, or is his view that it is a logically simple (i.e. atomic) problem that involves only one question?

But is this not mere nit-picking, one may wonder? Surely it is of little, if any consequence, whether or not Kant thinks that Hume is dealing with a compound or a logically simple problem? And even if we deem it important, has Kant not already indicated, albeit implicitly, how he views the issue? For we have already seen that the *Critique* presents what appears to be the suggestion that Hume is concerned with the issue on the possibility of "*a priori* synthetic judgments on the connection of an effect with its cause." Is this not to suggest that Kant views Hume's as a single issue problem i.e. as a logically simple problem? Admittedly, some interpretive

of the common-sense philosophers Reid, Oswald, Beattie and Priestley, is the categorical assertion that Hume is not raising their question on the use of the concept *cause*, but that his is the different question, "whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori*..."<sup>30</sup> Not content with this brief announcement of the problem, Kant immediately continues—presumably in an attempt to throw further light on Hume's issue, and to help clarify his statement of Hume's problem—by articulating what he appears to view as logical extensions of the central problem that occupies Hume:

The question was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted, but whether that concept could be thought by reason *a priori*, and consequently whether it possessed an inner truth, independent of all experience, implying a perhaps more extended use not restricted merely to objects of experience. This was Hume's problem.<sup>31</sup>

So for Kant, Hume's problem is more complex than, and different from that envisaged by Hume's common-sense opponents. Not concerned with the utility or correctness of the concept of a cause, Hume's prime focus, as Kant sees it, is on the question of the viability of this concept in an environment bereft of experience: that is to say, the question is whether or not this concept can be operated on, or "thought by reason *a priori*." This question leads Hume into other, subsidiary concerns. For if it can be shown that the concept can continue to function in the *a priori* realm of the understanding, without what is taken to be its lifeblood, namely experience, the ancillary question arises of whether or not this concept, cause, possesses "an inner truth, independent of all experience." And if this latter suggestion holds, muses Kant, the boundaries of application of this concept may encompass more than merely the "objects of experience," i.e. the concept may have a wider use than was previously believed to be the case. In short, at least in the *Prolegomena*, it appears that Kant views Hume's problem as a conglomerate of at least three separate, yet logically related issues. These component issues for Kant, can be expressed by the following questions:

- a) Can the concept cause "be thought by reason *a priori*"?
- b) Does this concept possess "an inner truth, independent of all experience"?
- c) Is this concept applicable to objects that cannot be experienced?

As we might expect, these questions beg others.

This account of Hume's problem, even though it is more forthcoming than that presented in the *Critique*, still leaves a lot to be desired. For one thing, assuming that my rendition of his views is correct, what is the precise relationship, for Kant, between what he appears to suggest are the three

be further refined, but perhaps more important, exposes Kant to the charge that his account of Hume's problem is incoherent.

To the best of my knowledge, Kant has not, in either the *Critique of Pure Reason* or the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, attempted to reconcile these seemingly separate accounts of Hume's problem. Which is not to say that he has not attempted to meet this requirement elsewhere, or to suggest that it cannot be met. As has been intimated above, the issue appears to be open. This reconciliation effort, however, would lose its significance if it turned out that neither of these Kantian interpretations is correct. So a crucial question arises: Are any of Kant's suggestions here on the nature of Hume's problem correct? For an answer to this important question we would need to turn to the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, in an attempt to uncover Hume's account of the issue. What then has Hume to say on the problem that apparently interrupted Kant's dogmatic slumbers, and gave his "investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction"?<sup>33</sup> This large issue must remain dormant—at least for now.

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manoeuvres were required to reach this suggestion, so we must be cautious in attributing this perspective of Hume's problem to Kant. But there clearly is at least some support for this interpretation, and thus the suggestion that for Kant, Hume is pursuing a logically simple problem. So, the fact that Kant later in the *Prolegomena* explicitly tells us that Hume's problem only concerns the question on the origin of the concept cause, far from dismaying us, ought to be welcomed. For these remarks surely serve to further the suggestion that Kant endorses the view that Hume is dealing with a logically simple problem.

This counter, unfortunately, does not eliminate our difficulties with Kant's view of Hume's problem. If anything, it channels our concerns into murkier, and even deeper waters. For even if we overlook what appears to be the conflicting evidence from the *Prolegomena*, and grant that Kant subscribes to the view that, in essence, Hume's is an atomic problem, we are still left with the crucial issue: what precisely is Kant's view of Hume's (logically simple) problem? For it appears that the *Prolegomena* rendition of Hume's problem is that Hume is after the origin of the concept cause, while the suggestion from the earlier *Critique* appears to be that Hume is concerned with the viability, or possibility of a particular type of judgment. Now these do appear to be two separate concerns. While I do not want to suggest here that these two views cannot be reconciled, it remains to be seen precisely how Kant can, and does relate the two positions. Admittedly, knowledge of the source or origin of an entity can prove useful in determining the behavior of that entity in specific environments. For instance, knowledge that the fish in the tank before me, comes from the fresh waters of the Amazon in tropical central Brazil can prove useful in predicting its viability in the frigid currents of the Pacific ocean off the coast of Alaska. So the two proposals alluded to by the *Critique* and the *Prolegomena* respectively need not be viewed as necessarily mutually exclusive interpretations of Hume's problem. But in my analogy we are referring to the same entity: namely, a specific fish. And Kant's accounts of Hume's problem, unfortunately, involve references to two separate phenomena: namely, the concept cause, and the viability of a specific judgement. Without any explanation on the precise relationship between these different concerns, Kant's account must strike one as disjointed. From this it follows that Kant still needs to show us how to reconcile his proposal that Hume is attempting to determine the origin of the concept cause with the proposal that he is intent on determining the possibility of the a priori synthetic judgment on the connection of an effect with its cause. The failure to satisfy this requirement not only entails that our command of Kant's view of Hume's problem can

thoughts represented by the genius advocates in Germany." (Cassirer: *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* p 319) For a careful assessment of the impact on Kant of British thinkers, especially Berkeley and Hume, see William Piper: "Kant's Contact with British Empiricism," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol 12, No 2 (1978/9), pp. 174-189.

<sup>15</sup> Piper 1978/9, 184. (My emphasis.)

<sup>16</sup> Others acknowledge the influence of Hume, and his British colleagues on Kant, but then suggest that Kant, and the other German thinkers "struggled to preserve as much of their *dogma* as they could," in the face of this "criticism from beyond the Rhine (and the channel)." For an interesting account of the origins of Kant's philosophy, and especially a discussion of the role of Moses Mendelssohn in this process, see especially the first chapter of John H. Zammito: *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgement*. As Zammito points out, Kant had a distinct "taste for things English. The crucial medium for this fascination in Kant was the Berlin *Aufklärung*. A fascination for things English was all the rage among the "popular philosophers" of Berlin with whom Kant entered into [a] very lively exchange. Moses Mendelssohn looms as especially influential in mediating the foreign Enlightenment, and especially the British, for German philosophy..." (pp 23,24)

<sup>17</sup> Kant 1976, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Kant 1976, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Kant 1976, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Kant 1976, 6 and 7.

<sup>21</sup> Kant 1976, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Kant 1976, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Kant 1976, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Kant 1978, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Kant 1978, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Kant 1978, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Kant 1978, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Kant 1978, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Kant 1976, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Kant 1976, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Kant 1976, 6 and 7.

<sup>32</sup> Kant 1976, 6 and 7, my italics.

<sup>33</sup> Kant 1976, 8

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zweig 1967, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Zweig 1967, 101.

<sup>3</sup> Zweig 1967, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Zweig 1967, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Zweig 1967, 101.

<sup>6</sup> Zweig 1967, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Zweig 1967, 101.

<sup>8</sup> From now on I shall refer to these texts simply as 'the Critique' and 'the Prolegomena' respectively.

<sup>9</sup> Zweig, 1967, 13. Other commentators also single out this Herz letter as the precursor to the problem that later features so prominently in the *Critique*. See L. W. Beck, "Kant's Letter to Marcus Herz," in *Studies in the Philosophy of Kant*, R. P. Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*, and T. D. Weldon, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*.

<sup>10</sup> Kant to Moses Mendelssohn, April 8, 1766. (Zweig 1967: 56-57, my inserts)

<sup>11</sup> Zweig 1967, 97.

<sup>12</sup> Zweig 1967, 124. My emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Kant 1976, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Bäumler: *Kant's Kritik der Urteilskraft*, p 162. This thesis has been vigorously rejected by Ernest Cassirer in his *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, where he points out that Bäumler both underrates the impact of Shaftesbury's doctrine of genius on Kant's aesthetics, and rests his case on a mistaken understanding of the concept of genius in Helvetius's *On the Mind* (1759). As Cassirer views matters, "Helvetius's doctrine of genius is the exact opposite of all the