

KANT'S CRITIQUE
OF PURE REASON
THE FOUNDATION OF MODERN
PHILOSOPHY

by

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 Springer

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CHAPTER 1

FOUR REASONS FOR ENGAGING WITH KANT'S FIRST *CRITIQUE*

There are three principal reasons for a substantive contemporary engagement with Kant and the following study attempts to articulate the inner unity between them. The first *Critique* represents a fundamental alternative to the prevailing currents of contemporary philosophy (Chapter 1.2), and one which directly addresses two characteristic features of our own time: the process of epistemic as well as political globalisation (Chapter 1.3) and the contemporary dominance of the (natural) sciences (Chapter 1.4). But we begin with a brief consideration of the historical significance of Kant's thought as a whole (Chapter 1.1). The present work is not intended as a contribution to Kant hagiography, but it certainly aims to contest that hagiographical tendency of the present which regards the philosophical approach generally adopted during the last couple of generations, and especially that belonging to one specific tradition, as the best foundation for engaging in systematic philosophy. For in confronting the first *Critique*, we are undeniably encountering a work of 'world literature': a text that does not belong to the past, but one which still possesses fundamental relevance for the present.

1.1 The Historical Significance of Kant's Philosophy

The mature work of Kant is emphatically required reading for any serious student of philosophy. No single text has exerted greater impact upon the thought of the modern epoch, itself remarkably rich in outstanding works of philosophy, than the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In spite of the contributions of Bacon, Descartes and Hobbes, of Pascal, and then of Leibniz, Locke, Hume and Rousseau, subsequently those of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, and finally of Frege, Russell, Husserl, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, it would be impossible to name any work

more influential for the history of modern philosophy than Kant's first *Critique*.

While the thinkers of German Idealism and the later neo-Kantians oriented their thought in relation to this work, this is equally true for a critic of idealism like Arthur Schopenhauer and a critic of neo-Kantianism like Martin Heidegger. And we must say the same for Gottlob Frege and his contribution to logic and the theory of mathematics, which itself shaped the entire tradition of analytical philosophy, for Fritz Mauthner and his critical reflections on language, which influenced Ludwig Wittgenstein himself, for Karl Popper and the members of the Vienna Circle. For the thought of Theodor W. Adorno the Kantian critique of reason is hardly less significant than the Hegelian dialectic (Adorno 1959). Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of American pragmatism, had already described the first *Critique* as his 'mother's milk' as far as philosophy is concerned (cf. Fisch 1964: 15). And Hilary Putnam has claimed that 'almost all the problems of philosophy attain the form in which they are of real interest only with the work of Kant (Putnam 1992: 3). Whether we consider Kant's idea of a self-administered critique of reason, the turn to the 'subject', the concept of the synthetic a priori, the theory of space and time, the transcendental conception of the 'I think', mathematics as the language of natural science, the refutation of all the traditional proofs for the existence of God, or the basic features of a purely autonomous conception of morality, it is quite clear that to study the first *Critique* is nothing less than to explore the fundamental roots of all subsequent philosophy.

And there is a further dimension to the historical significance of Kant which must be acknowledged here. From the broader cultural point of view Kant belongs to the 'Age of Enlightenment' which has subsequently been accused of failing to subject itself to full critical examination. But since the Enlightenment arguably first becomes truly self-reflexive and self-critical with the first *Critique* itself, we may well feel justified in criticising all of the particular substantive claims of the period in question, while recognising that there is no longer any serious alternative to the fundamental attitude exemplified by the concept of Enlightenment: the resolve to think in an independent manner, to distance oneself from purely personal and particular interests, to acknowledge the claims of universal human reason. The now often repeated remark that philosophy is not permitted to assume a 'God's

eye' view of the world might perhaps represent a salutary warning to the thinkers of German Idealism, enjoining modesty in such matters, but it is entirely otiose as far as Kant is concerned insofar as he had long encouraged philosophy, even prior to the first *Critique*, to adopt a more modest conception of its own powers. By means of his careful and methodical reflections on the problem of knowledge Kant challenged the exaggerated claims of philosophy and the sciences alike and thus already suggested a radical critique of ideology which exposes the mere 'semblance of science' (*Report*, II: 311) and the 'delusion of knowledge' (*Letters*: Nr. 34/21).

The earlier followers and critics of Kant, like Reinhold and Fichte, and subsequently Hegel as well, effectively demoted the first *Critique* to a kind of propaedeutic for the systems which they then explicitly undertook to construct. Although Kant himself once described the first *Critique* as a kind of 'propaedeutic (preparation)' (B 869; cf. B 25 and B 878), he directly contested 'the presumption of claiming that I have intended simply to provide a *propaedeutic* to transcendental philosophy rather than the *system* of this philosophy itself' (*Notice concerning Fichte's 'Science of Knowledge'*, XII: 370f.). For as distinct from the genuine propaedeutic of 'logic', which forms 'only the vestibule of the sciences' (B ix), the first *Critique* belongs to pure philosophy and investigates the true subject matter of such philosophy – namely 'true and merely apparent knowledge' – in a thorough and systematic manner. The first *Critique* thus already outlines 'the complete plan' of the system of pure reason 'on the basis of principles' and 'guarantees the completeness and certainty of the structure in all its parts' (B 27). It is only in a subordinate sense that the first *Critique* can be described as lacking in completeness, as for example in the presentation of the pure concepts of the understanding, which introduces all of the relevant basic concepts, or categories, but does not specify the other pure derivative concepts of the understanding, Kant's so-called 'predicables' (B 107f.), which would also have to be presented in due course. Thus although the first *Critique* only provides us with 'prolegomena for any future metaphysics', it nonetheless contains the extensively developed form of what we may call Kant's 'fundamental philosophy'.

Until fairly recent times our own epoch has generally been described as that of 'modernity'. This term was understood to capture the emphatic rise of natural science, technology and medicine, the

concomitant disenchantment of nature, and the progressive emancipation of the subject from the fetters of history and tradition. It has also served to characterise specific phenomena of alienation and reification, the far-reaching transformations that have taken place in the fields of art, literature and music, and, last but not least, the development of the democratic constitutional state. In some respects this standard self-conception of modernity now shows certain signs of breaking down. The emergence of a 'post-modern' conception of thought and experience has raised emphatic doubts about the validity of allegedly universal knowledge transcending the particularity of different cultures, and this development has only furnished a further reason for a serious engagement with the first *Critique*. The present work discusses and addresses what I have called 'epistemic modernity' not in terms of its own secondary expressions and manifestations, but explicitly in relation to its most sophisticated and intrinsically self-critical form. I am thereby also attempting to develop my own earlier reflections concerning the 'project of modernity'. After having addressed questions of right, politics and the state (Höffe 2002 and 2007), and ethical issues arising from the relationship between science, technology and the environment (Höffe 2000⁴), I turn in the present work directly to the theory of philosophy and science itself.

1.2 An Alternative Form of Fundamental Philosophy

If the principal reason for attending to Kant's first *Critique* were merely its enormous historical importance, one could of course simply reduce it to a mighty monument of the past. Its governing conception of the synthetic a priori is now widely regarded as highly questionable, and the idea of transcendently grounded natural laws, the constructive culmination of the work, is hardly given any serious consideration at all. Certain critics of Kant lament the fact that he failed to participate in the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy, some charge the first *Critique* with a kind of epistemological solipsism, while others ascribe a merely marginal role to his thought in relation to the currently prevailing philosophy of mind.

We already find Herder criticising and attempting to overcome Kant's general programme, in the wake of Johann Georg Hamann, by explicit recourse to the philosophy of language. Hamann had roundly

asserted 'the genealogical priority of language' and claimed that language itself represents the 'centre point of reason's misunderstanding with itself' (Hamann, *Metakritik*: 286; Haynes translation: 211), thereby anticipating, albeit in a less sophisticated form, two key aspects of the subsequent linguistic turn: the idea that the philosophy of language is itself the fundamental philosophical discipline and interest in philosophy as an essentially therapeutic clarification of the snares of language. Herder likewise declared the 'philosophy of human language' to be the 'ultimate and highest philosophy' and ascribed many of the follies and contradictions of reason to the 'inadequately employed instrument of language' upon which it depends (Herder, *Werke* VIII: 19f.).

Over a hundred years later we find Fritz Mauthner claiming that 'philosophy is the theory of knowledge, the theory of knowledge involves the critique of language, but the critique of language leads to the liberating thought that human beings, with the words available to their languages, ... never get beyond a pictorial representation of the world' (Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 1910–11: xi). This sceptical perspective, albeit without the pictorial theory, has developed, through Wittgenstein's philosophy of language games, into a widely influential current of contemporary thought. For this reason, as well as on account of the very different contributions to the philosophical analysis of language that have been made by G. E. Moore, Frege, Russell and Whitehead, and not least by Heidegger in the later phase of his thought (cf. Heidegger 1959), it has become a dogma that all philosophy *prior* to the linguistic turn, rather like European society before the French Revolution, is now revealed as profoundly obsolete.

The following examination of the first *Critique* attempts to determine whether this philosophy has inevitably forfeited its essential value now we have recognised the indispensability of language or the intersubjective character of knowledge, or whether, since the work is essentially concerned with other questions, it should properly be located 'alongside' rather than simply 'prior' to the philosophy of language. At any rate we shall here investigate the first *Critique* with a view to the possibility of developing a 'fundamental philosophy' which is framed neither in terms of the linguistic turn nor in terms of a more general discourse theory. In addition it is also noticeable that analytical philosophy itself has now turned away from its earlier almost

exclusive preoccupation with language as the central philosophical issue to concentrate its increasing attention upon the philosophy of mind, supplemented with contributions to ontology and to the theory of knowledge.

The history of Kant's own intellectual development itself already suggests an alternative conception of the task of philosophy beyond that of linguistic analysis. Kant himself once entertained the idea, like the advocates of a purely 'ideal language', of taking mathematics as his methodological paradigm and his *Physical Monadology* of 1756 furnished 'an example for the use of metaphysics insofar as it is intrinsically connected with geometry'. But Kant's essay on *The Introduction of Negative Quantities into Philosophy* of 1763 subsequently repudiates any imitation of mathematical method in philosophy precisely because the advantages expected of this approach have failed to prove themselves in practice (II: 289). In place of this methodology Kant now pursues a different path, oriented to the conceptual analysis of language, and argues that 'metaphysics must proceed entirely analytically insofar as its task is actually to clarify confused claims to knowledge' (*Principles*, II: 289). But although Kant was thus motivated, in the pre-critical period of his thought, by similar concerns to those of analytical philosophy, he later found himself forced, with the development of the first *Critique*, towards a quite different and alternative programme of philosophical method. (For a brief outline of Kant's pre-critical writings cf. Gerhardt 2002, Chapter 1).

1.3 Epistemic Cosmopolitanism

Kant's alternative approach promises significantly greater success precisely by virtue of its rich and differentiated character. And there is certainly no fundamental work of modern philosophy which exhibits a level of complexity that is comparable to Kant's text. The first *Critique* effectively represents, in the first instance, a 'metaphysics of metaphysics' as Kant himself puts it (*Letters*: Nr. 166/97), a second level metaphysics that reflects explicitly upon the possibility of metaphysics or fundamental philosophy in the usual sense. It is here that the full force of Kant's self-critical reflection makes itself emphatically felt: he interrogates the traditional claim of philosophy to represent a truly fundamental and universal systematic science and, in the course of his

critical examination, proceeds to subject philosophy to decisive limitations and restrictions with respect to its own possibilities.

Kant takes 'ontology' or 'general metaphysics', the prevailing fundamental philosophy or first level metaphysics of the age, as the point of departure for his own analysis. But this metaphysics is effectively transformed in two essential ways. In the first place, Kant's contribution to ontology is carried out entirely within the framework of a critical theory of knowledge and he expressly repudiates the idea of developing a theory of objects independently of a critical analysis of the faculty of cognition itself. And in the second place, Kant explicitly divides the theory of knowledge into two parts: the first, and more traditional, part presents 'metaphysical' theorems concerning space and time and the 'pure concepts of the understanding' (philosophy 1) which the second, intrinsically innovative, 'transcendental' part undertakes to demonstrate as the condition of the possibility of established and recognised sciences (philosophy 2). In this way philosophy 2 becomes an authentically philosophical and non-empirical scientific theory of mathematics and, above all, of (mathematical) physics, and thus establishes the new conception of transcendental laws of nature. But Kant also addresses the three philosophical disciplines that traditionally belonged to 'special metaphysics'. Here he examines three 'ideas' explicitly connected with the concept of the 'Unconditioned' (philosophy 3): the soul and the related question of immortality (rational psychology), the world and the problem of freedom (transcendental cosmology), the existence of God (natural theology). And finally, Kant discusses the limits and the possibilities of all philosophy (philosophy 4).

One might of course object that this 'all-destroying' critique effectively abolishes rather than transforms the enterprise of metaphysics (as Mendelssohn claimed in his *Preliminary Remarks* of 1785). But there are in fact four considerations which lead one to reject this claim. In the first place, Kant effectively preserves the literal meaning of the term meta-physics: something which transcends or goes 'beyond' (*meta*) experience and the domain of nature (*physics*). In the second place, Kant does speak, in the context of his 'Dialectic', about the transcendent objects of traditional metaphysics – God, freedom and the immortality of the soul – and explicitly ascribes a new transcendental (and thus specifically limited) significance to them. In the third place, we should also remember that the very paradigm

of metaphysics, Plato's theory of Ideas, does not address its metaphysical objects directly or immediately, but does so essentially within the context of a theory concerning the presuppositions of all knowledge and action. Lastly, in the fourth place, it is merely one part of traditional metaphysics that is actually 'pulverised' in the first *Critique*, and even this is based upon specific metaphysical considerations: the critical dissolution of 'special metaphysics' (philosophy 3) is accomplished through Kant's new and revolutionary 'universal metaphysics' (philosophy 1 and philosophy 2).

From a systematic point of view, it is only when this task has been fulfilled that philosophy can also take on the modest function of a 'stand-in' for 'empirical theories with strong universalistic claims' (Habermas 1983: 23; Lenhardt/Nicholsen translation: 15). But Kant's philosophical contributions to natural science (philosophy 5) all belong to the early pre-critical period, and thus fall outside the central focus of his mature thought.

The four central tasks that Kant addresses involve such a wealth of themes and problems that the first *Critique* in its entirety can be regarded as an 'encyclopaedia' of philosophical sciences. In comparison with the standard encyclopaedic treatises of the Enlightenment, however, Kant's text is concerned not with the sum of human knowledge as a whole, but, far more modestly, merely with philosophical knowledge. Unlike the great *Encyclopédie*, the first *Critique* is the work of simply one author rather than almost a hundred and fifty. Nor does it furnish us with a genealogical tree of all knowledge as preface to a cornucopia of historically accumulated learning in the Baroque manner. It undertakes nothing more or less than to unfold a genuine system of philosophy. In purely quantitative terms this system concentrates its attention mainly upon the domain of theoretical philosophy, including the question of a teleology of nature. But the principal interest of reason lies in the domain of morality, including considerations of moral theology. And even issues of political philosophy also make an appearance in the course of the first *Critique*. It is quite true that the work focusses, for the most part, upon the first of the three fundamental questions which Kant mentions in the text itself: 1. what can I know? 2. what ought I to do? 3. what may I hope for? (B 833). But we are inevitably driven on from this question to the second and third one as well. And since these three questions taken together ultimately also provide an answer to a fourth: 'what is man?' (*Logic*, IX: 25),

we can see that the work already implies a specifically philosophical anthropology. What we could thus describe as Kant's 'fundamental anthropology' is essentially to be found in the first *Critique* itself, rather than in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, or in the 'practical' anthropology which functions as a supplement to his moral philosophy (*Groundwork*, IV: 388).

The current age of globalisation has bestowed new relevance and significance to an ancient philosophical claim. Now that a variety of very different cultures participate, no longer merely 'in principle' but rather visibly, in the single world that we all share, we clearly require an equally visible form of argumentation that is independent of specific cultures and can therefore claim trans-cultural and inter-cultural, rather than ethnocentric, validity. On analogy with an intrinsically global system of law and right, we could describe this form of thought as 'cosmopolitan' in an epistemic rather than merely juridical sense of the word.

The first *Critique* itself thus extends Kant's already well-known political cosmopolitanism into a form of epistemic cosmopolitanism that has hardly been properly acknowledged but is certainly just as important. And it also expands the principal interest of reason to encompass an explicit moral cosmopolitanism. At the meta-philosophical level I therefore undertake to defend a fresh and expressly cosmopolitan reading of the first *Critique* in its entirety (as already suggested in Höffe 2006, Chapter 2). On this interpretation the work attempts to present the structure of the single world that is common to all cultures from a theoretical point of view and to explicate the single faculty of reason that is equally common to all human beings. In opposition to an increasingly popular form of scepticism concerning the possibility of any thought that claims validity independent of any specific cultural and historical factors, to what we can call epistemological historicism, Kant would emphatically defend a kind of knowledge which 'holds for everyone as long as they can be said to possess reason' (B 848). Kant attempts to capture this knowledge through the concept of the synthetic a priori: a type of cognition that cannot be relativised precisely because it is intrinsically independent of culture or history. With this concept, which furnishes the inner basis for a *single* epistemic world, Kant inaugurated a programme that could well prove more important in our own age of globalisation than the linguistic turn which has now itself rightly returned, in the guise

of formal semantics, to the same thought of an epistemically *single* world.

As far as philosophy 1 and philosophy 2 are concerned, contemporary epistemological theories tend to concentrate their attention on Cartesian assumptions, which are then typically rejected by appeal to empiricist arguments. In this context, the consistently anti-Cartesian, but equally anti-empiricist, thrust of the first *Critique* is in a position to shed fresh light on the relevant current debates in relation to realism versus anti-realism and naturalism versus anti-naturalism.

As far as philosophy 3 is concerned, with regard to the theory of God, freedom and the soul, Kant succeeds in breaking the hold of both traditional metaphysics and its simple repudiation. But he thereby also uncovers an entirely new field for reflection and provides a more than simply pragmatic reason for the rightly vaunted progress of the natural sciences (cf. Chapter 20.1). Kant's approach also furnishes a genuine alternative to the kind of responses to mind-body dualism in Descartes that have now become standard in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science (cf. Chapter 17.3).

1.4 Practical Philosophy in the Age of (Natural) Science

Kant's alternative programme also appears to enjoy a certain initial plausibility to the extent that it succeeds in negotiating a narrow and difficult path which neither overstates nor understates the role of philosophy on the one hand, nor overestimates nor underestimates that of the natural sciences on the other. Kant reconciles the philosophical interest in autonomous rational knowledge with the fervent commitment to experience of an epoch that has effectively been defined by the successes of the sciences. For the ever recurrent perspective of scientism, with its characteristic conception of the realm of genuine knowledge, the established sciences are not merely important, but rather all-important, a view that is bluntly repudiated in turn by a comprehensively sceptical attitude to the pretensions of science in general. In opposition to both of these positions Kant recognises the full significance of the sciences while nonetheless rejecting every form of intellectual imperialism. Kant carefully refrains from anticipating the results of the particular sciences, but concentrates instead on the preliminary and fundamental principles upon which they depend, while also addressing two domains which transcend the sphere of

competence of the particular sciences entirely: moral obligation and the rational hope which the latter serves to inspire.

Although mathematics and mathematical natural science play a particular role amongst the sciences in general, and have indeed exercised a decisive influence upon the self-understanding of the modern age, relatively few philosophers show any special interest in them today. From the historical point of view we can broadly distinguish five phases with respect to the specific relationship between philosophy and mathematics or natural science. In the first phase, which can be traced from Thales and Pythagoras through Aristotle (and his contributions to zoology) and on up to Descartes, Pascal and Leibniz, we can observe something of a personal union between the two fields: the important philosophers in question were themselves significant practitioners of mathematics or natural science in one sense or another.

In the second phase, one marked by sympathetic exchange between the two fields, many important philosophers have still made certain contributions to mathematics or natural science itself, but they have rather tended to concentrate upon the basic theoretical structure of these disciplines. Kant can already be numbered amongst these thinkers, along with Frege, Mach, Russell and Carnap. Indeed he could also be counted amongst the late representatives of the first phase insofar as he actually made a serious contribution to the explanation of the trade and monsoon winds (I: 254f.) and even suggested a characteristically modern definition of the smallest particles of matter as 'space-filling force' (*Monadology*, I: 482f.). Kant also argued for a plurality of star systems (galaxies) in his early work (*Natural History*, I: 254f.). And his theory concerning the rings of Saturn and gaseous heavenly bodies (*ibid.*, I: 290ff.) was later confirmed by the observations of Herschel and further developed by von Weizsäcker in relation to our own solar system. And if we ignore Descartes's theory of vortices, we could say that Kant is the first thinker to provide a purely scientific cosmology in accordance with the motto 'Give me matter alone and I shall construct a world from it', and entirely without recourse to the kind of divine intervention that Newton postulated in order to prevent the potential collapse of the solar system. Kant also responded to the phenomenon of the Lisbon earthquake and, without invoking either a Leibnizian theodicy or a contemptuous rejection of the latter in the manner of Voltaire, suggested a purely rational

explanation of the event in terms of the effects of subterranean explosions (I: 429ff.). Indeed, over a period of four decades, Kant regularly delivered lectures on a central subject of the time: a 'physical geography' which combined cosmic geography (concerning the place of the earth in the solar system as a whole), physical geography in the narrower sense (covering, amongst other things, the four realms of minerals, plants, animals and human beings), and a sort of political geography. Nonetheless, despite these substantial contributions, and an abundance of other interesting remarks and reflections on mathematics, physics, chemistry and physical geography (XIV), Kant should properly be regarded more as a philosopher of the natural sciences than as a natural scientist himself (for Kant's significance in the latter capacity cf. Adickes 1924–1925 or, more recently, Falkenburg 2000). But whereas Kant's empirical work on natural science is now of purely historical interest, his philosophical analysis of nature and of scientific method still possesses systematic significance today.

The later representatives of the second phase, whether we are speaking of scientifically trained philosophers (like Ernst Mach) or of philosophically inclined scientists (like H. von Helmholtz or J. H. Poincaré, or later Max Planck, Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg), coincide in time with the beginning of the third phase when otherwise significant philosophers pay little or no attention even to such revolutionary developments in scientific thought as quantum mechanics or the theory of relativity. If they did theorise, like some of the first generation members of the Frankfurt School, about issues arising directly from the natural sciences, they were properly and philosophically informed only about the application of science to the field of industry and technology rather than about the theoretical problems and questions of science itself. Nonetheless, with the theory of cognitive interests – and its claim that natural science is essentially oriented to the acquisition of control over nature – we can clearly see that (critical) social theory itself also makes a significant internal epistemic claim of its own.

In the fourth phase, that which is concerned with developing an ethic of scientific responsibility, fundamental questions internal to science itself are explicitly marginalised or excluded in order to subject the sciences to moral judgement precisely insofar as they are capable of directly influencing and transforming the life-world and the character of human life itself.

Finally, the fifth phase partly returns, in a substantive sense, to the typical considerations of the second phase. For, apart from certain specialist debates, it is specifically marked by an interest in articulating a unified, comprehensive and scientifically supported view of the world as a whole. But since philosophers have long since failed to establish a general consensus in such matters, it has now largely fallen to the representatives of natural science, formerly to the physicists, but now, with increasing confidence, to the biologists or practitioners of neurological and brain science. But since the relevant philosophical debates concerning such questions have become more and more remote from our everyday thought and experience, there is now a danger that specialist professional knowledge and expertise is uncritically combined with essentially superficial philosophical approaches and this can only produce general views of the world that are simplistic and naive.

We can express the only plausible alternative, freely formulated on analogy with Plato's remarks about the possibility of philosophers becoming kings, as follows: there will be no end to our problems with allegedly unified world-views until either natural scientists become philosophers or philosophers are prepared to engage seriously with natural science, until the competencies of both fields are somehow successfully brought together. From the explicitly philosophical perspective Kant's first *Critique* furnishes what has proved to this day to be a decisive clarification of the question concerning the possibility of an appropriately unified view of the world. In this sense it offers the epoch of the (natural) sciences two mutually supporting forms of philosophy: the 'aesthetic' and the 'analytic' unfold the constitutive elements of our *knowledge* of nature, which the 'dialectic' completes insofar as it provides the regulative elements that govern our ongoing scientific *research* into the field of nature.

Insofar as the first *Critique* represents a philosophical treatise on the empirical sciences it naturally also invites the objection that it has been rendered obsolete by later developments in scientific knowledge. Kant's assumptions concerning the exclusive validity of Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics, along with its rigidly deterministic conception of causality, have in fact been overtaken by subsequent discoveries. But our own double perspective on the work will undertake to determine whether these assumptions also fatally affect the philosophical argument to the extent that the *Critique* itself must be

regarded as a failure as a systematic theory of scientific knowledge. One could of course attempt to read Kant simply as a Hegelian *avant la lettre* who merely wished to conceptualise the structure of the sciences of his own time, but such a relativising and historicist interpretation of his thought certainly contradicts the essential thrust of his own philosophical programme.

There is a further question which we must address to the first *Critique*. are philosophies 1 and 2 so intimately interconnected that the first metaphysical part and the second transcendental part can only carry conviction in strict conjunction with one another? Is Kant's conceptual grounding of mathematics, for example, entirely dependent upon his theory of space and time, and is this theory itself dependent in turn upon his theory of mathematics? And if so, does this involve the dangerous implication that one of the most attractive features of Kant's *Critique*, its intrinsic relation to physics and mathematics, only renders it less intellectually attractive and ultimately more vulnerable?

In the final analysis Kant is basically less interested in eliciting the pre-empirical presuppositions of experience than the possibility of morality and moral theology with its fundamental questions concerning the soul, freedom and God. For it is these ideas which appear to be directly threatened by the triumphant progress of the view of the world that is essentially defined by the perspective of natural science. In order to investigate the character of this threat Kant asks what we can (scientifically) know about the world and opens up a space for morality and moral theology precisely by understanding the limits of all possible knowledge.

If we simply read the first *Critique* as a theory of mathematics and mathematical natural science, and perhaps also as a universal theory of knowledge, we inevitably fail to grasp this essential point. For the practical, or more precisely, the explicitly moral intention of Kant's philosophy is first already manifest in his theory of knowledge itself rather than merely in his explicit theory of morality. Anyone who reads the work through to its final part, the 'Doctrine of Method', will come to recognise what is already implied in the introductory motto and the preface of the second edition: the *Critique* as a whole is practical philosophy in the emphatic sense of the word.

This perspective is associated with the enormous importance that is here ascribed to morality. In opposition to the general tradition that

runs from Aristotle to Descartes at least, morality interpreted as pure practical reason thus becomes an integral component of metaphysics or fundamental philosophy. The primacy of practical reason thereby confers a pre-eminent significance upon morality itself. While Kant restricts pure theoretical reason within its own limits and subjects the metaphysical excesses of the tradition to a rigorous examination, he essentially elevates, by contrast, the status and range of morality as an expression of pure practical reason.