

Transcendental arguments against transcendental realism

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ABSTRACT: Transcendental arguments have traditionally been interpreted as anti-sceptical arguments. This paper argues that there is an important class of transcendental arguments that are not directed at the sceptic but at the transcendental realist. These arguments take as their starting point something that the sceptic can deny but that the transcendental realist accepts and show that the possibility thereof presupposes transcendental conditions that can only be made sense of by means of transcendental idealism. They thereby show that to be a realist one has to be a transcendental idealist, forcing the transcendental realist to either become a transcendental idealist or a sceptic.

I Introduction

Transcendental arguments are standardly directed at the sceptic. “[T]he point of transcendental arguments in general is an anti-sceptical point” (Strawson: 1985, p. 10). They are conceived to be anti-sceptical arguments that take a seemingly uncontentious commitment as a starting point, usually some supposed fact about the subject, and then show that something contentious that is rejected by the sceptic, usually something about the external world, is a necessary condition of the possibility thereof. By showing that the possibility of something that is accepted by the sceptic presupposes something that is rejected by the sceptic, they refute the sceptic, showing that his position is self-defeating. This characterisation applies to some of Kant’s transcendental arguments. For instance, Kant’s Refutation of Idealism is addressed at the problematic idealist, who is a sceptic about the existence of the external world. The problematic idealist is supposedly refuted by showing that the determinability of one’s own existence in time presupposes the existence of actual external things (cf. Bader: 2017).

This, however, does not hold for all transcendental arguments. This paper argues that Kant developed transcendental arguments that do not conform to this characterisation and that are better thought of as being directed at the transcendental realist than at the sceptic. Rather than refuting scepticism, they are meant

to refute transcendental realism and instead support transcendental idealism. Section 2 briefly illustrates this anti-realist reading by means of Kant's transcendental arguments in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* that aim to establish that space and time are pure forms of intuition on the basis of the synthetic a priori nature of pure mathematics. Sections 3 and 4 then spell out in detail how the core transcendental arguments in Kant's practical and theoretical philosophy conform to such an anti-realist reading, showing that, for Kant at least, transcendental arguments are inseparable from transcendental idealism.

2 How is pure mathematics possible?

In §§6-13 of the *Prolegomena* Kant addresses the transcendental question: 'How is pure mathematics possible?'¹ Here, Kant proceeds in accordance with the regressive method, taking a body of knowledge, namely pure mathematics, for granted and investigating the necessary conditions that must be in place in order for this knowledge to be possible (cf. 4:275). This how-possible question arises, due to difficulties posed by the fact that pure mathematics is a body of synthetic a priori knowledge. Such knowledge cannot be empirical (since pure mathematics is a priori) but also cannot be conceptual (since, according to Kant, pure mathematics is synthetic), making it difficult to see how such knowledge is possible.

Whilst the difficulty of providing a satisfactory answer to this how-possible question might be taken to cast doubt on pure mathematics constituting a body of synthetic a priori knowledge, Kant takes this body of knowledge to be certain and beyond doubt. Pure mathematics is accepted not only by various realists but also by any reasonable sceptic. Although explaining how pure mathematics is possible is an important philosophical challenge, this challenge does not cast doubt on the validity of the body of knowledge itself. "We thus have some synthetic a priori cognition that is at least *undisputed* and we need not ask whether it is possible (for it is actual), but only *how it is possible*" (4:275).

Kant argues that the non-empirical and non-conceptual nature of pure mathematics implies that one has to identify transcendental conditions in order to explain how this body of cognition is possible. In particular, he provides transcendental arguments that are meant to establish that space and time are forms of intuition in order to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge of geometry and arithmetic. These transcendental arguments are not anti-sceptical arguments. The possibility of pure mathematics and the resources that Kant invokes to explain this possibility are not what is at issue when it comes to various forms of scepticism. Most notably, Cartesian, Humean and Pyrrhonian forms of scepticism.

¹With the exception of references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which will take the usual form of citing the page numbers in the A- and B-editions, all references to Kant's works will be to the *Akademie-Ausgabe* (Kant: 1900) and will be cited by giving the volume and page numbers. Translations are my own.

ticism are not concerned with mathematics and their presuppositions.² Instead, they are anti-realist arguments. Rather than being meant to refute the sceptic, they are meant to refute the transcendental realist and establish transcendental idealism. They are supposed to establish that space and time are not transcendently real, but instead transcendently ideal.³

The starting point of these transcendental arguments is thus meant to be one that is accepted by transcendental realists (as well as by reasonable sceptics). Whether this really is correct, though, is far from clear, since there are two ways of rejecting the starting point. First, one can reject the possibility of pure mathematics. In the Preface of the *Critique of Practical Philosophy* Kant considers unrestricted empiricism to be the true form of scepticism. Unrestricted empiricism attempts to provide an empiricist account of mathematical cognition and hence is unable to underwrite the necessity and universality of mathematics. Such an approach treats mathematical propositions as nothing but empirical propositions that are synthetic a posteriori and accordingly cannot be known with certainty but can only have comparative universality: “so universal empiricism reveals itself as true *scepticism*, which was falsely attributed to Hume” (5:13). Such a sceptical position is not open to most transcendental realists for circumventing Kant’s transcendental arguments.

There is, however, another approach that is open to them. As Kant notes, Hume did not accept such an unrestricted form of empiricism and did not doubt the necessity and universality of mathematics. Instead, he treated mathematics as analytic a priori. This, however, shows in what ways Kant’s transcendental arguments in favour of the transcendental ideality of space and time are vulnerable. Whilst pure mathematics is beyond reasonable doubt, e.g. whilst it is beyond doubt that $7 + 5 = 12$, what can and has been doubted by transcendental realists is that mathematics is synthetic. That is, whilst the cognition itself is uncontested, its status as a synthetic cognition is much contested. This makes it possible for transcendental realists to accept the starting point of the argument, namely the a priori knowability of the truths of pure mathematics, without having to accept the transcendental ideality of space and time, unless Kant can conclusively show that pure mathematics is indeed synthetic.

²As we will see shortly, radical forms of empiricism (that are more radical than that espoused by Hume) do deny the possibility of pure mathematics and so reject the starting point of these arguments.

³As Shabel: 2004 has convincingly argued, this argumentative strategy is to be found only in the *Prolegomena* and not in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Unlike the *Prolegomena*, which makes use of the regressive method, the *Critique* employs the synthetic method (cf. 4:274). In particular, the Transcendental Exposition of the Concept of Space (and likewise for that of time) does not constitute a transcendental argument, but shows what is made possible by space (and time) being pure forms of intuition, namely synthetic a priori knowledge of geometry (and arithmetic), whereas the claim that space (and time) are pure forms of intuition is something that has already been established in the Metaphysical Expositions of the Concept of Space (and likewise in the case of time).

3 The fact of reason

The central transcendental argument in Kant's practical philosophy is his argument in favour of transcendental freedom in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This argument takes as its starting point the fact of reason, which consists in consciousness of the bindingness of morality. It moves from an ought-claim to a can-claim, which is its transcendental presupposition. Since ought implies can (cf. 6:50, A807/B835), given that can is a necessary condition of ought, one can infer from the actuality of the moral ought to the possibility of complying with it. Since the possibility of compliance presupposes transcendental freedom, insofar as the agent has to be able to act independently of sensible incentives in order to comply with the categorical demands of morality, the fact of reason enables one to establish transcendental freedom. Morality, in this way, classifies as the ratio cognoscendi of freedom. This transcendental argument starts from something that is given in experience, namely consciousness of the bindingness of morality and moves to something that cannot be given in experience, something that transcends experience, namely transcendental freedom, by establishing that the latter is a transcendental condition of the former, such that the actuality of the former implies the actuality of the latter.⁴

This argument is unlikely to convince any sceptic. Sceptics can simply deny its starting point. They can claim that the fact of reason is not a fact at all and instead insist that it is nothing but an illusion. This option, however, is not open to those transcendental realists who accept the reality and bindingness of morality. The argument, accordingly, does not start from an undeniable starting point that has to be granted by the sceptic, but instead starts from a commitment that is accepted by those transcendental realists who are moral realists. Since they accept the starting point of the argument, they are committed to accepting the transcendental presuppositions of this starting point, as long as they want to retain their realism about morality.⁵

⁴This argument poses difficulties for classifications of transcendental arguments, which are distinguished into, first, self-directed and world-directed arguments, and, second, modest and ambitious arguments, where these distinctions are taken to be aligned. Though the argument is not self-directed in Cassam's narrow sense (which is limited to arguments concerning our cognitive faculties, cf. Cassam: 1999), it is nevertheless a self-directed transcendental argument in a broader sense. In particular, the argument is not undercut by a global error hypothesis, which amounts to the supposition that the world does not exist (since any global error hypothesis that can be consistently entertained will have to exclude the denial of the existence of the self). However, it is not a modest transcendental argument but an ambitious argument that aims to establish a metaphysically substantive conclusion (that would be undercut if one could substitute the conclusion of the argument by the mere belief in freedom).

⁵This is analogous to Kant's regressive argument in sections I and II of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* that takes the reality of morality for granted and works backwards to the fundamental principle that underlies it: "Whoever considers morality to be something, and not a chimerical idea without truth, must at the same time concede its principle stated above." (4:445) This argument shows, if successful, that anyone who accepts morality has to accept the categorical

Importantly, Kant's argument shows that transcendental freedom has to be presupposed for (categorical) morality to be binding and hence that one needs to invoke transcendental resources that are incompatible with transcendental realism. Robust contra-causal freedom is required for morality to be binding. Compatibilist freedom, which Kant derides as the freedom of a turnspit (cf. 5:97), is not sufficient. This is because morality requires one to act in certain ways independently of what desires one happens to have. One has to be able to act independently of one's desires, such that the requisite freedom cannot be spelled out in counterfactual terms to the effect that one would have acted differently if one had willed differently.

It is only the case that one ought to act in the way that morality requires if one can do so. Given that the moral ought is desire-independent, one can only comply with the moral ought if one can act independently of one's desires, that is, independently of motives stemming from one's sensible side. This means that one must be able to act on non-sensible motives, namely rational motives in the form of respect for the law. Moreover, a moral ought also presupposes the possibility of non-compliance, insofar as one only ought to do something when it is contingent that one does do so, ruling out the form of determination by intellectual grounds that is to be found in the case of the holy will, where an 'ought' is out of place (cf. 4:414). The possibility of both compliance and non-compliance with the requirements of morality must thus be in place in order for morality to be binding for us. This means that the will has to be confronted with a choice between two heterogeneous incentives between which it can choose in a way that is not determined by antecedent causes but is absolutely spontaneous.⁶

Such a robust form of freedom, however, cannot be made sense of on transcendental realism. What is required is the reconciliation of universal determinism and absolute spontaneity. This is effectively due to the conflict encountered in the Third Antinomy. This conflict can only be resolved by means of transcendental idealism, on the basis of its distinction between the phenomenal realm and the noumenal realm, allowing the former to be governed by deterministic laws, whilst there is room for absolute spontaneity in the latter. Universal determinism can in this way be reconciled with contra-causal freedom by means of scope restrictions, attributing them to different spheres that are nevertheless suitably connected via a grounding relation. In short, the fact of reason is a transcendental argument that establishes transcendental freedom, which can only be made sense of given transcendental idealism.

Transcendental realists who want to be moral realists, accordingly, are in trouble (given certain auxiliary premises, such as universal determinism, which are

imperative, but has no purchase on the sceptic who considers morality to be a chimerical idea, a type of nothing (namely an *ens rationis*) that lacks objective reality.

⁶For a detailed account of the argument and an explanation why it is only categorical moral oughts that establish transcendental freedom, whereas hypothetical prudential oughts only establish practical freedom, cf. 'Transcendental and practical freedom' (Bader: manuscript).

meant to be established by other transcendental arguments that Kant provides in the Analogies). Their acceptance of the starting point, namely the bindingness of morality, is shown to be incompatible by the transcendental argument with their transcendental realism, since the transcendental presupposition of the bindingness of morality that the argument establishes can only be accommodated in the dual-level theory of transcendental idealism.

This holds at least if one accepts Kant's argument that morality can only take the form of a categorical morality that issues desire-independent oughts. In the case of pure mathematics we saw that a Humean can accept the truth of the relevant propositions but interpret them differently, namely as being analytic rather than synthetic, so that the resources that are required for explaining them are much more minimal. An analogous move is likewise possible here. The Humean can accept the reality of morality but deny that it is categorical and desire-independent, instead giving a Humean account that is desire-dependent. This would have the effect that morality, when construed in this way, would not presuppose transcendental freedom but only practical freedom. Such an approach, however, would implicate a form of subjectivism that is incompatible with any genuine version of moral realism that involves a commitment to the objectivity of morality, and is hence much less plausible than in the case of mathematics. Indeed, whereas someone who deems pure mathematics to be analytic can still plausibly be deemed to be a realist about mathematics, someone who holds such a Humean view of morality is not plausibly classified as a realist, such that the conclusion that moral realism presupposes transcendental idealism stands. That is, though one can combine rejection of an objective categorical morality with acceptance of a non-categorical relativist normative system, this would, for Kant at least, fall short of classifying as a genuine system of morality and hence would amount to abandoning moral realism.

Accordingly, transcendental realists have to either (i) reject the starting point of the transcendental argument, which amounts to abandoning moral realism and becoming sceptics or nihilists who doubt or deny that morality has objective reality, or (ii) reject transcendental realism and instead accept transcendental idealism and thereby make room for the transcendental freedom that morality presupposes. This kind of transcendental argument, if successful, shows that transcendental realism is not a stable view and that scepticism or nihilism, on the one hand, and transcendental idealism, on the other, are the only viable options, so that to be a realist one has to be a transcendental idealist. This argument thus does not aim to refute scepticism but raises the stakes of rejecting transcendental idealism, showing that doing so comes with substantive costs that moral realists should be unwilling to incur.

4 The fact of experience

This argumentative strategy applies more generally. Transcendental arguments that have a robust starting point that can be questioned by sceptics can nevertheless be used against transcendental realists who accept this starting point. In the same way that the transcendental argument for freedom starts from the fact of reason, it looks like some of Kant's transcendental arguments in his theoretical philosophy start from a corresponding fact of experience. Crucially, experience is construed in a robust manner as involving objectively valid judgements and thus goes beyond there merely being subjective experiential states. Such a fact of experience is a plausible commitment for realists, but can be rejected by the sceptic. As Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer wrote: "Kant's entire system can be summarised in the hypothetical syllogism. 'If experience is, then . . .' – . That experience is, is thereby presupposed, postulated, or however one wishes to call it. If a sceptic were foolish or impertinent enough to ask: 'Is there such a thing as experience?', there would indeed be no other answer for such a person than a good thrashing." (Letter to J. B. Erhard, 27 October 1794)⁷

Most notably, the Transcendental Deduction is a regressive argument that is based on the possibility of experience, construed in a thick sense, and that takes the objective rather than the merely empirical unity of apperception as its starting point (cf. Ameriks: 1978, Ameriks: 2003, chapter 1, Engstrom: 1994), and so can coherently be rejected by the sceptic. The Transcendental Deduction does not and is not meant to refute the Cartesian sceptic, but is concerned with refuting the empiricist, i.e. the Humean sceptic, and only shows that the a priori concepts that were identified in the Metaphysical Deduction, namely the categories, have objective validity with regard to experience. But that there is experience is not established by the Transcendental Deduction and is something that can coherently be doubted. Accordingly, it only establishes a conditional claim to the effect that the categories apply if there is experience, where this is a thick sense of experience that involves objectively valid judgements.

The Transcendental Deduction, accordingly, involves a substantive starting point that is far from being indubitable and can coherently be rejected by the sceptic. Even if it is possible for a sceptic to render the Transcendental Deduction ineffective by denying its starting point, this is not possible for transcendental realists. Such realists do accept the possibility of experience involving objectively valid judgements. Since Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction establishes that the categories are necessary conditions of the possibility of experience, anyone who grants the possibility of experience has to provide:

⁷The idea that a sceptic could deny the fact of experience played an important role in criticisms of the Kantian system raised by Salomon Maimon in his 1790 *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* and by Karl Leonhard Reinhold in his *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen*, also published in 1790. Cf. Franks: 1999, pp. 129–130.

1. an account of the origin of the relevant a priori concepts, explaining how we come to have these concepts despite the fact that they are not empirical concepts that are derived from experience (that is provided in the Metaphysical Deduction),
2. a justification of the way in which they apply to experience (that is provided in the Transcendental Deduction),
3. an account of the application conditions of these a priori concepts that explains under which conditions they can be validly applied to intuitive manifolds, despite the fact that they share no marks in common with intuitions (unlike in the case of empirical concepts where conceptual marks can correspond to the intuitive marks from which they were constructed via comparison, reflection and abstraction), which, according to Kant requires bringing in a schematisation in terms of transcendental determinations of time (that is provided in the Schematism), and
4. an account of the a priori principles that can be established on the basis of these concepts (that is provided in the System of Principles).

Crucial here is that one not only needs to establish the objective validity of these a priori concepts and principles, but also to restrict their application in a principled manner, so as to avoid running into the Antinomies that arise for speculative metaphysics. That is, one has to, at the same time, justify as well as restrict the application of these concepts and principles to make metaphysics into a science, identifying limits that are not to be transgressed and boundaries that are not to be overstepped. One should neither reject these concepts and principles altogether (as Hume does), nor grant them unrestricted application that extends to supersensibles (as the transcendental realist does), but instead limit their application.

One needs a stable middle-ground that avoids Humean scepticism without falling into the clutches of Pyrrhonian scepticism.⁸ Only Kant's critical approach can do so, not, however, the dogmatic approach of a transcendental realist. Kant achieves this by means of his transcendental idealism, restricting metaphysics to objects of experience, allowing for an immanent use of the a priori concepts, whilst rejecting any transcendent use that applies them to supersensibles. In this way, he avoids antinomial difficulties, not by privileging one side of each antinomy over

⁸Stern has argued that Hume combined the two, whereby Humean scepticism, as it is understood here, is an extension of Hume's Pyrrhonian scepticism. "Kant took Hume to be not *just* an empiricist sceptic, but an empiricist sceptic motivated in his empiricism by the Pyrrhonist hope that as a result the ceaseless debates in metaphysics can be brought to an end" (Stern: 2006, p. 104). Though the two may well be connected in this way, they nevertheless involve distinct challenges that are addressed separately: the empiricist concerns about the origin and applicability of a priori concepts is taken up in the Transcendental Analytic, whereas the Pyrrhonian concerns about antinomial conflicts and the possibility of metaphysics is taken up in the Transcendental Dialectic.

the other, but by explaining why such unrestricted applications of the categories are inadmissible.

It is only when the Transcendental Deduction is combined with the Refutation of Idealism, that they together come to constitute an overall progressive argument that, if successful, will refute the Cartesian and the Humean sceptic (cf. Bader: 2012, section 3). The type of experience that is shown to presuppose the categories and the principles of the understanding, which are called into doubt by the Humean sceptic, is the type of experience that is called into doubt by the Cartesian sceptic. The Refutation establishes that there is experience in this sense, by showing that the possibility of outer experience is a presupposition of the possibility of inner experience, in particular of the determinability of one's existence in time, which (though not completely immune to doubt) is much more difficult to doubt, so that moderate and reasonable forms of scepticism will be refuted.⁹

Accordingly, we can see that Kant's responses to Cartesian scepticism and Humean scepticism are ultimately connected. Though Forster is correct in claiming that Cartesian veil-of-perception scepticism was not part of what motivated Kant in developing the critical philosophy and that Pyrrhonian and Humean forms of scepticism were much more important in this regard (cf. Forster: 2008), establishing the conclusions that Kant wants to establish, in particular establishing them in a suitably unconditional way, does require him to refute problematic idealism and show that experience has objective reality and hence that the various transcendental conditions that make experience possible and which are doubted by the Humean sceptic are in fact in place.

Brueckner has also criticised Forster for downplaying Cartesian scepticism and taking it to be unconnected to Humean scepticism: "if Kant could establish that a priori concepts such as causal necessity and substance refer to genuine instances in the world of experience, then this would at least bear some relevance to Cartesian [veil-of-perception] skepticism (would it not?). Are the results of the Transcendental Deduction just irrelevant to Cartesian skepticism, as Forster seems to claim?" (Brueckner: 2008) We can now see that there is indeed a connection between these types of scepticism, though the reverse of the one that Brueckner suggests. It is not that the Transcendental Deduction is relevant to Cartesian scepticism, insofar as the Transcendental Deduction would, if it were to be successful, establish conclusions that are incompatible with Cartesian scepticism. Rather, it is the other way round, namely that the refutation of Cartesian scepticism is relevant

⁹The Refutation takes as its starting point not the mere 'I' of transcendental apperception, but a manifold of inner states that exist in time. Such a manifold is required for the argument, given that it is concerned with establishing the conditions of the possibility of objective time-determination, attempting to show that objectively ordering such a manifold of inner states in time presupposes outer experience. Kant is not concerned with scepticism as such, i.e. with an approach that calls anything that is not indubitable into doubt, but only with external world scepticism, i.e. problematic idealism, which takes there to be an asymmetry between the inner and the outer, treating the inner as being unproblematic yet questioning the outer (cf. Bader: 2017, section 2).

to the Transcendental Deduction. Even if the Transcendental Deduction were to succeed, the fact that it is a regressive argument implies that it can only establish the conditional claim that: ‘if we do have experience in the thick sense, then there are genuine instances of the a priori categories in the world of experience’. This by itself, however, is not sufficient to establish that there are in fact genuine instances of causal necessity and the like. To establish this conclusion Cartesian scepticism needs to be refuted as well.

Whilst the Refutation of Idealism is directly addressed at the problematic idealist, i.e. at the Cartesian sceptic who takes the existence of the external world to be doubtful and indemonstrable, it can also be interpreted indirectly as a critique of transcendental realism. Kant deemed it to be “a scandal to philosophy and to common human reason that the existence of things outside us [...] must be accepted merely on faith” (Bxxxix fn) and considered problematic idealism to be “a kind of cancer in metaphysics” (28:681). If it can be shown that only transcendental idealism can refute this version of external world scepticism, whereas transcendental realism is incapable of doing so, then transcendental idealism has to be adopted by all those who insist that the existence of the external world is not merely to be accepted on faith.

It is important to get clear on why precisely transcendental idealism is required to refute the sceptic. One way of thinking why Kant’s transcendental arguments presuppose transcendental idealism is that transcendental idealism has to be invoked to close the gap identified by Stroud.¹⁰ Stroud has objected to transcendental arguments that they fail to establish claims about the external world and, at best, only establish claims about what one must believe about an external world (cf. Stroud: 1968, p. 255). There is accordingly a gap to be bridged and one way of bridging this gap involves bringing in idealistic resources that close the gap between how things are and how they appear. Yet doing so might well be thought to involve “a position that many would consider as problematic as the skepticism it is designed to refute” (Stern: 2008, p. 267).

It is, however, implausible to read Kant as invoking idealism to bridge this gap. After all, Kant explicitly claims that time-determination is only possible as a result of the existence of “a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me” (B275). This claim precisely distinguishes how things are from how they appear to be and insists that this is an ambitious argument that establishes a claim about the existence of the external world that cannot be substituted by mere belief in the existence of an external world.¹¹ The Refuta-

¹⁰Cf. Stern: 2008, pp. 267-273 for a helpful discussion of this line of thought.

¹¹Stern has also emphasised this point, yet he thinks that it implies that Kant’s Refutation “is an argument that is presented without any appeal to Kant’s transcendental machinery” (Stern: 2008, p. 272). Whilst there is agreement to the effect that Kant does not use transcendental idealism to bridge the gap identified by Stroud, yet nevertheless puts forward an ambitious transcendental argument that is intended to establish claims about the external world and not only about beliefs concerning the external world, the interpretation proposed here argues that Kant does rely on

tion is not subject to Stroud's challenge since it does not have as its starting point a merely subjective fact about how we think or experience, but instead the fact that our existence is determinable in time, i.e. that our existence can objectively be determined in time, and so already involves conditions of objectivity. In this way, it does not start with how things appear to us, but with how things objectively are and then identifies conditions that must be in place in order for objective time-determination of our existence to be possible.

Instead of bridging the gap between appearance and reality, transcendental idealism is required in order to establish that inner experience is parasitic on outer experience, on the grounds that the principles that underlie time-determination are only applicable to the outer but not to the inner. That is, it involves establishing a priori conditions of objective time-determination, showing that these principles are necessary conditions of the possibility of experience insofar as they are required for an objective temporal ordering. Furthermore, it requires establishing that these conditions can only be satisfied in the case of the outer, but not the inner, so that the inner can only be objectively determined in time in a way that is parasitic on the outer, such that inner experience presupposes outer experience.¹²

The Refutation thus requires both establishing a priori principles of objective time-determination, such as the principle of substance, and showing that these principles can only be validly applied to the outer, insofar as one can only prove a conservation principle for matter but that one cannot prove the permanence of the self. Transcendental realists have difficulties both in establishing the relevant principles and in establishing the requisite inner/outer asymmetry. The first step involves addressing the Humean challenge discussed above of (i) explaining the a priori origin of pure concepts, (ii) justifying their application, (iii) providing application conditions by means of a schematisation, and (iv) deriving a priori principles from them, while (v) restricting their application to an immanent use and excluding a transcendent use that would lead to antinomies and fall prey to Pyrrhonian scepticism.

The second step requires one to show that the a priori principles are restricted to the outer and do not apply to the inner. This requires one to reject rationalist arguments in favour of these principles. Instead, one has to justify them in terms

transcendental idealism in this transcendental argument but that the version of transcendental idealism is much more plausible, since the idealistic commitments are not required to bridge the gap between appearance and reality, but concern the possibility of objective time-determination. If the requisite form of idealism were to eradicate the distinction between how things appear and how they are, one might well worry that "the cure of using transcendental arguments in conjunction with transcendental idealism is almost as bad as the disease" (Stern: 2008, p. 265). This, however, is not the case: appearance and reality are sharply separated and the idealistic commitments only concern the ideality of space and time and the restriction of a priori principles to objects of experience.

¹²In the Refutation, Kant focuses on the principle of the permanence of substance established in the First Analogy, but he could also have invoked the principles of the Second and Third Analogies as well, which concern succession and simultaneity, respectively.

of the distinctive structure of outer experience, invoking the three-dimensional nature of space in contrast to the one-dimensional nature of time to which inner experience is restricted (cf. Bader: 2017, section 4). If the category of substance could be applied on rationalist grounds to the self, as claimed by rational psychologists, then the self could be shown to be permanent and hence suffice for objective time-determination of inner states, in which case no refutation of problematic idealism would be possible: “*idealism*, at least problematic idealism, is inevitable in this rationalist system, and that when the existence of outer objects are not at all required for the determination of one’s existence in time, then it can only be assumed entirely gratuitously, without ever being able to give a proof thereof” (B418).

This means that transcendental realists who allow for the category of substance to be applied to the self on rationalist grounds end up in an unstable position. This holds at least once transcendental realism is not only understood in terms of metaphysical commitments, insofar as it endorses a realist stance about the external world, but also in terms of epistemological commitments, in that it takes the metaphysical claims that it makes about the world to be epistemically accessible. Transcendental realists who want to not merely dogmatically assert the existence of the external world but to be able to refute the problematic idealist and establish that the external world exists will not be able to do so without abandoning their transcendental realism and adopting transcendental idealism.

Whereas transcendental arguments are often taken to be attempts to show that sceptical positions are self-defeating, Kant’s arguments considered here are meant to show that transcendental realism is self-defeating. Transcendental realism is unable to answer Cartesian, Humean and Pyrrhonian scepticism. It thereby undermines the possibility of epistemic access to the facts that the transcendental realist countenances, precludes a satisfactory explanation of the origin, justification and application of a priori concepts and principles that are required to cognise these facts, and ends up with antinomial conflicts. In short, it is a form of metaphysical realism that is unable to account for the possibility of metaphysics. Transcendental idealism, by contrast, can set metaphysics on the secure path of a true science, explaining how we can know that there is an external world, how we can do metaphysics by means of the schematised a priori categories and their corresponding principles, and how we can prevent metaphysics from inconsistency by restricting it to an immanent metaphysics of experience, whilst ruling out any transcendent use.

5 Conclusion

Transcendental arguments not only take the form of anti-sceptical arguments. At least some transcendental arguments are anti-realist arguments. In particular, they are arguments against transcendental realism and in favour of transcendental ide-

alism. They begin from a realist starting point and show that this realist position can only be maintained by abandoning transcendental realism and instead adopting transcendental idealism, thereby showing that to be a realist one has to be a transcendental idealist (cf. Bader: 2010). In this way, they connect transcendental arguments to transcendental idealism and put the ‘transcendental’ back into transcendental arguments, establishing genuinely transcendental conditions, as opposed to merely necessary conditions.¹³

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