

CHAPTER 12

KANT'S RESPONSE TO
SKEPTICISM

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WITHIN much contemporary epistemology, Kant's response to skepticism has come to be epitomized by an appeal to *transcendental arguments*. This form of argument is said to provide a distinctively Kantian way of dealing with the skeptic, by showing that what the skeptic questions is in fact a condition for her being able to raise that question in the first place, if she is to have language, thoughts, or experiences at all. In this way, it is hoped, the game played by the skeptic can be turned against herself.¹ At the same time, however, this appeal to transcendental arguments is also widely felt to show what is *wrong* with Kant's response to skepticism: for, it is suggested, such arguments can only be made to work against the background of his transcendental idealism. As we shall see, what this doctrine amounts to is much disputed; but as with any form of idealism, the worry is that it means compromising the very realism and objectivity we want to defend against skepticism in the first place, so that the price for adopting this Kantian strategy appears too high—the cure of using transcendental arguments in conjunction with transcendental idealism is almost as bad as the disease.²

Faced with this difficulty, two kinds of response have been canvassed. On the first, it is accepted that transcendental arguments do require a commitment to the wider philosophical framework of transcendental idealism, but it is claimed that this framework can and should be defended against the suggestion that it is itself “quasi-skeptical.” On the second, transcendental idealism is indeed abandoned as wrongheaded, but it is held that Kant's transcendental arguments can be made to work without it and so can be isolated from the rest of his philosophical system. In what follows (in section 1), I will run through responses of both kinds and suggest

that at least one of Kant's transcendental arguments can in fact be understood in a way that involves very little appeal to the rest of the Kantian framework, whether one sees that as problematic or not.

However, I will also argue (in section 2) that this preoccupation with transcendental arguments is not the right way to get the full picture of how Kant saw the threat of skepticism, or indeed what he took skepticism to be, so that we should not consider the relation between skepticism and transcendental idealism only in these terms; we must get beyond viewing transcendental arguments as the central issue in Kant's response to skepticism if we are to properly understand what he took that response to involve and require. In coming to see what we are likely to miss if we focus only on the issue of transcendental arguments and whether or not they require transcendental idealism, we will also be brought to view the connection between Kant's response to skepticism and the rest of his philosophical project in a new light.

1. KANT, SKEPTICISM, AND TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS

As we have observed, when Kant's response to skepticism is discussed, it is commonly taken that at the center of this response is an appeal to transcendental arguments.³ Although the exact nature of these arguments is far from unproblematic, they are widely held to have the following features: they begin from some sort of self-evident starting point concerning our nature as subjects (for example, that we have experiences of a certain kind, or have beliefs of a certain kind, or make utterances of a certain kind) that the skeptic can be expected to accept, and then proceed to show that this starting point has certain metaphysically necessary conditions, where, in establishing that these conditions obtain, the skeptic is thereby refuted. So, in the face of the skeptical suggestion that we do not know that there is an external world, or other minds, or the past, a transcendental argument might be offered to provide deductive support for these claims from certain facts about our nature as subjects, based on the premise that the former are necessary conditions for the latter, where the form of the argument is this: we have certain experiences, etc; a necessary condition for us having these experiences, etc is the truth of *P*; therefore *P*.

It is, of course, no accident that Kant has come to be associated with this kind of response to skepticism, for this may well seem to be what he is aiming at when he introduces his Refutation of Idealism in the preface of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the following terms: “[I]t still remains a scandal to philosophy and to human reason in general that the existence of things outside us (from which we derive the whole material of knowledge, even for our inner sense) must be accepted merely on

faith, and if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof.”⁴ Kant thus appears to want the Refutation of Idealism to be taken as a proof of the existence of the external world, insofar as this is a necessary condition for “inner sense,” by which the mind (*Gemüt*) “intuits itself or its inner state.”⁵

However, it is widely held that this proof cannot proceed straightforwardly and can only be made to work by invoking Kant’s transcendental idealism. A highly influential source of this suspicion is Barry Stroud, who in his article “Transcendental Arguments” suggested that for any claim concerning the necessary condition *S*, “the sceptic can always very plausibly insist that it is enough [that] we *believe* that *S* is true, or if it looks for all the world as if it is, but that *S* needn’t actually be true.”⁶ So, in the case of the Refutation of Idealism, the concern is that no argument can be constructed to show that there must actually *be* an external world, but just that there must appear to us to be one, or that we must believe there to be one. If this is so, Stroud suggests, we have two options: on the first, we will need to bridge the gap between how things appear to us or how we believe them to be and how they are, perhaps using some sort of verificationism (where it is claimed that to believe that *S*, we must be able to establish the truth or falsity of that belief); on the second, we will need to close the gap altogether by denying that there can be any fundamental difference between how things appear to us or how we believe them to be and how they are, because things are themselves really appearances dependent on our conceptualization of them. The difficulty with the first option, Stroud argues, is that it renders the appeal to transcendental arguments redundant because verificationism is enough on its own to refute the skeptic. The difficulty with the second option, which is said to be Kant’s, is that it requires a commitment to idealism and thus to a position that many would consider as problematic as the skepticism it is designed to refute.

It might be felt, however, that Stroud has not yet done enough to show that by virtue of adopting a transcendental argument against the skeptic, Kant is obliged to turn toward idealism, and thus that this is what the Kantian antiskeptical strategy entails,⁷ for it might be argued that he has not shown why the skeptic can “very plausibly” weaken the necessary condition for experience from “there is an external world” to “there appears to us to be, or we believe there to be, an external world.” In subsequent work, however, Stroud has explained further why he thinks that it is hard to resist this kind of weakening move. Although he allows that we might plausibly be able to make modal claims about “how our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that we also think in certain other ways,” he thinks that it is puzzling “how . . . truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought or experience” (for example, that things exist outside us in space and time, or that every event has a cause) “[can] be shown to be genuinely necessary conditions of such psychological facts as that we think and experience things in certain ways, from which the proofs begin.” Stroud goes on: “It would seem that we must find, and cross, a bridge of necessity from the one to the other. That would be a truly remarkable feat, and some convincing explanation would

surely be needed of how the whole thing is possible.”⁸ Now, Stroud thinks, Kant’s commitment to transcendental idealism means that he can avoid the need for any such “remarkable feat” and so can avoid the troubling demand for an explanation of how that feat can be achieved, for (on Stroud’s account of Kant’s position) when we claim that our experience depends on “the world” being a certain way, “[t]he world of which [this] is true is not really a world which is in every sense fully independent of all thought and experience. It is a world which, transcendently speaking, depends on or is ‘constituted’ by the possibility of our thinking and experiencing things as we do”—so in this sense we are not crossing any “bridge of necessity” at all, with the “unpalatable metaphysical excesses” such adventures would require.⁹ Stroud therefore concludes that “[i]dealism, or the world’s dependence on the mind . . . is therefore the price one has to pay” for adopting a Kantian approach of this kind.¹⁰

When presented with the difficulties raised by Stroud, it may appear that those engaged in interpreting or reconstructing Kant’s position are faced with a choice: either take an idealist route but try to qualify that idealism in such a way as to render it somehow unproblematic, or hold that Stroud’s central worry can best be answered in a different way, by claiming that sufficient antiskeptical work can be done with a transcendental argument that merely establishes how things must appear to us, or how we must believe things to be, without needing to cross Stroud’s “bridge of necessity” from his “psychological facts” to facts about a world conceived in a fully realist way. These options can be labeled the *transcendental idealist* strategy and the *modest transcendental argument* strategy.

As we have seen, perhaps the main difficulty facing the transcendental idealist strategy is the concern that this is just too great a price to pay, where the suspicion is that it involves as much uncomfortable revisionism in our beliefs about the world as does skepticism. However, many interpreters of Kant have of course argued that, properly understood, transcendental idealism is less troubling than it may at first appear, particularly when it is carefully distinguished (as Kant intended it to be) from *empirical* idealism. Thus, it can be claimed, Kant never wanted to deny that objects as we experience them in space and time are empirically real in that they exist independently of our inner mental states and can be the subjects of true and false beliefs; however, although these objects are not “in the mind,” they are as they are because of how we experience them and not vice versa, and so are *transcendentally* ideal (just as one might argue that being blue is a feature of this book and that blueness is not “in the mind” or a mental image while claiming that the book’s blueness depends on how it appears to me and others like me).¹¹

Of course, the question of whether this is the right way to proceed in understanding Kant’s transcendental idealism is a large one and cannot be considered fully here. But even if it is right, and even if it does not amount to a form of mentalistic idealism or phenomenalism (which put objects and their properties “in the mind”), it may still be felt to have troubling consequences as amounting to a form of *subjectivism*, whereby all the things we might suppose are features of reality as such, independently of us, are only features that belong to reality *as we see it*, not

as it is in itself, regardless of the human perspective. Thus, although some will accept that Kant's position might allow us to hold to claims about knowledge and truth from within our perspective, they may nonetheless feel that Kant is wrong to treat all features of reality as we experience it as merely perspectival in this way; and others will be concerned that this position makes it impossible for us to claim knowledge of reality as it is "in itself" or absolutely, and so it involves a significant concession to skepticism—or perhaps even to be dubiously coherent as a result, for how could we know that everything we have cognitive access to is true of the world only insofar as it appears to us unless we had *some* knowledge of the world as it is in itself, on the basis of which to give content to this contrast?

Faced with these difficulties, it has been suggested that a different way of handling transcendental arguments is called for, which, rather than trying to respond to Stroud's concerns by using transcendental idealism, does not attempt to cross his "bridge of necessity" at all; instead, it allows that the only necessary conditions we can establish concern how we must think or how things must appear to us, thus avoiding Stroud's call for an explanation of how we can get from the "psychological" to the "nonpsychological" by remaining within the former and eschewing claims about the latter.

It might reasonably be wondered how this so-called modest approach to transcendental arguments could have any bite against skepticism: if the transcendental argument is just making some claim about how the world must appear to us, or what concepts we must use in thinking about it, how could that possibly trouble the skeptic, who presumably is challenging our right to make claims about how things actually are independently of how things appear to us to be or how we think of them? However, perhaps surprisingly, varieties of modest transcendental arguments of this kind have been developed. One such variety argues that transcendental arguments of this modest kind can be used to establish that some of our beliefs are invulnerable because they are necessary for us to have thoughts or experiences at all. The fact of this invulnerability is then variously claimed to render skeptical doubt unintelligible or, if not unintelligible, at least pointless; or these arguments may perhaps provide a reassurance of some other kind.¹² Another sort of approach holds that if we think of the skeptic as challenging the *justification* of our beliefs, and if by justification we mean an ability to show that our normal standards of evidence are satisfied, then a modest transcendental argument can help establish this, for while, in the case of the problem of the external world, the justificatory skeptic characteristically argues that our belief in the external world lacks proper inferential support (for example, as either a causal inference or an inference to the best explanation), the modest transcendental argument might then be used to show that it is necessary for us to have experience as of a world outside us in space and time, so that no such problematic inference is required; rather, the belief in the external world is shown to conform to our perceptual experience and so does not stand in need of any such inference in order to be justified.¹³

It might be wondered, however, how far such modest transcendental arguments can lay any claim to be properly Kantian, and how far they are merely

possible “reconstructions.” It is clear that some proponents of these arguments, such as Strawson, see themselves as leaving Kant behind in taking up this approach. Strawson’s position is in the end more Humean than Kantian,¹⁴ where the suggestion is that because the transcendental argument shows that we will find it impossible to give up certain beliefs insofar as they are necessary conditions for our believing anything at all, this is sufficient in itself to render skepticism about such beliefs “idle” and thus something we can legitimately ignore. It is possible to claim, however, that a closer connection to Kant can be maintained than this even while adopting a modest transcendental argument strategy, for it is arguable that it is just this kind of modesty that lies behind Kant’s transcendental idealism, rather than the subjectivist turn discussed earlier. On this account, rather than seeing transcendental idealism as making a claim about the status of things in the empirical world (as being dependent on our perspective on it for their existence), we should see it as making a more *epistemological* claim, namely, that our belief in the existence of a causally ordered world outside us in space and time is a well-grounded epistemic position, but it does not provide us with a full knowledge of reality, which has a nature we are unable to grasp, given the way in which our cognitive capacities operate; so the modest transcendental argument is designed to support the view that those cognitive capacities are working perfectly well within those limits, while the position is transcendental idealist in insisting that those limits nonetheless be respected and observed.

However, even if some interpretive issues can be settled in this way, there are those who may still feel that this does not answer the *philosophical* worry, that a more ambitious approach is required in employing transcendental arguments if skepticism is to be properly seen off, and they may be emboldened in this feeling by believing that we have been too quick in going along with the concerns Stroud raises. As we have seen, at the center of those concerns is the worry that if transcendental arguments are conceived of in an ambitious manner, they involve “a truly remarkable feat,” namely, that we cross “a bridge of necessity” from “psychological facts as that we think and experience things in certain ways” to “truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought and experience.” Stroud is prepared to allow (and indeed exploits our capacity himself in his own arguments against the skeptic) “that we can come to see how our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that we also think in certain other ways, and so perhaps in certain other ways as well, and we can appreciate how rich and complicated the relations between those ways of thinking must be,”¹⁵ but he believes that anything more than this that asserts that “non-psychological facts” about the world outside us constitute necessary conditions for our thinking is problematic. However, it might be objected, if this is Stroud’s reason for rejecting ambitious transcendental arguments (which make claims about the world having to be certain ways to make certain facts about us possible) and adopting more modest ones (which make claims only about how we think about or experience the world), it is less than compelling, for why should it somehow be easier to make modal claims involving the latter than the former? Why is it less problematic to

establish that “our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that we also think in certain other ways” than that our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that the world *be* certain ways? Why are such “bridges” or modal connections any easier to make “within thought” than between how we think and how the world must be to make that thought possible? Unless Stroud can offer us some principled reason for thinking that it is somehow less problematic to make these transcendental claims in the former case than the latter, he must either reject both (and so abandon his own project of establishing that some of our beliefs are invulnerable in certain ways because they are necessary for us to have beliefs at all) or allow that ambitious transcendental arguments are just as feasible as his more modest ones.¹⁶

Nonetheless, whatever the philosophical issues this raises, it might be said that Stroud at least appears to reflect a genuinely Kantian worry here, and that this worry is arguably the source for the “neglected alternative” that Kant has frequently been accused of missing in this area.¹⁷ The idea behind this criticism is roughly this: Kant can be credited for seeing that we may need certain conditions to be satisfied in order for experience to be possible for us, but Kant wrongly took it that what fulfills those conditions cannot be the world as it is in itself, but only the world as it appears to us. Kant fell into this error, it is argued, because he believed that to go further is to hold that a world over which we have no control is nonetheless set up in such a way as to meet the conditions necessary to make our experience possible; but then such a fact demands an explanation of the sort provided by a belief in a benign God or a preestablished harmony between us and the world. But Kant, who rejected any such metaphysical Panglossianism as fanciful, may then be said to agree with Stroud that we should confine our claims about the conditions of experience to claims about a world we have constructed because this makes it less mysterious why that world meets our conditions for experience, for that it does so is in effect down to how we have constructed it in the first place rather than some “third thing,” such as a benign God.

Perhaps, then, something like this view might make Kant agree with Stroud, that ambitious transcendental arguments are more problematic than those of other kinds, because there is something less mysterious in claiming that the conditions of experience are met by facts about us (as on ‘modest’ transcendental arguments) or facts about things somehow dependent on us (as when these arguments involve some form of idealism), than by a world independent of us—for why should that world do us any “favours” in this way? However, if this was Kant’s concern, how right was he to be moved by it? It has been argued that after Darwin, we can see that Kant was wrong: for that the world in itself should meet our conditions for experience or knowledge is no more mysterious than that the world should contain air that meets the conditions required for our respiratory apparatus, or that the way things reflect light meets the conditions required for our vision. In a sense, it can be suggested, Kant made the situation look more mysterious than it is by getting the order of explanation the wrong way around: we are only here at all because the limitations on our various capacities nonetheless fit the prevailing conditions, whereas Kant wanted an account of why the prevailing conditions fit our limited

capacities. Of course, even after Darwin, it may still be felt that this sort of evolutionary explanation is inadequate, and that much still remains to be accounted for, while the Kantian can hardly be expected to endorse an account that is purely naturalistic in this way; but it can also be argued, nonetheless, that once we address Kant's concerns along these lines, we may remove a good deal of heat from his worries.

In the face of these objections to Stroud's influential concerns over transcendental arguments, which seemed to require us to turn toward transcendental idealism or a more modest approach, we might then feel that we should go back to a more straightforward understanding of these arguments, which are "ambitious" in attempting to establish something about the world as a necessary condition for certain facts about us. Just as with the other approaches, there is some warrant for this approach in Kant's own work, most notably in the Refutation of Idealism. The refutation has always been something of a puzzle for commentators where it appears to offer a "direct" response to the skeptic (or "problematic idealist")¹⁸ by presenting a proof of "the existence of objects in space outside me" based on the claim that the determination of our existence in time "is possible only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me."¹⁹ Even if this conclusion does not stand in tension with Kant's own transcendental idealism (which *itself* talks of empirical objects as "representations" in some sense),²⁰ it at the very least is an argument that is presented without any appeal to Kant's transcendental machinery.²¹ It is sometimes suggested that the reason the Refutation is anomalous in this way is that it was added to the second edition of the *Critique* because Kant had been stung by accusations of skepticism and idealism made against the first edition and, in his concerns to overturn those accusations, came to present a more "ambitious" style of transcendental argument than any he had previously entertained.

On an account of the transcendental argument of this kind, one way to read the Refutation of Idealism would be as follows:

1. You are aware of your mental states (thoughts and sensations) as having a temporal order (e.g., that the sensation of pain you are having now was preceded in time by a feeling of pleasure).
2. To be aware of your mental states as having a temporal order, you must be aware of something that existed from the time of your previous mental state to the present.
3. For that awareness of permanence to be possible, it is not sufficient to have awareness of your self (because no permanent self is revealed to us in inner sense, as Hume argued)²² or to have impressions or representations (because these impressions have a "perishing existence," as Hume also argued).²³
4. Therefore, the "permanent" of which you are aware must be something that is neither you qua subject nor your subjective impressions but must be something distinct from both of these, that is, an object outside you in the external world.

5. Therefore, your awareness of the external world cannot come from a prior awareness of your subjective impressions because the latter awareness is not possible without the former, and so awareness of the external world cannot be based on the imagination but rather comes from generally veridical experiences.

Of course, this argument is far from unproblematic and can be challenged at a number of points, and it is possible that when it is so challenged, some resort to a form of transcendental idealism may be required.²⁴ Nonetheless, at least on the face of it, it looks as if we have here a Kantian reply to skepticism that someone who sees herself as a realist could accept and use.

It seems, therefore, that by taking transcendental arguments to be the core of Kant's response to skepticism, we could understand that response in a way that turns out to involve little of the rest of the Kantian framework because nothing here commits us to the use of transcendental idealism, in whatever way one understands that position.

2. KANT, SKEPTICISM, AND THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

I do not think that it is sufficient to leave things at this point, however, because by following most of the recent literature in focusing on the issue of Kant's relation to skepticism merely through the question of transcendental arguments, we have left out the context of much of Kant's engagement with the skeptic; as a result, we are in danger of missing a properly Kantian perspective on what skepticism is, and what a genuine reply to it must involve. Once this context is brought in, I will now suggest, we can see more clearly why it is more difficult than it just appeared to isolate that reply from the rest of Kant's philosophical framework.

The first point to emphasize is that from the perspective of contemporary debates on these questions, Kant has a conception of "the skeptic" that is closer to the ancient tradition than to our own.²⁵ For our purposes here, this difference may be very roughly characterized as follows. On the modern conception, the skeptic is someone who holds and sets out to demonstrate that our beliefs are insufficiently protected from error, and that as a result, we cannot claim to have knowledge or even rational justification. On the ancient conception, by contrast, the skeptic is someone who holds that for some or all of the issues we set out to investigate, equally strong arguments can be found to support different views of the subject in question, so that on such issues we should suspend judgment for now or perhaps avoid persisting in our inquiries altogether in order to avoid endless and vexatious disputes and instead to attain *ataraxia*, or tranquility, as the better form of life. The

natural target of the ancient skeptic, therefore, is the *dogmatist*, who thinks that he has arrived at the truth on some matter and so has no need to suspend judgment because attaining the truth will bring consensus and hence tranquility; but for the skeptic, it is naïve to think that this point has been or even can be reached, and the only stability the dogmatist achieves is the fragile one of failing to properly recognize the counterarguments to his position.²⁶ To succeed against the dogmatist, therefore, the skeptic must persuade him that he is premature in thinking that a position on some issue has been decisively established because whatever position the dogmatist has (or perhaps can ever) come up with faces an equally strong opposing position on that issue, and no decisive judgment can be made between these positions; it is therefore best for the dogmatist to become a skeptic and suspend judgment on this question, maybe even give up inquiring further into it altogether, if he hopes to attain tranquility. In modern debates, by contrast, the skeptic is not seen as advocating a picture of the good life, and the success of the skeptic is not judged on whether he shows that the goal of tranquility can only be achieved by suspending judgment rather than by having reached an indisputable view. Rather, the issues raised by modern skepticism concern how far we can show that our beliefs and the methods we use to form them are sufficiently error-proof to sustain the epistemic weight we put upon them.

If we take the Refutation of Idealism as our starting point, it is natural to assume that Kant views skepticism in the modern manner, for the position he is concerned to refute asserts “our incapacity to prove, through immediate experience, any existence except our own,”²⁷ where it is held that this lack of proof undermines any certainty we might have regarding the reality of the world outside us and should thus incline us to doubt rather than belief on this matter. Moreover, as we have seen, Kant’s response to this position may be taken in a thoroughly modern light: that is, he attempts to provide just the proof that the “problematic idealist” says is lacking, and so to shore up our belief in the external world in the face of these skeptical doubts.

However, Kant’s concern with skepticism can also be put in a broader context than this, and once it is, it appears that it is ancient rather than modern skepticism that is his model. This broader context provides the starting point of the *Critique*, namely, the problematic status of metaphysics. Kant sees the difficulties of metaphysics in terms of the classical dispute between dogmatism, on the one hand, and skepticism, on the other, where what is at issue is which of these approaches can bring us peace with respect to metaphysical questions. Thus the dogmatist thinks that he can settle various metaphysical disputes by arguing for a position that is true and will therefore command consensus, but the skeptic argues that contrary views are also available, so that faced with *isostheneia*, or “equal force on both sides,” the only rational course is to suspend judgment—and if this problem persists, perhaps also abandon further inquiry altogether.²⁸ Kant agrees with the skeptic that under the rule of the dogmatists, the “empire” of metaphysics “gradually through internal wars gave way to complete anarchy,”²⁹ so that it is now a “battle-field of . . . endless controversies,”³⁰ but he nonetheless thinks that the

way to break the dogmatists' hold over metaphysics is not to side with the skeptic, because the skeptic cannot prevent the dogmatist regaining his confidence, and thus the battles breaking out again. Thus, Kant argues, it is rather only by becoming a *critical philosopher* that the tranquility the skeptic is looking for can be attained, so that in the end the latter must give way to the former.

Kant's argument with the skeptic here can be considered in more detail by looking at his treatment of Hume. Just as Kant begins the first *Critique* by reflecting gloomily on the "battle-field" of metaphysics, so Hume begins his *Treatise* by commenting on the unsatisfactory state of the subject, emphasizing the seemingly endless arguments to be found on all sides:

There is nothing which is not the subject of debate, and in which men of learning are not of contrary opinions. The most trivial questions escapes not our controversy, and in the most momentous we are not able to give any certain decision. Disputes are multiplied, as if every thing was uncertain; and these disputes are managed with the greatest warmth, as if every thing was certain. Amidst all this bustle 'tis not reason, which carries the prize, but eloquence, and no man needs ever despair of gaining proselytes to the most extravagant hypothesis, who has art enough to represent it in any favourable colours. The victory is not gained by the men at arms, who manage the pike and the sword; but by the trumpeters, drummers, and musicians of the army.

From hence in my opinion arises that common prejudice against metaphysical reasonings of all kinds, even amongst those, who profess themselves scholars, and have a just value for every other part of literature.³¹

Kant takes Hume's response to this situation to be a skeptical one, namely, that the endless disputes show that we must think again about what metaphysical inquiry can hope to achieve, and we must refuse to commit ourselves on such matters, turning instead to more modest investigations where the possibility of consensus is more real. The question for Kant, however, is whether Hume can do enough to persuade the dogmatist to join him and to give up his pursuit of metaphysical truth. Kant argues that Hume cannot succeed because he is not a properly critical philosopher.

The problem Hume faces, according to Kant, is that (as Kant sees it) Hume is obliged to be too radical in his attempt to bring "peace" to metaphysics, radical in a way that undermines his efforts to persuade the dogmatist that he would do best to withdraw from the fray because the fight cannot be won. This is because, Kant thinks, the principles on which the dogmatic metaphysician bases his claims are ones that have a good deal of plausibility, so that in rejecting these arguments, Hume is forced to question what look like well-grounded principles of ordinary thinking.³² Kant therefore holds that we end up on the "battle-field" of metaphysics by beginning "with principles which [reason] has no option save to employ in the course of experience, and which this experience at the same time abundantly justifies it in using." However,

Rising with their aid (since it is determined to this also by its own nature) to ever higher, ever more remote, conditions, it soon becomes aware that in this way—the questions never ceasing—its work must always remain incomplete; and it

therefore finds itself compelled to resort to principles which overstep all possible empirical employment, and which yet seem so unobjectionable that even ordinary consciousness readily accepts them. But by this procedure human reason precipitates itself into darkness and contradictions; and while it may indeed conjecture that these must be in some way due to concealed errors, it is not in a position to be able to detect them. For since the principles of which it is making use transcend the limits of experience, they are no longer subject to any empirical test.³³

The principle of causality (that every event has a cause that brings it about necessarily) is a case in point here: Kant believes that this is a principle that we have “no options save to employ in the course of experience,” and that seems “unobjectionable” to “ordinary consciousness,” which cannot conceive of an event happening without a cause and that event following from the cause merely by accident, in a way that is not governed by any law. However, using this principle, the philosopher can find himself drawn into the “battle-field” of metaphysics, concerning such issues as the existence of God, for example,³⁴ in a way that then gives rise to familiar controversies. The skeptical response is to say that we should withhold assent on such metaphysical matters and consider our inquiry futile; but, the dogmatist can ask, if we are here using principles (like the principle of causality) that are indeed “unobjectionable” to “ordinary consciousness,” why should we accept that no consensus is possible, and that no single view on such matters can be attained?

As Kant sees it, Hume’s response to this challenge to the skeptic is a very radical one, namely, to question whether “ordinary consciousness” is *right* to view a principle like causality as “unobjectionable” in this way, as a way of preventing the dogmatic metaphysician from licensing his speculations by appeal to the apparently unproblematic nature of the principles it is using—for Hume, even our “ordinary consciousness” has gone astray on this matter. Hume thus opts for a mitigated skepticism which holds that there is no way to justify principles like that of causality, even though ordinary life and human nature in fact do not permit us to reject them completely and give them up entirely. Hume thinks he can thereby allow us to adopt the causal principle for practical purposes, but in a way that blocks its use in metaphysics,³⁵ where, as Richard Popkin has put it, “Nature leads us to this suspensive attitude when the dogmatist’s arguments go too far away from the affairs of common life. On the other hand, nature does not lead us to a suspensive attitude on many unfounded beliefs about the common affairs of mankind.”³⁶

Kant therefore views Hume as a skeptic in a classical as well as modern sense, who aimed at tranquillity by trying to prevent us becoming mired in the “battlefield” of metaphysics, where only the dogmatist could naively think our disputes might be brought to a satisfactory conclusion; by getting us to accept that further inquiry here is misguided, Hume, like the classical skeptic, hoped to bring us peace.³⁷ However, Kant takes Hume’s strategy to be fatally flawed: for Kant thinks he can show (in the Second Analogy and elsewhere) that the principle of causality

is not to be found wanting in the way Hume claims, and the same is true of other principles of "ordinary consciousness" (such as the principle of permanence: "in all change of appearances substance is permanent; its quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished")³⁸ which the metaphysician makes use of. As a result, Kant believes, as long as the dogmatist feels that his inquiry is based on sound principles of "ordinary consciousness," he will be not be persuaded to adopt any sort of "suspensive attitude" in metaphysics any more than in ordinary life, and will continue with his inquiries unchecked. In view of what Kant saw as Hume's misguided challenge to the principle of causality and his attempt to reject it altogether,³⁹ he therefore warns that Hume's attempt to bring an end to the speculations of metaphysics will inevitably be undermined, and the dogmatist will come to feel that he is back in business:

Thus the fate that waits upon all scepticism likewise befalls Hume, namely, that his own sceptical teaching comes to be doubted, as being based only on facts [*facta*] which are contingent, not on principles which can constrain to a necessary renunciation of all right to dogmatic assertions. . . . Accordingly that peculiarly characteristic ardour with which reason insists upon giving full rein to itself, has not in the least been disturbed but only temporarily impeded. It does not feel that it has been shut out from the field in which it is wont to disport itself; and so, in spite of its being thwarted in this and that direction, it cannot be made entirely to desist from these ventures. On the contrary, the attacks lead only to counter-preparations, and make us the more obstinate in insisting upon our own views.⁴⁰

Instead of bringing the combatants to their senses, Kant holds, Hume's approach leaves them free to carry on much as they did before.

Kant argues, therefore, that by considering Hume's skeptical strategy and the way that in fact it allows metaphysical hostilities to continue, we can see that although "the skeptical method of escaping the troublesome affairs of reason appears to be, as it were, a shortcut by which we can arrive at a permanent peace in philosophy,"⁴¹ this is nonetheless a shortcut that cannot really be made to work or get us where we want to go. Rather, Kant claims, we need to take the "long road" of critical philosophy if we really want to achieve the tranquility that the skeptic desires.⁴² How is this so?

The key to Kant's strategy is to offer a way of allowing "ordinary consciousness" to hang on to principles such as the principle of causality and the principle of permanence (contra Hume), but to argue that these principles are only valid for objects as they appear to us within experience and so cannot be employed within any metaphysical speculations, which concern objects that lie outside our experience (such as God); the dogmatist is therefore not entitled to appeal to these principles as a way of arguing for the possibility of progress in his metaphysical speculations. Where the critical philosopher differs from the skeptic, then, is that although both hold that the dogmatist has little hope of succeeding in his inquiries, the critical philosopher shows the dogmatist exactly where he has gone wrong and offers him a principled argument that shows not just why his inquiries have failed

up to now, but why they will always fail, and the critical philosopher does this in a way that nonetheless respects our “everyday” commitment to principles like the principle of causality within the bounds of experience. As Kant puts it, therefore, where the skeptic merely *censors* human reason and its attempt to conduct metaphysical inquiries, the critical philosopher sets it within well-defined *limits* in a way that (Kant thinks) will finally bring us the kind of lasting peace the skeptic was after but could not attain:

All sceptical polemic should properly be directed only against the dogmatist who, without any misgivings as to his fundamental objective principles, that is, without criticism, proceeds complacently upon his adopted path; it should be designed simply to put him out of countenance and thus to bring him to self-knowledge. In itself, however, this polemic is of no avail whatsoever in enabling us to decide what it is that we can and what it is that we cannot know. All unsuccessful dogmatic attempts of reason are facts [*facta*], and it is always of advantage to submit them to the censorship of the sceptic. But this can decide nothing regarding those expectations of reason which lead it to hope for better success in its future attempts, and to build claims on this foundation; and consequently no mere censorship can put an end to the dispute regarding the rights of reason.⁴³

What is needed, therefore,

is not the censorship but the *criticism* of reason, whereby not its present *bounds* but its determinate [and necessary] *limits*, not its ignorance on this or that point but its ignorance in regard to all possible questions of a certain kind, are demonstrated from principles, and not merely arrived at by way of conjecture. Scepticism is thus a resting-place for human reason, where it can reflect upon its dogmatic wanderings and make survey of the region in which it finds itself, so that for the future it may be able to choose its path with more certainty. But it is no dwelling-place for permanent settlement. Such can be obtained only through perfect certainty in our knowledge, alike of the objects themselves and of the limits within which all our knowledge of objects is enclosed.⁴⁴

Ultimately, therefore, Kant’s response to skeptics like Hume is to argue that they must let themselves be co-opted into Kant’s critical program for philosophy, which will allow a genuine peace for metaphysics to be achieved. And this enables Kant to say that while critical philosophy incorporates something of the skeptical method, it avoids succumbing to skepticism proper, by offering a way out of the toils of metaphysics while keeping our ordinary knowledge claims in place.⁴⁵

If the Kantian response to skepticism is seen in this way, it is clearly much harder than it seemed previously to divorce that response from the rest of Kant’s philosophical framework because it requires an understanding of how his critical philosophy was meant to operate, and in particular of his account of how “ordinary consciousness” can know synthetic a priori principles like that of causality, but without such principles becoming applicable beyond experience. Kant’s position is that unless we abide by the latter constraint, we cannot avoid the oscillation between dogmatism and skepticism, but to explain why this constraint obtains, we need to accept that a principle like the principle of causality applies

necessarily to the world as we experience it but not beyond, because this is how that world is structured by us, whereas the world beyond experience conforms to no such constraint. This, of course, takes us to the heart of Kant's "Copernican revolution" in philosophy and his transcendental turn.

We also now have a different way of considering the *adequacy* of Kant's response to skepticism, which is not just to ask whether (say) the Refutation of Idealism proves what the external-world skeptic says should be doubted, but whether Kant can achieve what he said Hume could not: namely, giving us a way of thinking about principles like those of causality that will satisfy "ordinary consciousness" on the one hand, without giving the dogmatic metaphysician grounds for encouragement on the other. For this is the central advantage that Kant claims for his critical philosophy over Hume's skeptical one. Just as Kant thought that Hume ultimately failed to bring peace to the battlegrounds of metaphysics, because he had not properly handled the fundamental principles we use to get metaphysical speculation started, the question here then is whether Kant does any better with his critical project. And we might also ask, conversely, whether Kant is fair to Hume in the way he characterizes Hume's approach and the differences he asserts for his own, as well as asking whether he is right to say that the Humean approach cannot succeed in bringing about the tranquillity in metaphysics that they both desired.⁴⁶

We cannot attempt to follow Kant any further here. But it does seem that we have shown that unless we accept that there is more to Kant's engagement with skepticism than is commonly assumed, we will miss how far that engagement takes us into his critical philosophy in a way that remains to be taken up by those interested in the problem of skepticism, notwithstanding Kant's already-considerable influence in this field.

NOTES

I am grateful to David Bell, John Greco, Kristina Musgnug Barratt, and Ken Westphal for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

1. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*) trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), B276. References to the *CPR* will be given in the standard form, relating to the pagination of the A (first) and B (second) editions. References to works of Kant other than the *CPR* will be to volume and page number of the Akademie edition (*Kants gessamelte Schriften*, ed. Deutsche [formerly Königliche Preussisch] Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–]), together with a reference to a standard English translation.

2. For some prominent discussions, see Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); Graham Bird, "Kant's Transcendental Idealism," in Godfrey Vesey (ed.), *Idealism Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Arthur Collins, *Possible Experience: Understanding Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Paul Guyer, *Kant and the*

Claims of Knowledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); James Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Kenneth R. Westphal, *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Graham Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant: A Commentary on the "Critique of Pure Reason"* (La Salle: Open Court, 2006).

3. For a bibliography of works on transcendental arguments, see Robert Stern (ed), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 307–22. For some more recent contributions that discuss the role of transcendental arguments in Kant's thought, see Sami Pihlström, *Naturalizing the Transcendental* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003); Mark Sacks, *Objectivity and Insight* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Westphal, *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism*.

4. *CPR* Bxxxix n.

5. *CPR* A22/B37.

6. Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments," reprinted in his *Understanding Human Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 24.

7. In fairness to Stroud, it should be noted that this is not a point he seeks to make in relation to Kant in "Transcendental Arguments," where his focus is more on contemporary attempts to adopt the Kantian approach, particularly by Strawson and Shoemaker. But cf. Barry Stroud, "The Allure of Idealism," in *Understanding Human Knowledge*, pp. 87–88: "Kant begins by 'deducing' what our concepts or categories are or must be and exploring the conditions of our thinking in those ways. He finds that they are conditions of our thinking of anything at all. Now how could such an investigation of how we think, or of how it is possible for us to think at all, reveal to us . . . 'what it is to be X', as opposed to what it is to think about X, or what makes it possible (and perhaps also necessary) for us to think about X? . . . It does so by showing that what makes it possible for us to think about or perceive objects at all makes it true that there are objects of the sorts we think about and perceive. There being such objects is a condition of our being able to think about or perceive any objects at all. The short answer to how that is established is to say that the objects we think about or perceive are in some way dependent on our faculty of thinking or perceiving."

8. Barry Stroud, "Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability," in *Understanding Human Knowledge*, pp. 158–59. Cf. also Stroud, "The Goal of Transcendental Arguments," in *Understanding Human Knowledge*, p. 212: "All this would be so on the assumption that transcendental arguments deduce the truth of certain conclusions about the world from our thinking or experiencing things in certain ways. That strong condition of success is what I continue to see as the stumbling-block for such ambitious transcendental arguments. Can we ever really reach such conclusions from such beginnings? . . . [The most troubling danger is] that of not being able to reach substantive, non-psychological truths from premisses only about our thinking or experiencing things in certain ways."

9. Stroud, "Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability," p. 159.

10. *Ibid.* Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 162–63: "Without questioning the demonstrated connections *within* our thought, we might agree that thought of an independent world, for example, ultimately requires that we possess an elaborate conception of particular objects which endure and are reidentifiable in a single spatio-temporal system. That is still only about how we do or must think. But why, we will ask, does our possession of such a conception, our *thinking* of and *believing* in such objects, also require that there actually be

such objects, or even that we can know or have good reason to think that there are? We know why Kant thought there had to be. But if we do not go in for transcendental idealism, why would the existence or even the know ability of such objects be derivable from our thinking in certain ways? Would not the most that we can see to be necessarily connected with our thinking in a certain way be only our having to *think* or *believe* that certain other things are true, and not the actual truth of those other things as well?"

11. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 4: 289; translated by Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 41: "as little as someone can be called an idealist because he wants to admit colors as properties that attach not to the object in itself, but only to the sense of vision as modifications, just as little can my system be called idealist simply because I find that even more of, *namely, all of the properties that make up the intuition of a body* belong merely to its appearance: for the existence of the thing that appears is not thereby nullified, as with real idealism, but it is only shown that through the senses we cannot cognize it at all as it is in itself."

12. Cf. P.F. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties* (London: Methuen, 1985); Barry Stroud, "The Goal of Transcendental Arguments," reprinted in his *Understanding Human Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 203–23.

13. For further discussion of some of these positions and the issues they raise, see my *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism: Answering the Question of Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

14. Cf. Strawson, *Skepticism and Naturalism*, pp. 10–14.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 158–59.

16. For further discussion of this worry, and how a less Stroudian argument can be given in favor of the modest approach, see my "Transcendental Arguments: A Plea for Modesty," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 74 (2007), pp. 143–61; reprinted in Christian Beyer and Alex Burri (eds.), *Philosophical Knowledge: Its Possibility and Scope* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 143–61.

17. Cf. Ross Harrison, "Transcendental Arguments and Idealism," in Godfrey Vesey (ed.), *Idealism Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 211–24.

18. It is, I think, rarely noted as significant that Kant himself does not call the position he is attacking in the refutation "scepticism," but "problematic idealism." That he does not call it "scepticism" may have the straightforward explanation that his target here is Descartes, and he would not have wanted to label Descartes a skeptic because, of course, Descartes' position is intended to be *anti* skeptical. But in the light of my discussion in the next section, it may also be that in Kant's terms, to be someone who simply doubts the existence of the external world is just to be a modern skeptic and so not really a proper skeptic at all, but only a "problematic idealist."

19. *CPR* B275.

20. Cf. *CPR* A30/B45: "The transcendental concept of appearances in space, on the other hand, is a critical reminder that nothing intuited in space is a thing in itself, that space is not a form inhering in things in themselves as their intrinsic property, that objects in themselves are quite unknown to us, and that what we call outer objects are nothing but mere representations of our sensibility, the form of which is space."

21. This is brought out very clearly by David Bell in his "Transcendental Arguments and Non-naturalistic Anti-realism," in Robert Stern (ed.), *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

22. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), bk. 1, pt. 4, sec. 6, p. 252.

23. *Ibid.*, bk.1, pt.4, sec. 2, p. 194.

24. Most obviously, perhaps, the Humean assumptions in premise 3 might be questioned, both as regards the possibility of intuiting an abiding self, and as regards adopting a less atomistic view of our representational states.

25. For a discussion of Kant's understanding of ancient skepticism and its contemporary context, see Giorgio Tonelli, "Kant und die antiken Skeptiker," in *Studien zu Kants philosophischer Entwicklung*, ed. Heinz Heimsoeth, Dieter Henrich, and Giorgio Tonelli (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), pp. 93–123. For an extensive discussion by Kant himself, see *The Blomberg Logic* (lectures from c. 1770), 24: 207–18; in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, translated by J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 163–73.

26. It is a matter of great dispute in the understanding of ancient skepticism, whether the ordinary person counts as a dogmatist and hence a target for the skeptic in this way, or just the philosopher; it is therefore a matter of disagreement how far and in what way the skeptical suspension of belief was meant to extend—to our ordinary beliefs, or just to our philosophical ones? On this issue, see M.F. Burnyeat, "Can the Skeptic Live his Skepticism?" in Myles Burnyeat (ed.), *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 117–148 and Michael Frede, "The Skeptic's Beliefs," reprinted in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 179–200. For a helpful general overview of ancient skepticism, see David Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," in Burnyeat, *The Skeptical Tradition*, pp. 9–30.

27. CPR B275.

28. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik Vigilantius* [1794–1795], Akademie edition, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902-) (hereafter AK), 29: 957–58, translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon, in *Lectures on Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 429: "All judgments and every whole system were accepted [in metaphysics], if one only remained consistent and did not contradict oneself. But there arose a dispute of the philosophers among themselves over the propositions maintained as conclusions of their systems, in that one group believed that they were grounded, and the other group that they were just as clearly refuted, and showed that the opposite could be grounded just as clearly. . . . Thus as soon as the contradiction and the existence of the wholly conflicting propositions was quite clear, there arose that party [i.e., the skeptics] which doubted the certainty of either; this party took the opportunity thereby to declare all truths of reason as uncertain, and accepted the principle that we lack certainty in all our cognitions; it even contradicted itself, and admitted that even the question whether everything is uncertain is itself uncertain. Now this killed all progress of the investigation because dogmatism was overthrown and skepticism affirmed no principles <principium> from which one could proceed. The interest of human beings suffered under this, and neither of the opposites <opposita> served any use."

29. CPR Aix (translation modified).

30. CPR Aviii. Cf. also Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Ak 4: 255–57, translated by Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 5–7, and Ak 4: 271, trans. Hatfield, pp. 24–5: "[O]ne metaphysics has always contradicted the other, either in regard to the assertions themselves or their proofs, and thereby metaphysics has itself destroyed its claim to lasting approbation. The very attempts to bring such a science into existence were without doubt the original cause of the skepticism that arose so early, a mode of thinking in which reason moves against itself with such violence that it never could have arisen except in complete despair as regards satisfaction of reason's most important aims." And also *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (lecture notes from 1782–1783), 29: 779, trans. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon, in Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, p. 134: "The whole

of metaphysics is nothing other than a chain of built-up and overthrown systems. No book has yet appeared where there is something permanent. It is not a science which has the fate to be permanent.”

31. Hume goes on in this passage to make clear that this problem can be attributed not just to metaphysics ‘proper’ (as a ‘particular branch of science’) but to ‘every kind of argument, which is any way abstruse’, where Hume shows no sympathy with this kind of ‘most determined scepticism’ and ‘indolence’ (partly, of course, because he acknowledges, the *Treatise* itself may be counted as ‘abstruse’). But that Hume shared these skeptical misgivings regarding metaphysics ‘proper’ is made clear by Philo in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, particularly at the beginning and end of Part VIII, which concludes in a way that may be taken to be an expression of Hume’s own view: ‘All religious system, it is confessed, are subject to great and insuperable difficulties. Each disputant triumphs in his turn, while he carries on an offensive war, and exposes the absurdities, barbarities, and pernicious tenets of his antagonist. But all of them, on the whole, prepare a complete triumph for the *sceptic*, who tells them that no system ought ever to be embraced with regard to such subjects; for this plain reason, that no absurdity ought ever to be assented to with regard to any subject. A total suspense of judgment is here our only reasonable resource’.

32. Cf. Kant, *Blomberg Logic*, 24: 217; translated by Young, p. 172: “In most recent times, *David Hume* is especially known as a *scepticus* who had an overwhelming, indeed, a somewhat extravagant inclination to doubt. . . . In [his] writings is to be found a gentle, calm, unprejudiced examination. In them he considers, namely, first of all one side of thing; he searches for all possible grounds for it, and expounds them in the best oratorical style. Then he takes up the other side, presents it for examination, as it were, completely without partisanship, expounds again all the opposing grounds with just the same eloquence, but at the end and in conclusion he appears in his true form as a real skeptic[;] he complains about the uncertainty of all our cognition whatsoever, shows how little these can be trusted, and finally he doubts instead of inferring and settling which of the two cognitions is true and which false. He would, however, certainly be one of the best authors, and one of those most worthy of being read, if only he did not have the preponderant inclination to doubt everything, but instead wanted to seek to attain a true certainty by means of the examination and investigation of cognitions.” Cf. also Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4: 258 note; translated Hatfield p. 8: “The acute man [i.e. Hume] was, however, looking only to the negative benefit that curbing the excessive claims of speculative reason would have, in completely abolishing so many endless and continual conflicts that perplex the human species; he meanwhile lost sight of the positive harm that results if reason is deprived of the most important vistas, from which alone it can stake out for the will the highest goal of all the will’s endeavours.”

33. *CPR* Avii–viii.

34. Cf. *CPR* A609-10/B637-38.

35. Cf. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Section XII, Part III, pp. 161–62: “There is, indeed, a more *mitigated* scepticism or *academical* philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or *excessive* scepticism, when its undistinguished doubts are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection. The greater part of mankind are naturally apt to be affirmative and dogmatical in their opinions; and while they see objects only on one side, and have no idea of any counterpoising argument, they throw themselves pre-

cipitately into the principles, to which they are inclined; nor have they any indulgence for those who entertain opposite sentiments. To hesitate or balance perplexes their understanding, checks their passion, and suspends their action. They are, therefore, impatient till they escape from a state, which to them is so uneasy: and they think, that they can never remove themselves far enough from it, by the violence of their affirmations and obstinacy of their belief. But could such dogmatical reasoners become sensible of the strange infirmities of human understanding, even in its most perfect state, and when most accurate and cautious in its determinations; such a reflection would naturally inspire them with more modesty and reserve, and diminish their fond opinion of themselves, and their prejudice against antagonists.” And cf. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section XII, Part III, p. 162, where Hume argues that once we see how even our ordinary inductive beliefs (for example) are problematic, we will not be tempted into anything as ambitious as metaphysics: “While we cannot give a satisfactory reason, why we believe, after a thousand experiments, that a stone will fall, or fire burn; can we ever satisfy ourselves concerning any determination, which we may form, with regard to the origin of worlds, and the situation of nature, from, and to eternity?” This is in support of his earlier hope that “could such dogmatical reasoners [in metaphysics] become sensible of the strange infirmities of human understanding, *even in its most perfect state* [i.e. in ordinary life], *and when most accurate and cautious in its determinations*; such a reflection would naturally inspire them with more modesty and reserve, and diminish their fond opinion of themselves, and their prejudice against antagonists [in their metaphysical speculations]” (*ibid.*, p. 161, my emphasis).

36. Richard H. Popkin, “David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and his Critique of Pyrrhonism,” in V.C. Chappell (ed.), *Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 91.

37. My position is therefore different from the more standard view, defended recently by Paul Guyer, which tends to distinguish between Kant’s treatment of Humean scepticism on the one hand (in the Transcendental Analytic section of the *Critique*) and Pyrrhonian scepticism on the other (in the Transcendental Dialectic): see Paul Guyer, “Kant on Common Sense and Scepticism,” *Kantian Review*, 7 (2003), pp. 1–37. For a more detailed critique of Guyer’s view, see my “Metaphysical Dogmatism, Humean Scepticism, Kantian Critique,” *Kantian Review*, 11 (2006), pp. 102–16.

38. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B224.

39. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A765–67/B793–95.

40. *CPR* B224.

41. *CPR* A765–67/B793–95.

42. *CPR* A767–68/B795–96. Cf. also B127–28, where Kant argues that Hume’s radically empiricist treatment of concepts like causality was designed to put a break on Locke’s attempts “to obtain knowledge which far transcends all limits of experience” in a way that meant Locke “opened a wide door to *enthusiasm*—for if reason once be allowed such rights, it will no longer allow itself to be kept within bounds by vaguely defined recommendations of moderation.” In the face of this “enthusiasm,” therefore, Kant thinks that Hume “argued quite consistently [in declaring that it] is impossible . . . with these concepts and the principles to which they give rise, to pass beyond the limits of experience,” based on the premise that they are derived “from experience, namely, from a subjective necessity (that is, from *custom*), which arises from repeated association in experience, and which comes mistakenly to be regarded as objective.” However, Kant thinks that as a result Hume “gave himself over entirely to *scepticism*, having, as he believed, discovered that what had hitherto been regarded as reason was but an all-prevalent illusion infecting our faculty of knowledge.” As a result, Kant says here of his own project, “We now propose to make trial

whether it be not possible to find for human reason safe conduct between these two rocks [namely, of Lockean 'enthusiasm' and Hume an skepticism], assigning to her determinate limits, and yet keeping open for her the whole field of her appropriate activities."

43. *CPR* A757/B785.

44. Cf. also Kant, *Prolegomena Ak* 4: 262, trans. Hatfield, p. 12: "[Hume] deposited his ship on the beach (of skepticism) for safekeeping, where it could then lie and rot, whereas it is important to me to give it a pilot, who, provided with complete sea-charts and a compass, might safely navigate the ship wherever seems good to him, following sound principles of the helmsman's art drawn from a knowledge of the globe"; and *ibid. Ak* 4: 351, trans. Hatfield, p. 105: "Skepticism originally arose from metaphysics and its unpoliced dialectic. At first this scepticism wanted, solely for the benefit of the use of reason in experience, to portray everything that surpassed this use as empty and deceitful; but gradually, as it came to be noticed that it was the very same *a priori* principles which are employed in experience that, unnoticed, led further than experience reaches—and did so, it seemed, with the very same right—even the principles of experience began to be doubted [cf. Hume]. There was no trouble with this, for sound common sense will always assert its rights in this domain; there did arise, however a special confusion in science, which cannot determine how far (and why only that far and not further) reason is to be trusted, and this confusion can be remedied and all future relapses prevented only through a formal determination, derived from principles, of the boundaries for the use of our reason [cf. Kant]."

45. Cf. Kant, *CPR* A423–24/B451–52: "This method of watching, or rather provoking, a conflict of assertions, not for the purpose of deciding in favour of one or other side, but of investigating whether the object of controversy is not perhaps a deceptive appearance which each vainly strives to grasp, and in regard to which, even if there were no opposition to be overcome, neither can arrive at any result,—this procedure, I say, may be entitled the *sceptical method*. It is altogether different from *scepticism*—a principle of technical and scientific ignorance, which undermines the foundations of all knowledge, and strives in all possible ways to destroy its reliability and steadfastness." Cf. also Immanuel Kant, *Dohna-Wundlackhen Logic* (lectures from c. 1790), 24: 245; translated by J. Michael Young, in Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, p. 480: "Criticism is the middle way between dogmatism and skepticism, [as] the principle of a rightful trust in one's use of reason"; and also *The Jäsche Logic*, 24: 83–84; translated by J. Michael Young, in Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, p. 585.

46. For a helpful introduction to some of these issues, see H. O. Mounce, *Hume's Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 1999).