

# THE POSITIVE ROLE OF REASON AND PHYSICO-THEOLOGY IN THE TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC

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## 1. Introduction

In this essay, I investigate the positive role of theoretical reason in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, focusing on how it emerges from the argument of the Transcendental Dialectic.

The case for my answer is constructed from a negative standpoint: following Kant's line of thinking and the structure of the first Critique, I take it that to identify what positive role theoretical reason can play in our cognitive relationship to the world, it is first necessary to establish its epistemological limits and expose its mistakes. This follows the necessary premises reached in the Transcendental Analytic, where Kant has traced a demarcation of the limits of our understanding as the correct application of the categories onto empirical experience.

The question concerning the positive role of reason in Kant's analysis of the transcendental conditions of possibility of knowledge and science is very closely linked to Kant's more general preoccupation towards metaphysics and its relation to scientific knowledge. This concern is voiced in the preface to both editions of the first Critique, where metaphysics is described as a discipline in crisis due to both the establishment of a modern physico-mathematical science of nature and the attacks on

cognitive procedures proposed by authors of the empiricist tradition such as Locke and Hume.

The 'problem of reason' opens the preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason" (A vii).<sup>1</sup> These questions are those of traditional metaphysics: at the same time impossible and unavoidable. A few lines later, in fact, metaphysics is famously compared to the Ovidian queen Hecuba who mourns: "Greatest to all by race and birth, I am now cast out, powerless" (A ix).

It is clear here that, for Kant, solving the 'problem of reason' is the only possibility of saving metaphysics from the obscurities and contradictions that have brought it to its state of misery and finally granting it the status of science that it deserves. When addressing the endless controversies of metaphysics, Kant's target is primarily Wolff's school of metaphysics and its dogmatic imposition of principles. At the same time, Kant wants to distinguish his critique of dogmatism from that of the sceptics, empiricists and indif-

ferentists – all guilty of failing to secure metaphysics on solid epistemological grounds, which could be ensured only by a critical approach. Kant, despite his criticism of traditional metaphysics, does not give up the possibility of grounding knowledge on universal conditions, which have to necessarily extend beyond experience and therefore be given to us a priori.

My essay is divided in three sections, which are divided in a number of subsections. The first section introduces the role of reason in Kant's argument by looking of the structure of the critique. In the first subsection I evaluate the position of the Transcendental Dialectic in the first Critique and in the second subsection I address Kant's opening of the Dialectic with the problem of the transcendental illusion in light of the question of what is the positive role of reason.

The second section investigates the claim that metaphysics is an absolutely necessary discipline and has reason at its engine. In the first subsection, I give an account of the cognitive faculty of human reason and of how its characteristics are linked to the urge of extending our knowledge beyond the limits of experience, towards metaphysical thinking. In the second subsection, I introduce the ideas of reason focusing on the ideal of pure reason.

In the third section, I subwork towards a positive formulation of my answer to the question concerning the positive role of reason. I articulate my reply from a reflection on Kant's discussion of the physico-theological proof of the existence of God and argue that the teleological elements of this argument are a relevant key to understand the positive role of reason in Kant's first Critique. This final section is divided in four subsections: the first gives a justification of my choice of this particular part of the Kantian text, the second addresses the negative part of the argument and the third its constructive part. The fourth subsection, finally, sums up what has been achieved in the previous chapters by outlining the positive use of pure reason in our epistemological relationship to the world and as foundation to morality.

## 2. From the island of knowledge to the ocean of illusion

### 2.1 *The Transcendental Dialectic in the structure of the Critique of Pure Reason*

The question concerning the positive role of reason in Kant's first Critique should first be addressed in the negative, through the *destruens* paragraphs of the Transcendental Dialectic. The Dialectic is, in fact, the more destructive section of the Transcendental Logic, following the constructive role played by the Analytic.

In the Dialectic, Kant takes pure speculative reason, emptied of empirical experience, to be the judge of itself, and, by doing so, establishes its limits and exposes the errors of traditional metaphysics and dogmatism. Towards the end of the Transcendental Analytic, the third chapter of the Analytic of Principles, Kant describes the results achieved so far through the metaphor of an island surrounded by stormy waters:

We have now not only traveled through the land of pure understanding, and carefully inspected each part of it, but we have also surveyed it, and determined the place for each thing in it. But this land is an island ... the land of truth (a charming name), surrounded by a broad and stormy ocean, the true seat of illusion, where many fog bank and rapidly melting iceberg pretend to be new lands and, ceaselessly deceiving with empty hopes the voyager looking around for new discoveries, entwine him in adventures from which he can never escape and yet never bring to an end. (B 295)

The first part of the metaphor describes the land of knowledge, referring to the epistemologically positive role of the understanding, which has been established in the Transcendental Aesthetic (with the a priori forms of sensibility, space and time) and in the first part of the Transcendental Logic (through the transcendental deduction and the categories). Right after, however, the land of knowledge becomes an 'island', not a piece of land that we can endlessly explore, but rather a small portion of *terra*

**The land of knowledge becomes an 'island', not a piece of land that we can endlessly explore, but rather a small portion of *terra firma* surrounded by a stormy ocean.**

*firma* surrounded by a stormy ocean. In the metaphor, the ocean represents illusory knowledge: a space to which our reason tends to travel, intrigued by the possibility of adventure, but that in itself defies the possibility of knowledge, because it lies beyond the ‘shores’ of empirical experience. This second part of the metaphor can be read as an introduction to the next section of the Transcendental Logic, that is, the Transcendental Dialectic.

The Dialectic is, in fact, opened by the introductory paragraph on the ‘Transcendental Illusion’. Here, Kant defines the transcendental illusion as to which “contrary to all the warnings of criticism, carries us away beyond the empirical use of the categories, and holds out to us the semblance of extending the pure understanding” (B 352). The transcendental illusion, therefore, deceives us with the belief that actual knowledge can be found in the realm of pure reason.

Following this, Kant distinguishes two kinds of illusion: the logical illusion “which consists in the mere imitation of the form of reason (the illusion of fallacious inferences)” (B 353) and the transcendental illusion. The former derives from a lack of “attentiveness to the logical rule” (B 353) and is therefore a logical mistake that ceases to be as soon as our focus is brought at it.

The transcendental illusion, on the other hand, is a “natural and unavoidable illusion” (B 354), one that originates from the nature of our reason itself, which takes the subjective need of connecting the concepts of our understanding in a specific fashion, to be an objective determination of things in themselves.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2 The epistemologically negative role of reason

With the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant wants to expose the negative role that reason plays in the epistemological construction of traditional metaphysics: it is only via a

thorough understanding of the faculty of reason itself, its negative role and the origin of its mistakes, that it becomes possible to identify reason’s

positive role and to therefore save metaphysics from both dogmatism and scepticism, laying the grounds for a new metaphysics understood as ‘critical philosophy’.

The destruction of ‘bad’ metaphysics is carried out in the three chapters of the second book of the

Transcendental Dialectic, where Kant exposes the logical illusion of three concepts of pure reason – what Kant calls the ‘ideas of pure reason’. The first chapter, ‘The paralogisms of pure reason’, is dedicated to the critique of rational psychology and its related idea of the subsistence of the soul. The second chapter, ‘The antinomies of pure reason’ deals with rational cosmology and its related idea of the totality of the world. Finally, the third chapter, ‘The ideal of pure reason’, considers rational theology and the idea of an existing God.<sup>3</sup>

Kant goes into the details of the ‘sophisms’ of the three disciplines and their arguments in great depth. However, this is not the context to follow closely the reasoning that exposes the logical mistakes at the core of each idea of reason. What is relevant here, is to note that all three, despite their different specificities, share the same supreme error: applying the logic of the intellect to pure reason, that is, applying the logic of the categories outside the realm of experience. We have seen, that this is what Kant calls transcendental illusion, or the cognitive mistake of granting objectivity to that, which exists only in the realm of pure reason.

In the light of what has been said so far, Kant’s choice of opening the Transcendental Dialectic with the paragraph on the transcendental illusion indicates the relevance that this plays in the whole argument of the Dialectic and gives us a first clue on how to look for the positive role of reason in the chapters that follow. We will in fact have to wait until the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, once the destructive task of the ideas of reason has been accomplished, before we get a more explicit account of the positive role of reason. Nevertheless, already from the introduction, we can start looking for it through the critical efforts of removing the aberrations and false hopes that reason naturally generates (B 355).

## 3. Always returning to a beloved one

### 3.1 New grounds for metaphysics

Following what has been said in the previous chapter, it should have started to emerge how Kant, despite the focus of the Dialectic on the mistakes and fallacies of pure reason, is far from thinking that reason plays only a negative role in our cognitive process. On the contrary, we will see how pure reason has not only a positive but also an absolutely necessary epistemological and moral function.

In the second part of the introduction to the Dialectic, reason is defined as the ‘supreme faculty of cognition’ (B 355) and is illustrated via a parallel with the understand-

ing: if the latter is the faculty that unifies the manifold of intuition, the former “applies to the understanding, in order to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called ‘the unity of reason’ (B 359). Reason is therefore a unifying faculty, one that demands the “unity of principles ... in order to bring the understanding into thoroughgoing connection with itself” (B 362). Reason’s core goal is then to work towards bringing the manifold of cognition into supreme unity and systematization.

In this introductory part of the Dialectic, Kant illustrates human cognition as starting from the senses, moving from there to the understanding and culminating with reason. This scheme is mirrored right at the end of the Dialectic. The concluding paragraph of the first part of the Critique, the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, opens, in fact, with a famous parallel scheme (where the human epistemic faculties are replaced by their products): “Thus all human cognition begins with intuitions, goes from there to concepts, and ends with ideas” (B 730).

Reason, as the highest unifying faculty of human cognition, has the natural tendency of surpassing empirical experience, abandoning conceptual knowledge for a unity beyond appearances:

Pure reason is concerned with nothing but itself, and it can have no other concern, because what is given to it is not objects to be unified for the concept of experience, but cognitions of understanding to be unified for the concept of reason, i.e., to be connected in one principle. (B 708)

Therefore, as much as the search for a systematic unity of all understanding is a natural predisposition of reason, so is the urge to expand our knowledge towards metaphysics.

Further on in the text, in the second part of the Critique, Kant illustrates the human yearning towards metaphysics as the longing for a beloved one “from whom we have been estranged” (B 878). A critique of pure reason is the only viable solution to save metaphysics from the errors of dogmatism and scepticism and to provide it with the solid grounds it needs in order to develop as a science: “a science that is indispensable for human reason, and from which one can chop down every stem that has shot up without ever being able to eradicate its root” (B 24).

At the same time, however, Kant describes metaphysics, in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as a battlefield of endless sophisms, with-

out either winners or losers.<sup>4</sup> From this definition, how is it possible to reach a positive evaluation of metaphysics? And how can reason, as its engine, be defined in terms of a positive force that can be productively employed in our epistemic relationship to the world? The answer to this question is, as we shall see, that it is only after reason has been subjected to Kant’s critical method, that metaphysics can win back its beneficial function as critical philosophy.

### 3.2 The ideal of pure reason

Guided by its natural desire for unity, reason progresses by means of inferences and, according to Kant, inevitably recognizes the necessity and the foundational role of the three ideas of the immortality of the soul, the world as a totality and God. If in the ‘Paralogisms’ Kant discusses the idea of the subsistence of the soul as the unity of the inner experience of the subject, and in the ‘Antinomies’ the idea of the totality of the world as the unity of the outer experience, that is, the totality of the experience of the world as an object,

in the ‘Ideal’ Kant addresses the highest idea of an ‘all-embracing unity in general’ (Höffe 2010:301). Of the three ideas of reason, therefore, the ideal is the su-

preme one, where human reason accomplishes its highest effort of supreme unification. ‘The ideal of pure reason’ is the final and highest part of the Dialectic, reflecting the structure of traditional metaphysics, which is “both crowned and completed by God conceived as the absolutely highest or supreme being” (Höffe 2010:301).

However, the concept of God presented in the first critique is paradigmatically different from the concept of God of traditional metaphysics, first and foremost because the critique, exposing the transcendental illusion intrinsic in the ideal itself, denies its epistemological validity as an object of the understanding. Of the three ideas of reason, the ideal is the one that is farthest away from experience. If the first two ideas can still, in fact, be said to relate somehow to experience, in the sense that they ‘involve a conceptually projected unity of experience’, the ideal is a concept of pure reason generated solely within pure reason itself. Consequently, the idea of God, as the supreme expression of the longing of reason towards the unconditioned, *in individuo* (B 596), transcends all boundaries of

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experience and cannot, therefore, be an object of cognition, like rational theology contends.

Therefore, in ‘The ideal of pure reason’, Kant has set himself the task of demolishing the idea of the God of traditional metaphysics and of re-establishing it within the frame of his critical approach. In order to do so, he has to complete the ‘destructive’ section of the Dialectic with the confutation of the three traditional proofs of the existence of God: the ontological proof, the cosmological proof and the physico-theological proof. Over the course of this chapter of the Dialectic, Kant argues that the proofs are fallacious, and that none can be said adequate to positively establish the existence of a highest being. Kant will conclude that it is impossible to give either a positive or a negative account of the transcendental ideal on an epistemological level and, as a consequence, establishes the ideal as a paradigmatic noumenon, in the sense that is only ‘thinkable’ but not ‘knowable’.

Understanding how the ideal, following the confutation of its epistemological objectivity, can subsequently come to play a positive role in the context, not only of the first Critique, but of Kant’s criticism in general, can guide us in formulating an answer to the question of what the positive role of human reason actually is. In order to achieve this, we will now turn to a specific part of Kant’s argument that can lead us on the right way.

#### 4. When all numbers lose their power to measure

##### 4.1 Introduction to the physico-theological proof

In this section, I track Kant’s argument through a closer look at what he says in the section of the ideal dedicated to the impossibility of the physico-theological proof of the existence of God. This section is one of the concluding moments of Kant’s argument of the whole first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the next subsections I will, inverting Kant’s order, first briefly reconstruct the negative part of the argument, that is, the part that demonstrates the fallacy of the proof. Following this, I will look at three key passages where Kant affirms the positive role of the idea of God as it emerges from the physico-theological argument. To begin with, though, a clarification of the reasons of this choice is due.

According to Michelle Grier (2010, p. 288), out of

the three arguments on the traditional proofs of the existence of God, the physico-theological is the one that, in the scholarly discussion of the ideal, has been mostly overlooked and marginalised. This is predominantly due, according to Grier, to Kant’s own partial dismissal of the proof as logically dependent on the other two. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the discussion of the physico-theological proof is a relevant element in Kant’s argument in this section of the Critique, especially in the context of the question concerning the positive role of reason.

First of all, the ‘argument from design’ and teleological thought play an important role in Kant’s philosophical work before and beyond the first Critique.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, one is tempted to believe that the argument must have more relevance in the first Critique than what it seems like when simply analysed from the perspective of its epistemic fallacy. In favour of this view, it could also be argued that the proof is strategically placed in a part of the Dialectic that is approaching its climax. In the light of Kant’s obsession for systematic structures it seems improbable that the argument was placed in this specific part of the text as a matter of mere coincidence.<sup>6</sup> I take it, though, that as a counter argument, one could say that the physico-theological proof is placed here simply as it follows the refutation of the other two proofs, to which Kant makes it logically dependent.

All the same, Kant himself explicitly shows his own special inclination towards the teleological argument when he defines it as the “oldest, clearest and the most appropriate to common human reason” (B 651). If the first two proofs are more sophisticated products of the ‘sophisms’ of rational theology, the last is the one that suits best reason

in its simplest form as it originates from our observation of the world and the sense of wonder evoked by its beauty and order.

Finally, the physico-theological proof contains *in nuce* elements of Kant’s thought that are crucial for

the first Critique, and in particular for the issue that is being discussed in this essay, but also reach out to other areas of his philosophical system.<sup>7</sup> Otfried Höffe supports the view that teleology has a very important function in Kant’s thought and notes how teleological elements are not to be considered ‘pre-Critical residues’ but rather how ‘the attribution of purpose forms an integral part of the

transcendental critique of reason’ and mentions how teleology plays a crucial role in all the three Critiques (Höffe 1994:211–212).

##### 4.2 Negative part of the argument

The structure of the argument proceeds as follows: its starting point is our observation of the world and the stupor we feel in response to the purposiveness and order that we see in it; from this, reason infers a wise creator of the world who is responsible for the purposiveness observed, and goes on by inferring a “necessary author from the complete purposiveness of the world” (Höffe, 2010:311). It concludes by inferring the actual existence of this necessary author.

However, these inferences are not only logically fallacious, as we will see, they are also grounded on an incorrect analogy: one between the products of nature and those of human art. By means of this analogy, nature is forced to proceed according to human means instead of its own and the freedom of nature is made to derive from a superhuman author.

But even if one accepts this parallel between the artist as author of human artworks and the idea of God as author of the world, then it is clear that the God inferred by this analogy cannot be the creator of the Judaeo-Christian tradition but merely an ‘architect’ of the world, ordering matter that is already given to him, just as the artist uses materials that are already available.

Furthermore, and here comes the logical error, the order of magnitude of the perfection that we can attribute to this highest being can only be proportioned to that of the order and purposiveness that we observe in nature. No one can therefore really grasp the “relation of the magnitude of the world as he has observed it ... to omnipotence, or the world-order to highest wisdom, or the unity of the world to the absolute unity of its author, etc” (B 656).

Our reason, with its tendency of looking for the unconditioned in what is conditioned, takes a ‘determinate experience’, that is, our experience of the things in the world, to lay the grounds to prove the existence of a higher being. Nevertheless, there is an irremediable discrepancy between our empirical experience and the ‘ideal’: this supreme unconditioned can only be met as a transcendental idea and never empirically. Therefore, our

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experience of the world, in its contingency, is incommensurable with that of the transcendental ideal.<sup>8</sup>

As a consequence, it is certainly impossible to jump from our fragmented empirical experience to the ‘absolute totality’ of the ideal. Here Kant explains how, in order to fill this gap, the physico-theological proof has to rely on the cosmological proof. But this, as he previously demonstrated, is nothing else than a form of concealed ontological proof. Therefore, since he has

already shown the invalidity of the latter, Kant’s argument against the possibility of proving that the existence of God is complete: it cannot be achieved by either empirical or theoretical means.

##### 4.3 Positive part of the argument

Despite the dramatic conclusion of the impossibility of proving the existence of God, Kant does not maintain that this should imply

that the idea of God is to be abandoned. On the contrary, in his discussion of the physico-theological proof, he has made clear how such an idea is not only possible (as it implies no contradiction) but even necessary.

I will address Kant’s acceptance of the positive role played by the idea of God implied by the physico-theological proof by looking closely at three passages extracted from the first part of the chapter:

The present world discloses to us such an immensurable showplace of manifold, order, purposiveness, and beauty, whether one pursues these in the infinity of space or in the unlimited division of it, that in accordance with even the knowledge about it that our weak understanding can acquire, all speech concerning so many and such unfathomable wonders must lose its power to express, all numbers their power to measure, and even our thoughts lack boundaries, so that our judgement upon the whole must resolve itself into a speechless, but nonetheless eloquent, astonishment. (B 650)

Here, Kant articulates how our sense of wonder for the world and nature forces the weak restrictions of our understanding. In our experience of the world, we observe the great order and regularity of cause and effects and reason, with its unifying power, reaches out the boundaries of experience inferring an absolute cause as the grounds to the ‘infinite contingency’ (B 650) of the world. Without a primary cause “the entire whole would sink into the abyss of nothingness” (B 650), so reason infers a highest cause

and gives it a “perfection exceeding everything else that is possible” (B 651). Such a concept, in fact, suits human reason and its ‘parsimony of principles’ (B 651).

In the next passage, Kant positively comments on this concept of a higher cause that follows our observance of nature and wonder of the world:

[It is not] subject to any contradictions and even *salutary* [my emphasis] for the extension of the use of our reason within experience, through the guidance such an idea gives to order and purposiveness. (B 651)

The question is, nevertheless, how can such an operation of reason have a positive epistemological outcome despite the fallacy of its logic? The answer can be found in this last extract, which addresses the physico-theological proof in itself:

It enlivens the study of nature, just as it gets its existence from this study and through it receives ever renewed force. It brings ends and aims where they would not have been discovered by our observation itself, and extends our information about nature through the guiding thread of a particular unity whose principle is outside nature. (B 651)

In this passage, Kant not only praises the teleology within the idea of a highest being as primary cause and end of the beauty and order of the world, but even recommends and encourages it as a beneficial guidance to the extension of our knowledge. However, once again, if our knowledge is to be confined to the limits of empirical experience, how can reason positively extend it via a transcendent idea?

The answer to this question frames the positive theoretical role of pure reason: Kant accepts, and even praises, the urge of reason to unfold outside the limits of empirical experience but refutes that this can have an epistemological value in determining any object of our knowledge.

#### 4.4 Conclusions - Towards the horizon

From our analysis of Kant’s argument on the physico-theological proof, it has emerged how the ideal of pure reason and, consequently, pure reason in its totality, plays a positive role in our cognitive relationship to the world despite the fact that it is “concerned with nothing but itself” (B 708). Kant has finally reached the point where he can give a positive evaluation

of reason and does so in the Appendix to the Dialectic and, later on in the text, in the Canon of Pure Reason. If the argumentation in the Dialectic focuses mainly on the possibility of reason’s positive role in its theoretical use, the Canon sketches the positive role of the practical use of reason that will be subsequently developed in the Critique of Practical Reason.

As it has emerged from our analysis of the physico-theological argument, reason has a very beneficial *guiding* role in our cognition of the world. In the Appendix, Kant concludes that reason can only have a positive value if it is used *regulatively* instead of *constitutively*. This means that reason can not, by itself, cognize any of its objects but, if used within the limits of experience to systematize and give order to the cognitions of the understanding, its transcendental ideas “have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge at one point, which, although it is only an idea (*focus imaginarius*) ... nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension” (B 673). Reason, like the vanishing point of perspective, is placed outside a painting, but it gives it a structure nevertheless (Höffe 1994:133). The problem with dogmatic metaphysics, as we have seen, is that it takes the vanishing point as an object of research in itself, when, as Kant shows, it should only be used as a guiding principle.

In fact, reason directs the cognitions acquired through experience towards the greatest unity and systematisation and by so doing functions as the epistemological ‘horizon’ to the divided multiplicity of the cognitions of the understanding. Reason, as we have seen above, ‘enlivens the study of nature’ and is therefore necessary for a proper understanding of the sciences and for their progress. Science,

in fact, looks not only at cognition through empirical experience, it also needs a structure and systematic unity in order to implement scattered knowledge into theories. Towards the development of the sciences, therefore, reason has a fundamental heuristic function:

“the whole is never ‘given’ but always ‘given over’ to us as a task whose goal is the constantly advancing process of scientific investigation” (Höffe 2010:253).

Furthermore, reason and its ideas have an important moral function. Once Kant has completed his dismantling of ‘bad metaphysics’, the new metaphysics as critical phi-

losophy serves as the ground to the ‘practical demands of morality’ (Höffe 2010:254). The non-critical use of pure reason, endlessly looking for an object of cognition that will never be found, shakes traditional metaphysics at its core and opens the door to materialism, fatalism and atheism. But once a new metaphysics have been re-founded by the critical method, the three ideas of reason can be re-introduced as postulates of reason.

The idea of God, in particular, as it has emerged from our reading of the physico-theological argument, opens the doors to the Kantian philosophy of the ‘*as if*’, which has crucial consequences for the grounding of morality. Once it has been established that God cannot be an object of our cognition, we can still look at the world *as if* God was its moral author. This has implications in Kant’s moral philosophy, that will be addressed in the *Critique of Practical Reason* but which is also briefly sketched in the second part of the first Critique, in ‘The canon of pure reason’. It exceeds the purpose of this paper to go into the details of the development of Kant’s argument here. It should suffice, for our aims, to note how in the Canon, the idea of God functions as a unifying principle serving as the ultimate grounds for morality: the world should be understood *as if* it was organised in the best possible way for the achievement of morality, where God represents the maximum guarantor for the moral good and the possibility of the realisation of happiness. This is related to the concept of hope: “Thus without a God and a world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for the majestic ideas of morality are ... objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realisation” (B 841). Since nature seems to proceed independently from human happiness and no necessary relation exists between the latter and moral behaviour, human beings need to postulate God as the ultimate grounds for “systematising and unifying the moral elements of our experience” (Rauscher 2010:305). In the light of this, the moral value of pure reason is already framed in the beginning of the first Critique, in the Preface to the second edition, where Kant writes: “I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (B xxx).<sup>9</sup>

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from Kant (1998).

<sup>2</sup> The cause of this is that in our reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition) there lie fundamental rules and maxims for its use, which look entirely like objective principles, and through them it comes about that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves” (B 353).

<sup>3</sup> This structure reflects Wolff’s division of general metaphysics into the specific disciplines of: psychology, cosmology and theology. See Höffe (1994:108).

<sup>4</sup> “Metaphysics ... is rather a battlefield, and indeed one that appears to be especially determined for testing one’s powers in mock combat; on this battlefield no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory” (B xv) or: “The battlefield of these endless controversies is called metaphysics” (A viii).

<sup>5</sup> The physico-theological argument is also discussed in *The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763). Here, the argument by design “moves from observations of order and harmony in the world to its conclusion that there must be a wise creator of that order. This argument he also [like the ‘cosmological argument’] finds lacking in strict probative force; he nonetheless considers it an important marker of the dynamics of human reason to seek an explanatory totality, even though it does not thereby provide a sure demonstrative route to an affirmation of God” (Pasternack and Rossi 2014).

<sup>6</sup> In 1771, Kant writes to Marcus Herz that he is working on the project of what will become the first Critique as ‘Driven by a mania for systematizing’ (reported in Robinson 2012:3).

<sup>7</sup> Four different areas could be said to meet here: theology (the third proof is the sum of the three rational proofs together, as in contains the other two), ethics (it presupposes a moral author of the world), aesthetics (to my knowledge, this is the only place in the first Critique where Kant makes use of the words ‘art’ and ‘artist’ and, furthermore, the teleological argument plays an important role in the Critique of Judgement). Finally, science (the heuristic role of teleological thought - see the conclusions).

<sup>8</sup> In a platonic way, Kant understands the ideas of reason as something that experience can never be an adequate basis for grasping, but at the same time revolutionizes Plato’s epistemology by allowing the status of logic of truth to appearances only and identifying the theory of ideas with that of illusion.

<sup>9</sup> I am very grateful to Luca Valzesi for his precious guidance and help in reviewing the text.