Critique of Pure Reason
the Dialectic

Immanuel Kant

1781

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Each four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions will be reported between square brackets in normal-sized type. This version follows (B) the second edition of the *Critique*, though it also includes the (A) first-edition version of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason. Undecorated marginal numerals refer to page-numbers in B; ones with an 'A' in front refer to A, and are given only for passages that don't also occur in B. The likes of ..356 in the margin mean that B356 (or whatever) started during the immediately preceding passage that has been omitted or only described between square brackets. These marginal numerals can help you to connect this version with other translations, with the original German, and with references in the secondary literature. Cross-references to other parts of this work include the word 'page(s)', and refer to numbers at the top-right corner of each page.—The Transcendental logic divides into the Transcendental analytic, which started on page 45, and the Transcendental dialectic, which starts here.

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Chapter 2: The antinomy of pure reason

In the introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic I showed that all the transcendental illusion of pure reason rests on dialectical inferences that can be classified on the basis of
433 the three forms of inference-of-reason, just as the categories can be classified on the basis of the four forms of judgment. [Kant now repeats his earlier claim—see page 176—that **(1)** the paralogisms are arguments starting from a premise using the subject-predicate form, **(2)** the antinomial fallacious arguments start from a premise that is hypothetical in form, and **(3)** the third (theological) fallacious arguments have a special relationship to the disjunctive form. His formulations remind us that **(1)** concerns *subjective* conditions while **(2)** concerns *objective* ones. I get into **(1)** by thinking about *myself*, into **(2)** by thinking about *the world out there*. Then:]

But there's something we should especially notice; ·it's another enormous difference between **(1)** and **(2)**·. Transcendental paralogism produced a purely one-sided illusion concerning the idea of the subject of our thought. The concepts of reason don't cause any illusion that gives the slightest support to the opposing assertion. ·i.e. to the denial of the conclusion of the paralogism, thinking especially of 'The soul is *not* simple', which would open the door to the thesis that the soul is a material thing·. So the only position that the paralogism claims to support is pneumatism [= 'the thesis that the soul is immaterial'], though of course the fiery ordeal of critical investigation makes that 'support' go up in smoke.

A completely different situation arises when reason is applied to **(2)** the *objective* synthesis of appearances. For in this domain, however hard reason may try to establish its principle of unconditioned unity (indeed making the principle seem quite plausible), it also produces lines of thought that go *against* that principle, falling into such contradictions that it has to back off from its demand for such unity in the cosmological domain.

We are confronted here by a new phenomenon of human reason—an entirely *natural* antithetic into which reason stumbles •unavoidably, •quite of its own accord, •without being led on by sophisticated arguments or enticed into traps set for the unwary. It does guard reason from the slumber 434
of a false belief such as is generated by a purely one-sided illusion ·like that of the paralogisms·; but it subjects it to the temptation either •to abandon itself to a sceptical despair or •to defend one of the two sides dogmatically and stubbornly, refusing to give the other side its day in court. Either attitude is the death of sound philosophy. . . .

Before ushering in the various forms of opposition and dissension to which this conflict or antinomy of the laws of pure reason gives rise, I offer a few remarks to explain and justify the method I'm going to adopt in dealing with this subject. I label as a 'world-concept' any transcendental idea that concerns absolute totality in the synthesis of **appearances**. I have two reasons for this: •the concept of the world-whole, though itself only an idea, rests on this unconditioned totality; and •such concepts concern only the synthesis of appearances, and thus only empirical synthesis. Accordingly, just as the paralogisms of pure reason formed the basis of a dialectical psychology, so the antinomy of pure reason will reveal the transcendental principles of a supposed pure rational cosmology [= 'theory of the whole world']. But it won't be trying to show this 'science' to be valid and to adopt it. As the title '*conflict* of reason' indicates well enough, the object of the exercise will be to display it in all its flashy but false illusoriness, as an idea that can never be reconciled with appearances. (·It's obvious that the label 'world-concept'

doesn't apply to the idea of the transcendental *I* or have any role in the paralogisms; but it also doesn't belong in the third of the three basic kinds of dialectical illusion either·. When we are dealing with absolute totality in the synthesis
435 of **the conditions of all possible things in general**, —·as we are in the third kind of illusion·—there arises an *ideal* of pure reason which, though it may indeed stand in a certain relation to the world-concept, is quite distinct from it.)

1. System of cosmological ideas

To clear the way for enumerating these ideas with systematic precision according to a principle, I need to make two points. **(1)** The only source for pure and transcendental concepts is the understanding. Reason really doesn't generate any concept. The most it can do is to free a concept of *understanding* from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, thus trying to extend it beyond the limits of the
436 empirical, though still in a certain relation to the empirical. Here's how it does this: [In reading what follows, bear in mind that Kant is concerned with such condition/conditioned relations as cause/effect, part/whole, earlier-time/later-time. So one example of the absolute **totality** of the conditions of a given conditioned would be: the set of **all** the past events that are causally related, by however long a chain, to a given present event.] For a given conditioned item, reason demands *absolute totality* on the side of the conditions that. . . .the understanding finds for all appearances, and through this demand it converts the category into a transcendental idea. How is that so? Well, the only way to make the tracking of empirical conditions extend as far as the unconditioned is by making it absolutely complete; and ·there can't be experience of any such absolute totality, which is why· the unconditioned is never to be met with in •experience, but only in •the idea. Reason makes this demand on the basis of the principle that

> •If some conditioned item x is given, then the entire sum of x's conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned, is given (because that unconditioned totality is what has made it possible for x to exist).

Two important things follow from this. **(i)** ·Because each condition/conditioned relation is an instance of one of the categories (e.g. cause/effect)·, it follows that the transcendental •ideas ·of reason· are simply •categories extended to the unconditioned. That enables us to set them out in a table arranged according to the ·four· headings of the table of the categories [see page 52]. **(ii)** Only some of the categories enter into this match-up with the ideas of reason, namely the ones that pulls things together into a *series* of conditions, each member of which is subordinated to its immediate neighbour, not co-ordinated with it. ·To understand why, you have to grasp the basic thought that if x is a conditioned item subordinated to condition y, then y in some way generates or creates x·. The absolute totality that reason demands is the totality of the

> **(a)** ascending series of conditions related to a given conditioned x,

·i.e. the series consisting of the condition y to which x is subordinated, the condition z to which y is subordinated, and so on, back *up* through the series of conditions·. Reason doesn't demand totality of the

> **(b)** descending series of consequences of an item x,

·i.e. the series consisting of something y that is subordinated to x, z that is subordinated to y, and so on *downwards*.· Nor does reason demand totality in reference to the

> **(c)** aggregate of co-ordinated conditions of at item x,

·this being a set of conditions that don't fall into either an ascending or a descending series·. Why? Because in case **(a)** when x is given, all its conditions are presupposed ·as 437

having given rise to x·, and are considered as given together with it. In case **(b)** the downward series of consequences of x don't give rise to x or make x possible, so our intellectual engagement with x doesn't require us to give any thought to that series, e.g. worrying about whether it has a last member or not; reason simply isn't interested in that. ·I'll return to **(c)** co-ordinated conditions a little later·.

[Kant illustrates **(a)** and **(b)** with the example of *time*. Here we are in *today*; this had to be reached through yesterday, which had to be reached through the day before, and so on backwards. So the entire series of ever-earlier times is 'presupposed' by our confrontation with today, and reason tells us to accompany our thoughts about today with a thought of the totality of that series of ever-earlier times. On the other hand, the existence of today doesn't presuppose tomorrow, nor does tomorrow presuppose the day after; so the series of ever-later times is not something reason challenges us to think about in its totality. Reason has an interest in the question 'Was there a first time?' but not in
..438 the question 'Will there be a last time?' Then:]

I shall use the label 'the *regressive* synthesis' for the synthesis of the ascending series from the given appearance x to its nearest condition y, then to z the nearest condition of y, and so on; and I'll label as 'the *progressive* synthesis' the series that runs in the opposite direction. . . . So there we have it: the cosmological ideas deal with the totality of the regressive synthesis, the series of antecedents, not of consequents. You might set up a 'problem of pure reason' concerning the progressive form of totality—·involving such questions as 'Will there be a last time?', 'will there ever be an effect that doesn't cause anything?·—but that would be something you *chose* to think about, not something you *had* to think about.

(1) ·AN IDEA SUPPOSEDLY RELATED TO THE CATEGORIES OF QUANTITY·

[The categories of quantity as announced on page 52—unity, plurality, totality—are irrelevant to what we are about to encounter, which is all about time and space. Kant papers over the gap by referring to time and space as 'quanta', i.e. items that permit of the notions of more and less.] In arranging the table of ideas in accordance with the table of categories, we first take the two original *quanta* of all our intuition, *time* and *space*. **Time** is in itself a series, and it is also the formal condition of all series—·i.e. the right way to think about any series x, y, z,. . . is in the form 'x and then y and then z. . . '·. With regard to any given time, e.g. the present, we can distinguish *a priori* the antecedents (the past) from the consequents (the future). So the transcendental idea of the absolute totality of the series of conditions of any given time refers only to all *earlier* 439
times; and the idea of reason requires that the whole of previous time, which is a condition of the given moment, has to be thought of as being given in its entirety along with that given moment. Now in **space**, taken in and by itself, there is no distinction between progress and regress. For as its parts are co-existent, it is an *aggregate*, not a *series*. The present moment can be regarded only as conditioned by past time, never as conditioning it, because this moment comes into existence only *through* past time, or rather through the passing of the preceding time. But as the parts of space are co-ordinated with, not subordinated to, one another, one part is not the condition of the possibility of another; so space doesn't in itself constitute a series, as time does. However, when we apprehend space we mentally •pull together the different parts of space, and •that procedure *is* successive: it occurs in time and contains a series. [Kant now offers two obscure sentences whose gist seems to be this: any region of space x can be regarded as conditioned by its limits

(without the limits it wouldn't exist), and those limits are its shared boundary with some larger region y within which x is nested; so we can think of the sequence of regions x, y, z,. . . , of which each item contains the one before it, as a *regressive* series analogous to the series of causal
..440 ancestors of a given event. He then continues:] In respect of boundary-setting, therefore, the advance in space is also a regress; so we do have here a regressive or ascending series of conditions, so that space too falls under the transcendental idea of the absolute totality of the synthesis in the series of conditions. I can as legitimately ask about the absolute totality of appearance in space as about the absolute totality of appearance in past time. Whether we can ever *answer* such questions is something we'll look into later.

(2) ·AN IDEA RELATED TO A CATEGORY OF QUALITY·

[The categories of quality are •reality, negation, and limitation; Kant fastens on a special case of the first of these, ignoring the other two.] •Reality in space, i.e. *matter*, is conditioned. Its internal conditions are its parts. ·Consider for example a brick that can be divided into 100 cubic-inch parts; the brick as a whole is an upshot of those parts, they make it possible and indeed actual·, it is *conditioned by* them. If we think of the brick first in terms of 1-inch^3 parts, then we can also think of in terms of 0.1-inch^3 parts, then 0.01-inch^3 parts, and so on down into ever smaller and more remote conditions of the brick. So there is here a regressive synthesis, a series of ever smaller and ever more remote conditions of the brick—the kind of series whose absolute totality is demanded by reason. The only way to satisfy reason's demand would be to produce a *completed* division, and that would have to be either •one that went on for ever, with no smallest member, or •one that ended in something simple, i.e. a thing having size but not having parts. (In the former case, matter would vanish into •nothing; in the latter it would vanish into •something that isn't matter any more ·because all matter *must* have parts·.) Here also, then, we have a series of conditions, and an advance to the unconditioned.

(3) ·AN IDEA RELATED TO A CATEGORY OF RELATION·

[The categories of relation are substance-property, cause-effect, and interaction ('community'). Kant here fastens on cause-effect, but first explains why the other two are not relevant to ideas of reason.] As regards the categories of real relation between appearances, the •relation of a substance to its properties doesn't have 441
the right shape for a transcendental idea to be based on it, because it doesn't offer any regressive series of conditions which reason could demand be carried to its completion. Several properties that are possessed by a single substance are co-ordinated with each other, ·are on the same level·, so they don't constitute a series. You may think 'Aren't they subordinate to the substance that has them?' The answer is No. A substance's properties or 'accidents' are *the way the substance exists*; ·it's just not the case that the substance is a condition of the properties·. [Kant goes on to say that the substance/property category might seem suitable for an idea of transcendental reason, and this would be the idea or concept of *the substantial*. That's an idea of reason all right, Kant says. It is indeed the idea or concept of *object as such*, which is involved in our thinking the transcendental subject apart from all predicates, i.e. involved in the thinking with the transcendental contentless *I* that is at work in the paralogisms. But it has no place *here*, because it doesn't involve any series of conditions which reason could demand to have completed. Then:] That holds also for substances in •interaction with one another ('community'). Among such substances there are none that are subordinate to others; so they don't form a series; so reason's demand for completeness of series of conditions gets no bite on them. There thus remains only the category

of ·one-way· •*causality*. That does present us with a series 443
442 of causes of a given effect, a series that moves upwards from the effect to its conditions, to their conditions, and so on, enabling us to answer the question of reason. [Kant really does say 'answer' (*antworten*), though one would have expected him to say only that such a series enables us to *ask* reasons's question.]

(4) ·AN IDEA RELATED TO A CATEGORY OF MODALITY·

The only way to get a series out of the categories of modality—the concepts of the possible, the actual, and the •necessary—is by fastening on •necessity, and having the following thought: Anything that exists *contingently* must always be regarded as conditioned by a condition relative to which it is •necessary; if this condition also exists contingently, then it must in turn be conditioned by (and necessary relative to) a further condition. . . and so on upwards, backwards, with reason demanding unconditioned necessity—·something whose existence is necessary in itself, not necessary relative to something else·—and that can be supplied only in the totality of the series. This requirement of a condition for everything that exists contingently is laid down by a rule of the understanding. [Kant doesn't say what rule this is. It ought to come from the so-called Postulates of Empirical Thought' (pages 123–6); but they don't yield any such result, being 'nothing but explanations of how the concepts of possibility, actuality and necessity work in their empirical employment'. Mightn't the relevant 'rule' be the second analogy, which says that all appearances are caused? No! That has already been used in the preceding paragraph; and anyway we'll see that what Kant does with this present notion of condition-that-makes-x-necessary is quite different from the regressive series of causes.]

Thus, when we pick out the categories that necessarily lead to a series in the synthesis of the manifold, we find that there are exactly four cosmological ideas, corresponding to the four trios of categories:

(1) Absolute completeness of the *Composition* of the given whole of all appearances.

(2) Absolute completeness in the *Division* of a given whole in the ·domain of· appearance.

(3) Absolute completeness in the *Origination* of an appearance.

(4) Absolute completeness as regards *Dependence* of *Existence* of the changeable [here = 'contingently existing'] in the ·domain of· appearance.

It's important to bear in mind that the idea of *absolute totality* concerns only. . . .*appearances*, not the understanding's pure concept of a totality of *things as such*. . . .

And another point: What reason is really looking for in this synthesis of conditions—a synthesis that forms a series, a backwards series—is solely the *un*conditioned. The aim 444
is to have the series of premises in such a complete form that there won't be any need for any other premises to be presupposed. This *unconditioned* is always contained in the *absolute totality of the series* as represented in imagination. But this utterly complete synthesis is only an idea, because we can't know in advance whether such a synthesis of appearances is possible. If we represent everything only through pure concepts of understanding, leaving sensible intuition out of it, we can indeed say straight off that for a given conditioned item the whole series of conditions. . . .is likewise given. The conditioned item is given only *through* the series of its conditions. But when we are dealing with appearances, we find that a special constraint enters the picture because of the fact that conditions of appearances are given through the *successive* synthesis of the manifold of intuition—a synthesis that has to be made complete by working backward along the series. Whether *this* completeness is possible in sensibility is a further problem. Reason

has the idea of this completeness, independently of whether
..445 we can connect it with any adequate empirical concepts. . . . And it pursues this completeness as a way of pursuing *the unconditioned*.

We can think about this unconditioned item in either of two ways. **(a)** We can think of it as consisting in the entire series, in which *each* member is conditioned and only the totality of them is absolutely unconditioned. This is the *infinite* regress; it has no limits, no first member; and is given in its entirety. But the regress in it is never completed—·i.e. we never complete it·—and can only be called potentially infinite. **(b)** We can think of the absolutely unconditioned item as being *in* the series—a part of it to which the other members are subordinated but which isn't itself subordinated to or conditioned by any other condition.
446 On this view, there is a first member of the series. We have labels for each of these first members:

(1t) ·ever earlier· past times—**the beginning of the world**;
(1s) ·ever larger regions of· space—**the limit of the world**;
(2) ·ever smaller· parts of a given limited whole—**the simple**;
(3) ·ever earlier· causes—absolute **self-activity** (freedom);
(4) explanations of the existence of contingent things—absolute **natural necessity**.

We have two expressions, 'world' and 'nature', which sometimes coincide. Here are their meanings:

'the world' signifies the mathematical sum-total of all appearances and the totality of their synthesis, both **(1)** moving to items that are ever larger and **(2)** moving to parts that are ever smaller; and

'nature' signifies that same world when viewed as a dynamical whole,[7] ·a whole in which things *happen*—**(3)** and **(4)**·.

[7] [Kant has a footnote here, explaining that 'nature' can be used 'adjectivally' to refer to the whole system of happenings and dependences and the laws of nature governing it, or 'substantivally' to the great big *thing* to which or in which these happenings occur and these contingent things exist.]

When we are interested in nature, we aren't concerned with the spatio-temporal size of the world or of its parts; our 447
interest is in the unity in the *existence* of appearances, ·i.e. in the connecting-up and hanging-together of all the facts about what happens and about what contingently exists·. . . .

Some pages back, I labelled the ideas we are now dealing with as 'cosmological' ideas—·i.e. *world*-ideas·—and this is a good label, for two reasons. One is that we use the word 'world' to stand for the sum of all *appearances*, and that's what these present ideas aim at—the unconditioned in the *appearances*. The other reason is that when we use the term 'world' in its transcendental sense, it refers to the absolute *totality* of all existing things, and again that's what these present ideas aim at—the *completeness* of the synthesis (even though that is reachable only in the regress through the conditions). These ideas are all transcendent, but in a special way: they don't surpass appearances by talking about noumena, but only by going too far for any possible experience to keep up with them. The mis-match between them and possible experience is a matter not of *kind* but of *degree*. So it really is all right to call them cosmical concepts, *world* concepts. . . .

2. Antithetic of pure reason

[This numbered item runs to page 225 where we'll encounter **3.**] ..448

I use the term 'antithetic' to mean 'conflict between dogmatic doctrines. . . .where neither side can establish superiority over the other'. So the antithetic ·I'm going to discuss here· doesn't concern one-sided assertions, but rather the conflict of the doctrines of reason with one another and the causes of this conflict. The transcendental antithetic is an inquiry

into the antinomy of pure reason, its causes and its upshot. If in using our reason we don't—as the principles of under-
449 standing would have us do—confine ourselves to objects of experience, but venture to extend these principles beyond the limits of experience, there arise *sophistical* doctrines that can't hope for confirmation in experience and needn't fear refutation by it. Each of these doctrines •is internally free from contradiction, and also •finds in the very nature of reason conditions of its necessity; the only trouble being that the opposite doctrine is also free from self-contradiction and ·seemingly· well supported.

The questions that naturally arise in connection with such a dialectic [see explanation on pages 45–6] of pure reason are the following: **(i)** In what propositions is pure reason unavoidably subject to an antinomy? **(ii)** What is this antinomy? **(iii)** Is there, despite this conflict, a way for reason to reach certainty? and, if so, what is it?

So a dialectical doctrine of pure reason has two features that no ·other· sophistical proposition has. •It arises out of a question that human reason *has to* encounter as it goes about its work, not one that is merely *chosen* for some special purpose. •The illusion involved in such a doctrine (and in its opposite) is not the kind of *constructed* illusion that vanishes as soon as it has been detected, but a *natural*
450 and unavoidable illusion which, even after it has stopped leading us into error, still continues to delude though not to deceive us—the illusion can be rendered harmless but it can't be eradicated.

What such a dialectical doctrine will be about is not •the unity of understanding in empirical concepts, but rather •the unity of reason in mere ideas. Since this unity of reason involves a synthesis according to rules, it must conform to the understanding; and yet as ·demanding· absolute unity of synthesis it must at the same time harmonise with reason. But the conditions of •this unity are such that when •it is adequate to reason it is too big for the understanding; and when •it's suited to the understanding it is too small for reason! So we have here a conflict that we can't avoid, try as we may.

So these sophistical assertions reveal a dialectical battlefield in which the side permitted to open the attack always wins, and the side forced onto the defensive is always defeated. It's like the situation with knights at arms who, however bad or good their cause is, can be sure of carrying off the laurels provided they arrange to be allowed to make the last attack, and don't have to withstand a new onslaught from their opponents. . . . As impartial umpires, we must ..451
set aside the question of whether the cause for which this or that contestant is fighting is good or bad; they'll have to decide *that* for themselves. . . .

This is an approach [*Methode*] in which we watch—or rather *provoke*—a conflict of assertions, not so as to decide in favour of one of the sides but ·so as to understand the conflict. Specifically·, we want to investigate whether *this* is the case:

> What they are quarrelling about is a deceptive appearance that neither side could grasp even if there were no opposition to be overcome, so that their conflict *can't* lead to any result.

We could call this the 'sceptical approach'. It is nothing like *scepticism*, which is a principle of technical and scientific ignorance that undermines the foundations of all •knowledge, and tries in every way it can to destroy •its reliability and steadfastness. The sceptical approach aims at *certainty*. It tries to discover the point of misunderstanding in disputes 452
that are sincerely and competently conducted by both sides. It's like the way in which

•wise legislators study •the perplexities that judges run into when trying cases, in order to •learn about the defects and ambiguities of their laws.

Compare that with what we can do with

•our limited wisdom: study •the antinomy that occurs in the application of laws, this being the best way to •evaluate the legislation that has given rise to them.

When reason is going about its abstract business it doesn't easily become aware of its errors; our sceptical approach enables us to alert reason to what is at issue when it decides on its principles

But it's only for transcendental philosophy that this sceptical approach is essential; although it can't be dispensed with here, it can be in every other field of enquiry. It would be absurd to adopt it in •mathematics, because *there* it's impossible for false assertions to be concealed, made invisible, because mathematical proofs must always proceed under the guidance of pure intuition, with every step along the way self-evident. In •natural science a doubt may cause the scientist to pause, and that can be useful; but in that domain there can't be any misunderstanding that isn't easily removed; and the final resolution of any dispute, whether found early or late, must come from experience.
453 •Morality can also present all its principles along with their practical upshots in concrete examples drawn from the real world or at least from possible experiences; and that enables moral studies to steer clear of the misunderstandings that can come from abstraction. But it's quite otherwise with transcendental assertions that claim to report on what is beyond the domain of all possible experiences. *Their* line of abstract thought can't be given in any *a priori* intuition (·like mathematics·), and any errors they contain can't be detected through any experience (·like natural science·). So transcendental reason can't be tested in any way except through the attempt to harmonise its various assertions, and for this we must allow a free and unhindered development of the conflicts into which they fall. Now I'll set the stage for that.

[Kant presented each 'conflict' with the Thesis material on the odd-numbered pages and the Antithesis material on the facing even numbered pages; some editions have them in facing columns on the same pages. But nothing is gained by having thesis and antithesis glaring at one another; so the present version will give the material in the order: •statement and proof of thesis, •statement and proof of antithesis, •remarks on thesis, •remarks on antithesis. The marginal numbers will be corresponding disordered.]

First antinomy

Thesis: **The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.** 454

Proof: Suppose that the world *doesn't* have a beginning in time. From this it follows that

•up to any given moment an eternity has elapsed; an infinite series of states of affairs has happened in the world, one after another.

But what it is for a series to be infinite is that it can never be completed through any one-after-another process. So it's impossible for an infinite world-series to have occurred, ·because to say that it *has* occurred is to say that it is now completed·. Therefore, the world can't exist now unless it began at some time in the past. This was the first point to be proved.

As regards the second point, once again assume the opposite:

•The world is an *infinite* given whole of coexisting things.

Now, when something isn't given in intuition as within
456 certain limits, the only way we can think about how big it is is through the synthesis of its parts, and the thought of *its size* has to come from ·the thought of· *completing* the process of going through it part by part.[8] Thus, if we are to have the thought of the world that fills all spaces—thinking of this as a whole—we must think of the successive run-through of the parts as *completed*, and that's the thought of an infinite time's having passed in the enumeration of all coexisting things. This, however, is impossible. Therefore, an infinite aggregate of actual things can't be regarded as a given *whole*; so there can't be a thought of *all of it out there, right now*. So the world's spatial extent is not infinite, but is enclosed within limits. This was the second point in dispute. [Just to make sure this is clear: The thesis-arguer argues first that •there can't be a coherent thought of a now-complete temporally past series of items, and then *infers* from this that •there can't be a coherent thought of an
455 actually now-existent infinitely large thing.]

Antithesis: **The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.**

Proof: Suppose the opposite: the world has a beginning. Now, the beginning of x is a real event preceded by a time in which x doesn't exist. So if the world began, there must have been an earlier time in which the world didn't exist, i.e. an empty time. But it isn't possible for there to be an empty time at the end of which something comes into existence. Why? Because in an empty time there's no difference at all between any moment and any other; and that means that nothing could mark off one moment as the moment for something to come into existence. . . . In the world many series of things can begin, but the world itself can't have a beginning, and is therefore infinite in respect of past time.

As regards the second point, again assume the opposite: the world is finite in spatial extent. This implies that a limited world exists surrounded by an unlimited empty space, which in turn implies that as well as things' being related ·to one another· *in* space, they will be related *to* space because the entire aggregate will be sitting there *in—surrounded by*—the empty part of space. Now, the world is an absolute whole, and there is no object of intuition outside it; so there's no 457
correlate to which the world is related; so the ·supposed· relation of the world to empty space would be a relation of it to no *object*. But such a relation is nothing; so the limitation of the world by empty space is nothing; so the world can't be limited in space; i.e. it is infinite in respect of extension.[9]

[8] [Kant attaches two footnotes to this one sentence. In one he equates •going through something part by part with •measuring it. Something whose size is 'indeterminate' can't be measured, he implies; but if it is enclosed within limits, we can still have the notion of the completeness of the part-by-part run-through, because that is supplied by the limits. The second footnote says that if something has an infinite size, there can't be an intuition that would give us the concept of *all of it*; and in this case our thought of all-of-it is simply our thought of the completed synthesis or run-through of its parts—an infinite sequence that is complete 'at least in our idea'.]

[9] Space is merely the form of outer intuition. It isn't a real object that can be outwardly intuited. What about *absolute* space—i.e. space thought of independently of all the things that occupy it and thus give it a detailed character? That's ·not a *thing*; it's· nothing but the mere *possibility* of outer appearances. . . . So empirical intuition is not a composite of •appearances and •space,. . . . with these being two things that are correlated in a synthesis. The connection between them is really just that space is the *form of* the intuitions that underlie appearances. If we try to set the two side by side—•space side by side with •all appearances—we'll create sorts of empty 'facts' that *couldn't* be registered in any perception. For example, the 'fact' about whether the world as a whole is moving through empty space, and, if it is, how fast.

Comment on the first antinomy

458 **On the thesis:** In stating these conflicting arguments I haven't tried to play tricks, constructing a 'lawyer's proof', as they call it. That's what you have when an advocate tries to take advantage of his opponent's carelessness—letting him appeal to a misunderstood law so as later to score points by pointing out the misunderstanding. Each of the above proofs arises naturally out of the subject-matter, and neither side has taken advantage of any openings provided by errors of the dogmatists on the other side.

I could have made a pretence of establishing the thesis in the usual manner of the dogmatists, by starting from a defective concept of what it is for a magnitude to be infinite:

> A magnitude x is infinite if it contains so many units that there can't possibly be one that is greater, i.e. contains more units than x does. But however many there are of something, it's always possible to *add one*. So there can't be an infinite given magnitude; and it's therefore impossible for there to be a world that has lasted infinitely long or is infinitely large; so the world must be limited in both respects.

I could have argued like that; but that argument uses a concept of *infinitude* that doesn't fit what we actually mean by 'an infinite whole'. It doesn't represent *how great* x is, so it isn't the concept of a *maximum*. When we use that concept—
460 ·the one used in the indented argument above·— our thought about x is merely that •how many units x contains is •greater than any number. This involves *choosing* the kind of unit one wants to use—·the smaller the unit, the more of them x contains·—with the result that, according to this defective concept of infinity, the infinity that x involves is larger or smaller, depending on whether the chosen units are small or big. ·That is absurd, of course, because x's size isn't really altered by our choosing different units·. . . .

The true transcendental concept of infinitude is this: the magnitude of x is infinite if the process of going through the units x contains, one by one, can never be •completed.[10]

So it follows with complete certainty that an eternity of actual successive states leading up to a given moment can't have elapsed, because if it *had* elapsed that would be a •completed infinity. So the world must have a beginning.

In the second, ·spatial·, part of the thesis, we don't have the problem of a completed infinite series, because the parts of an infinitely large world wouldn't form a series—they would exist *together*. But consider how we have the thought of an infinitely large world. It can't be a thought about something that is or could be given in intuition, ·e.g. about how it would *look* if seen from such-and-such a distance·. The only way to think about it is in terms of the process of going through its parts, one by one. But in the case of something infinite we can't do that—we can't *complete* doing it. So it's impossible that the world should be infinite in size. . . .

On the antithesis: The proof of the infinitude of the 459
given •world-series and of the •world-whole—·i.e. the world's infinite •age and infinite •size·—rests on the fact that the only alternative is for the world to be bounded by empty time and empty space. I'm aware that attempts have been made to dodge this conclusion by arguing the world could have a limit in time and in space without there being absolute ·empty· time before the beginning of the world, or absolute ·empty· space extending beyond the real world—both of which are impossible. I entirely agree with the philosophers of the Leibnizian school that empty time and empty space outside the world are impossible. Space is merely the *form*

[10] So the answer to 'How many units does this quantum contain?' is 'More than any number'—which is the mathematical concept of the infinite.

of outer intuition; it's not a real object that can be outwardly intuited; it's not a thing that is related in a certain way to appearances, but the *form of* the appearances. Everything we can say about space is an upshot of things we can say about appearances in space. No facts about the size or shape of appearances are facts about how appearances relate to a self-subsistent space. . . . Thus, appearances can't be limited *by an empty space* outside them, though space, whether
461 full or empty,[11] can be limited by appearances. All this applies equally to time. But it can't be denied that these two nothings, empty space outside the world and empty time before the world, have to be assumed if we are to assume a limit to the world in space and in time.

There's a line of thought that professes to show that the world could have limits in time and space without its duration and size being fixed by an infinite void ·by which it is preceded or surrounded·. But that line of thought consists in quietly switching

—from the •sensible world ·that we have been talking about· to who-knows-what •intelligible world,

—from •the first beginning (an existence preceded by a time of non-existence) to •an existence in general that doesn't presuppose any other condition in the world,

—from •limits of extension to •boundaries of the world-whole

thus getting time and space out of the way. But our topic has been the phenomenal or sensible world and its magnitude; if we set aside those conditions of sensibility, ·i.e. time and space·, we'll destroying the very being of that world. The intelligible world is merely the general concept of *world*, abstracted from all conditions of its intuition; and just because of that abstraction we can't possibly say anything synthetic, whether affirmative or negative, about it.

[11] What about *empty space* that is *limited by appearances*? That is, what about empty space *within the world*? That doesn't contradict transcendental principles; so far as *they* are concerned, we can allow it; though I am not asserting that it is outright actually *possible*.

Second antinomy

Thesis: **Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing exists anywhere except the simple or what is composed of the simple.** 462

Proof: Let's assume the opposite: Composite substances are *not* made up of simple parts. Now, take some substance x and set aside in your thought all the composition that is involved in x—·i.e. think about it as raw material, filtering out all the facts about how bits of it are put together·. What will be left for you to think about? No composite parts, of course; but x is supposed not to have simple parts, so you aren't left with them either; so you are left with *nothing*—no substance at all. So either **(i)** it's impossible to remove in thought all composition, or **(ii)** after its removal something remains that exists without composition, i.e. ·something that has no parts·, something simple. Well now, when small substances are assembled so as to be parts of a big substance x, it's just a contingent fact that they are inter-related in this way; they could have been arranged differently or just scattered; and this means that the composition that x involves *can* be set aside in thought. It follows that if **(i)** is true, x isn't composed of substances; that ·implies that x is itself not a substance, which· contradicts our stipulation ·that it is a composite 464
substance·. All that remains is **(ii)** the original supposition, namely that a composite of substances in the world is made up of simple parts.

From this it follows immediately that •*all* the things in the world are simple beings; that •composition is merely a fact about how they are related to one another; and that

•although we can't ever isolate these elementary substances so as to take them out of this state of composition, reason must *think* them as the primary subjects of all composition, and therefore as simple beings that exist prior to all
463 composition.

Antithesis: **No composite thing in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing exists anywhere that is intrinsically simple.**

Proof: Assume the opposite: a composite thing (as substance) is made up of simple parts. Now, all external relations amongst things, and therefore all putting together of substances to make composite substances, are possible only in space; so any composite substance x must occupy a ·region of· space that has as many parts as x has. . . . Every part of a composite substance must therefore occupy a space. But ·we're supposing that· the absolutely basic parts of every composite substance are simple, which implies that a simple thing can occupy a space. Now, any real thing that occupies a space is made up of a manifold of constituents side by side, which means that it is composite. And any real composite is made up of constituent substances (it couldn't be made up of properties, because *they* can't exist side by side without being in substances); so the line of thought we are exploring here implies that the world is made up of •simple things, each of which is a •composite of substances—which is self-contradictory.

The second proposition of the antithesis, that nowhere in the world does there exist anything simple, is intended to
465 mean only this:

> The existence of something utterly simple can't be established by any experience or perception, either outer or inner; so that the utterly simple is therefore a mere idea. No experience *could* show that anything in the objective world matches this idea; and because the idea has no object, it can't be used in any explanation of appearances.

Why can't it have an object? Well, to have an object for this transcendental idea we would need to have an empirical intuition of the object that we *know* doesn't contain any complex of elements external to one another and combining to make a single composite object. Of course we can have an intuition of something in which we aren't aware of any complexity, but that doesn't prove that no intuition of this object *could* reveal it to be complex—and that's what would be the case if the object were simple. So absolute simplicity of an object can't be inferred from any perception whatsoever; an utterly simple object can never be given in any possible experience. And since we have to regard the world of sense as the sum of all possible experiences, it follows that nothing simple is to be found anywhere in it.

This second part of the antithesis goes much further than the first part. [Kant's account of why this is so is obscure and puzzling; it seems not to matter for the rest of the work.]

Comment on the second antinomy

On the thesis: When I speak of a whole as necessarily 466
made up of simple parts, I'm referring only to a *substantial* whole, which is only item that can be 'composite' in the strict sense of the word; that is, I'm talking about items that can exist (or at least be thought of) *separately*, and that happen to be brought together and inter-connected in such a way as to constitute a single thing. Space is not 'composite' in that sense, because its parts can't exist or be thought of separately from the whole; it's the whole that makes the parts possible, not vice versa. . . . Since space isn't a composite made up of substances,. . . .if I remove all compositeness from it there's nothing left (not even *points*, because a point

is possible only as the limit of a space, and so of a composite).
468 So space and time don't consist of simple parts. And the *states* of a substance aren't composed of simple parts; and this is true even of a state that has a magnitude. An example is *alteration*. It has a magnitude, because there are big alterations and small ones; but a big alteration doesn't come about through the piling up of many *simple* alterations! The inference that is drawn here from the composite to the simple applies only to things that can exist independently ·of any other things·, and that rules out states and properties of things ·and also events and regions of space·. If you apply the inference to everything that could be in any way called 'composite'—and people have often done just that—it's easy to make the thesis of this antinomy look silly by coming up with things that are irrelevantly 'composite' yet not composed of simple parts.

In the thesis I am trying to prove the ·existence of· simple substances only as elements in things that are composite, so I could call the thesis 'transcendental atomism'. But for many years the word 'atomism' has been tied to a particular way of explaining bodily appearances, a process that avails itself of empirical concepts; so perhaps a better label for the thesis would be—·borrowing from Leibniz·—'the dialectical principle of *monadology*'. ·But that's not very accurate either,
470 because· the word 'monad', used in Leibniz's way, refers only to •something that is *immediately* given as a simple substance (e.g. ·the *I*· in self-consciousness), not to •an element of composite things; and the thesis of the second
467 antinomy is concerned only with the latter.

On the antithesis: The proof of the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter is purely mathematical; and the monadists have objected to it on grounds that lay *them* open to suspicion. Given a really evident mathematical proof, they won't acknowledge that

> •the proof is based on insight into the constitution of space, i.e. the constitution of something that is the formal condition of the possibility of all matter.

They maintain instead that

> •the proof merely draws out the consequences of abstract concepts that we have chosen to construct, and so it doesn't apply to real things.

How could we possibly invent a kind of intuition other than the one that is given in the basic intuition of space? As for the properties we can attribute *a priori* to space: how *could* they fail to be properties also of things that are possible only because they occupy this space? If we listened to the monadists, we would have to suppose that there are •real-world points which are simple = partless and yet have the special privilege of being able to fill space just by being lumped together. (That's because they would be *parts* of space. Don't confuse them with •mathematical points; *they* are simple too, but they don't fill space, because they aren't *parts of* space but merely *limits in* it—·a point is merely the *end* of a line, not a *part* of it·). . . . ·In this work of the monadists·, philosophy is playing tricks with mathematics, and it does this because it forgets that the topic here is 469
appearances and the condition that makes them possible. Of course given the understanding's pure **concept of the composite**, we can form the **concept of the simple**, but that isn't what's needed here. For the monadists to be right, we'd have to find an **intuition of the simple** to go with the **intuition of the composite** (i.e. of matter). But the laws of sensibility rule out any intuition of the simple, so it's impossible to find anything simple in objects of the senses. The abstract thesis that

> •anything composite made up of substances presupposes simples that make it up

is true when we are talking about *concepts* of composite

and simple; but it is not true when applied to *phenomenal* composites—ones given through empirical intuition in space. That's because anything given through empirical intuition in space *must* have the characteristic that no part of it is simple, because no part of space is simple. The monadists were smart enough to look for an escape from this difficulty: instead of •taking space to be a condition of the possibility of the objects of outer intuition (bodies), they •took bodies and the causal relations among substances to be a condition of the possibility of space. But ·that's putting things backwards·. The only concept we have of bodies is *as appearances*, so they must presuppose space, which is a condition of the possibility of all outer appearance. So this escape-hatch is blocked, as I showed well enough in the Transcendental Aesthetic. The monadists' argument would
471 of course be valid if bodies were things in themselves.

[Kant now has a longish paragraph that is really a comment on the thesis. It says that the thesis of the second antinomy is unique among the 'sophistical assertions' in claiming to have empirical evidence for its truth. He is referring to the mistaken view that for me to be aware of the *I* of self-consciousness is for me to be empirically confronted with a certain object, myself, as simple. This has already been amply refuted in the discussion of the paralogisms, Kant says, but he whips quickly through the refutation again here.]

Third antinomy

472 Thesis: **It's not the case that absolutely all the appearances of the world •can be derived from causality according to laws of nature and •can't be derived from anything else. To explain these appearances we have to assume that there is another causality, that of freedom.**

Proof: Assume the opposite: There is no causality except the causality governed by laws of nature. This implies that everything that *happens* presupposes a preceding state of affairs from which it inevitably follows, according to a rule. But the state of affairs x from which y arose must itself be something that has happened (i.e. has come to exist having previously not done so), because if x had always existed then y would always have existed also, rather than having just *happened*. That's how it goes with causality according to the law of nature—events are caused by earlier events which are caused by still earlier events. . . and so on. Therefore, if everything that happens does so in accordance with laws of nature, there will. . . .never be a first beginning, so 474
there'll be no completion of the backward-running sequence of causes ·of any given event·. But the law of nature is just this, that nothing happens without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*. The proposition that no causality is possible except in accordance with natural laws is therefore self-contradictory; so this can't be regarded as the only kind of causality. [Two points about this paragraph: •A certain phrase of Kant's has been translated as 'a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*' in every previous translation. This version follows suit, with no firm sense of what the phrase means. •In its switches between 'laws' and 'the law', this paragraph exactly tracks Kant.]

So we have to assume a causality through which something y happens without its cause x having arisen from a still earlier event z through necessary laws. In other words, we have to assume that an event can be a self-starter, occurring *absolutely spontaneously*, thereby *starting* a series of appearances that carries on from there in accordance with laws of nature. This ·second kind of causality· is *transcendental freedom*. Without it, the series of appearances on the side of the causes is never complete, however thoroughly we explore the source of nature. 473

Antithesis: **There is no freedom; everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature. Proof:** Assume the opposite: There is 'freedom' in the transcendental sense, as a special kind of causality in accordance with which the events in the world can have happened. This causality would be a power of *beginning* •a state of affairs and, therefore, also •the whole series of all its consequences. ·Don't underestimate the strength of what is being said here·: the series of events will have had its real beginning in this spontaneity, and the spontaneous event x that kicked off the series won't itself have arisen from *any* previous event or state of affairs. There will have *been* an immediately preceding state of affairs, but x won't have been caused by it. So transcendental freedom stands opposed to the law
475 of causality; and what it it assumes about how successive states of affairs are (dis)connected makes a *unified* experience impossible. So this freedom can't be met with in any experience, and it is therefore an empty thought-entity.

So when we are trying to find the pattern and order in the world's events, we have nowhere to look but *nature*—·not freedom·. 'Freedom from—independence of—the laws of nature is a liberation from •constraint!' Well, yes, but it's also a 'liberation' from the •guidance of all rules. 'But *the laws of freedom* enter into the causality exhibited in the course of nature, and so take the place of natural laws.' No! If freedom were governed by laws, it wouldn't be *freedom* but simply *nature* under another name. •Nature differs from •transcendental freedom as •law-governedness differs from •lawlessness. Nature **(i)** imposes on the understanding the demanding task of always looking for the sources of events further and further back in the series of causes, with every item in the series being causally conditioned ·by something still earlier·. But it compensates for that by **(ii)** promising us a thoroughgoing law-governed unity of experience. The illusion of freedom, on the other hand, offers to remove the **(i)** burdensome task imposed by nature, by giving to the understanding a point of rest in its climb up the chain of causes, taking it to an unconditioned causality that is a self-starter; but it undercuts the **(ii)** promise of intellectual unity by offering us a *blind* causality that breaks the guiding thread of rules that we need if our experience is to be thoroughly coherent.

Comment on the third antinomy

On the thesis: The transcendental idea of freedom is just 476
one part of the psychological concept of freedom, which is mainly empirical. It's the part that concerns absolute spontaneity considered as something that an action must have if it's to be properly imputed to the agent—·i.e. if the person who acted is rightly to be held responsible for the action, perhaps blamed or praised for it·. When speculative [see note on page 168] reason has tackled the question of the freedom of the will, what has always so greatly embarrassed it is the merely •transcendental question: Must we admit a power of *spontaneously* beginning a series of successive things or states of affairs? We needn't concern ourselves with the question:

> **(i)** *How* is such a power ·of spontaneous action· possible?

Just as we don't trouble ourselves the question

> **(ii)** *How* is causality in accordance with the laws of nature possible?

We have to settle for the *a priori* knowledge that this latter type of causality must be presupposed; we haven't the least notion of **(ii)** what could make it possible for the existence of one item to bring about the existence of a different one; in this territory reason must be guided by experience alone.

·And the claim made by the thesis is limited in another way as well·. We have established the thesis that

> •a series of appearances must have a first beginning involving freedom

only as something that's required for it to be conceivable that the world *began*; for all the •states of affairs and events
478 after that beginning, all we need are purely natural laws. Still, now that the power of spontaneously beginning a series in time has been proved (though not understood!), it's now permissible for us •to allow causal chains *within* the history of the world to be capable of beginning spontaneously, and so •to attribute to their substances—·i.e. the substances involved in the initiating event·—a power of acting from freedom. Don't be scared off from this conclusion by the thought:

> A chain of events occurring within the world's history can have only a *relatively* first beginning, because every such chain is preceded in the world by some other states of affairs, which implies that no *absolute* first beginning of a series is possible during the course of the world.

This is a misunderstanding: what I'm talking about here is a beginning not in •time but in •causality. Suppose for example that I get up from my chair right now, doing this completely freely, without being *made* to do it by the influence of natural causes; this event will be the utterly first beginning of a new *causal* chain of events—the infinite series of all its natural consequences—although as regards *time* my getting up from my chair is only the continuation of a preceding series. . . .

Reason's insistence that we assign to the series of natural causes a *beginning* due to freedom is clearly on display when we observe that all the ancient philosophers except the Epicureans saw themselves as obliged, when explaining the movements of things in the world, to assume a *prime mover*, i.e. a freely acting cause that spontaneously *began* this series of events. They didn't try to make the world's beginning conceivable through mere nature.

On the antithesis: Someone defending the omnipotence of 477
nature against the sophistical arguments offered in support of the opposing doctrine of freedom would argue as follows. [The argument runs to the end of this so-called 'Comment on the antithesis'. The thesis presented an •argument for a •conclusion; the 'Proof of the antithesis' criticised the •conclusion, and the 'Comment on the antithesis' is now going to criticise the •argument.] *If you don't admit anything as being. . . .temporally first in the world, there's no need for you to look for something that is causally first.* What you have done is to think up an utterly first state of the world, and therefore an absolute start of the ever flowing series of appearances, thus providing a resting-place for your imagination by setting bounds to limitless nature—*who told you that* ***that*** *was all right*? The substances in the world have always existed (or anyway the unity of experience requires us to suppose that they have); so there's nothing problematic about assuming that the causal chains into which they enter have also always existed, so we should call off the search for a first beginning, whether temporal or causal. It's true that we have no grasp of what could make it possible for there to be such an infinite ancestry for a given event—a causal chain with no initiating member. But if you treat that as a reason for refusing to recognise this enigma in nature (·the real causal chain that never began·), you're going to be obliged reject many fundamental properties and forces that are equally impossible to grasp intellectually. You'll even 479
have to deny the possibility of anything's *happening*! If your experience didn't assure you that things undergo alterations, you wouldn't be able to think up *a priori* the possibility of such a ceaseless sequence of being and not-being.

And even if we *did* allow a transcendental power of freedom, so as to have a beginning of events in the world, this power would have to be outside the world. . . . But it could never be right to ascribe to substances in the world itself a power that is outside the world; because that would virtually abolish the patterns among appearances, patterns created by the way appearances are causally inter-related according to universal laws; and our name for them is 'nature'. In losing nature we would also lose the criterion of empirical truth, through which experience is distinguished from dreaming. We could hardly make any sense of a 'nature' that existed side by side with such a lawless faculty of freedom ·acting on the world from outside the world·. Freedom would keep interfering with the laws of nature, reducing the world of appearances to disorder and incoherence.

Fourth antinomy

480 Thesis: **There belongs to the world, either as a part of it or as its cause, a being that is utterly necessary.**

Proof: The sensible world, as the sum-total of all appearances, contains a series of alterations. (Why? Because without such a series we wouldn't be presented with a time-line, and there has to be such a time-line if the sensible world is to be possible.[12]

And every alteration is subject to its condition—a condition of its existence—which precedes it in time and makes it necessary. Now, every given conditioned item x presupposes a complete series of conditions running up to something *un*conditioned, and *that*'s the only thing that is utterly necessary. So we have to accept the existence of something absolutely necessary, because the consequences of such a thing—namely alterations—certainly exist. And *this necessarily existent item belongs to the sensible world*. If it didn't, that would mean that the series of alterations in the world would derive its beginning from a necessary cause that that didn't itself belong to the sensible world; 482
and that is impossible. Here is why: A series in time can only be made to begin by something that precedes it *in time*, so the item we are talking about—the top condition of the beginning of a series of changes—must have existed at a time when series didn't yet exist (because a •beginning of x is an •existence preceded by a time in which x didn't yet exist). So the. . . .necessary cause of ·all· alterations must belong to time, and—because time is possible only as the form of appearances—the necessary cause can only be conceived as belonging to the world of sense. Therefore: something utterly necessary is contained in the world—either as •the ·initial· part of the series of alterations in the world or as •the series.

Antithesis: **There is no unqualifiedly necessary being anywhere (i) in the world, or (ii) outside the world as the world's cause.** 481

Proof: Suppose the opposite of **(i)**: Either **(1a)** the world itself is necessary, or **(1b)** a necessary being exists in the world. Then there are two alternatives. Either

> **(1b)** the series of alterations started with something that is unqualifiedly necessary, and therefore without a cause; or
>
> **(1a)** the series itself has no first member; every item in it is conditioned ·by earlier members· and is contingent; but the series as a whole is unqualifiedly necessary and unconditioned.

[The point of '*unqualifiedly* necessary' is to exclude from the discussion items that are merely necessary-relative-to-cause-x.] But **(1a)** con-

[12] Objectively speaking, time comes before alterations; but subjectively—in actual consciousness—·it's the other way around, because· the representation of time, like every other representation, is given only *through* the prompting of perceptions.

flicts with the dynamical law of the determination of all appearances in time; and **(1b)** contradicts itself, because no set of things can exist necessarily if no single member of it is necessary.

Then suppose the opposite of **(2)**: An utterly necessary cause of the world exists outside the world. In that case this
483 cause, as the highest member in the series of the causes of alterations in the world, must begin$_2$ that series of causes. But this cause must itself begin$_1$ to act,[13] so its causality must be in time, and must therefore belong to the totality of appearances, i.e. to the world—which contradicts the hypothesis that it is 'outside the world'. Therefore neither **(i)** in the world nor **(ii)** outside the world (though in causal connection with it) does there exist any unqualifiedly necessary being.

Comment on the fourth antinomy

484 **On the thesis:** In proving the existence of a necessary being I ought not, in this connection, to use any but the *cosmological* argument, i.e. the one that ascends from conditioned items in the domain of appearance to something unconditioned. . . .that is regarded as the necessary condition of the absolute totality of the series. [Kant adds a sentence here explaining that he is setting aside the so-called 'ontological proof' of the existence of a supreme being, which he will discuss separately [starting on page 272].]

The pure cosmological proof's way of demonstrating the existence of a necessary being has to leave unanswered the question of whether this being is the world itself or something distinct from the world. To show that it is distinct from the world we need premises that aren't cosmological and don't simply move up the series of appearances. That's because we would have to use •the general concept of *contingent beings* (viewed as objects of the understanding alone) and •a principle enabling us to connect this conceptually with ·the concept of· a necessary being. But all that ·takes us outside cosmology; it· belongs to a *transcendent* philosophy, which I'm not yet in a position to discuss.

If we start our proof cosmologically, basing it on appearances that form a series according to empirical laws of causality, we mustn't then suddenly **switch** from this mode of argument by bringing in something that isn't a member of the series. If we are working our way back from 486
some item to its condition, from that to *its* condition, and so on backwards up the series, this involves a condition-to-conditioned relation that we have to stick with the whole way up; if there is a *highest condition* it must have that status by entering into the very same condition-to-conditioned relation that we have been using all the way up to this highest one. If the relation in question is a sensible one that falls within the domain of the possible empirical use of understanding, then *every* member of the series must ·belong in that domain, and so· be temporal, and that includes the highest condition or cause, the one that brings the regress to a close. That's why the necessary being must be regarded as the highest member of the cosmical series, ·i.e. as belonging to the world·.

Yet certain thinkers have allowed themselves to make that **switch**. They have started out quite correctly: from the alterations in the world they have inferred that the alterations are empirically contingent, i.e. depend on empirically determining causes, and so have obtained an ascending series of empirical conditions. [Kant's own sentence •contains that odd bit about inferring the contingency of the alterations *from the alterations*, and •uses *empirisch* three times.] But because they couldn't find

[13] There are two ways of using 'begin'—the transitive or dyadic use ('x begins$_2$ y') and the non-transitive or monadic use ('x begins$_1$'). The inference in this paragraph draws a conclusion involving begin$_1$ from a premise using begin$_2$.

in such a series any first beginning, any highest member, they abruptly dropped the empirical concept of contingency and grabbed the pure category ·of contingency· instead; and this involved them in a strictly *intelligible* series—·one that is to be handled purely in terms of concepts and intellect rather than one involving the senses·—a series that could be completed only by the existence of an unqualifiedly necessary cause. And since this cause wasn't tied down to any sensible conditions, it didn't have to be in time, and so its causality didn't have to be thought of as *beginning*. But such a procedure is entirely illegitimate, and I shall now show why.

Taking contingency as a category—·a pure concept of the intellect·—something is called 'contingent' because its contradictory is possible. Now, something's being 'contingent' in this intellect-linked sense doesn't entail that it is empirically contingent. When something is altered, it comes to be at
488 time T_2 in a state S_2 that is the opposite of a state S_1 that was actual and therefore possible at an earlier time T_1. But S_2 is not the contradictory opposite of S_1. The thought of a contradictory opposite of S_2 is the thought of S_1's existing at T_2 instead of S_2's existing then. And the possibility of *that* doesn't follow from the fact that an alteration has occurred (i.e. the fact that something that *is* in state S_2 *was* in state S_1. ·Let's take a simple example·. We have the premise that

(i) A body x that was moving at T_1 comes to rest at T_2;

and we are interested in reaching the conclusion that

(iii) x's being at rest at T_2 is contingent,

which is equivalent to the proposition that

(iv) the contradictory opposite of x's being at rest at T_2 is possible.

But we can't infer **(iv)** from **(i)**. To get to **(iv)** we need the premise that

(ii) x *could have been* moving at T_2 rather than being at rest,

·which doesn't follow from the fact that x first moved and then stopped·. . . . The upshot is that the fact of *alterations* doesn't imply that any of the states that things are in at given times are contingent or possible in the categorial sense; so we don't have anything here that can carry us to the existence of a being that is 'necessary' , with this similarly conceived in purely intelligible terms. Alteration proves only empirical contingency; i.e. that the new state couldn't have existed ·at that time· if its preceding cause hadn't occurred, that being what the law of causality implies. A cause that is reached by moving up the series from conditioned item to their conditioning causes of it—call it unqualifiedly necessary if you like—will be met with *in time* and will belong to the series of appearances.

On the antithesis: We run into trouble when we try to 485
assert the existence of an unqualifiedly necessary highest cause that we could encounter when ascending the series of appearances. The trouble doesn't arise out of the mere concept of *thing that exists necessarily*; it involves the causal connectedness of a series of appearances for which a condition has to be assumed that is itself unconditioned; so the trouble has to be •cosmological, relating to empirical laws, and not •ontological [here = 'relating to abstract logic']. We are bound to discover that the ascending series of causes in the sensible world can never come to an end with an *empirically unconditioned* condition—·a real-world cause that has no cause·—and that will show us that there's no valid cosmological argument from •the contingency of states of the world, as shown by the alterations they undergo, to •the existence of a first cause that is the utterly basic cause of the series. 487

This antinomy presents a peculiar face-off: The thesis infers the existence of a primordial being [see note on page 173] from a certain premise, and from *that same premise* the antithesis infers the non-existence of a primordial being, this

derivation being as valid as the other! The thesis told us that *a necessary being exists* because

> •the whole of past time includes the series of all conditions, and therefore also includes the unconditioned (i.e. the necessary);

while now the antithesis assures us that *there is no necessary being* because

> •the whole of past time includes the series of all conditions (and just because they are conditions they must *all* be conditioned).

This happens because the two arguments focus on different aspects of •the series of conditions of which each is determined by another in time. The thesis argument focuses exclusively on *the absolute totality* of •that series, and this leads it to something that is unconditioned and necessary ·because without that the series goes back for ever, so that there's no absolute totality of all its members·. The antithesis argument, on the other hand, focuses on the *contingency* of everything in •the series. . . .and from this
489 point of view everything unconditioned and all absolute necessity completely vanish. [The next sentence contains the phrase *gemeinen Menschenvernunft*, which could be mechanically translated as 'common human reason', but actually means 'ordinary common-sense'. In using it, Kant may have been influenced by the fact that the phrase does contain *Vernunft* = 'reason'. In the next few pages 'common-sense' will often translate *gemeine Verstand*, which mechanically translates into 'common understanding'.] Yet each argument is entirely in line with ordinary common-sense, which often conflicts with itself through considering its object from two different points of view. Two famous astronomers got into a fight that arose from their choosing different points of view ·from which to see the same set of empirical facts·. One argued that the *moon revolves on its own axis*, because it always turns the same side towards the earth. The other drew the opposite conclusion that *the moon does not revolve on its own axis*, because it always turns the same side towards the earth! Both inferences were correct, according to the point of view that each chose in observing the moon's motion. M. de Mairan regarded this situation as so remarkable that he wrote a book about it. [We are now at the end of the switching back and forth between odd- and even-numbered pages.]

3. What's at stake for reason in these conflicts

[The above number picks up from **2.** on page 211.] So there it is—the 490
whole dialectical play of cosmological ideas! No possible experience could present an object that was congruent with those ideas; and indeed reason can't even *think* them in a way that harmonises them with the universal laws of nature. But they aren't ideas that we have simply *chosen* to think up. Our reason is *necessarily* led to them when, in the continuous advance of empirical synthesis, it tries to grasp in its unconditioned totality something that (according to the rules of experience) has to come out as *conditioned*. These sophistical assertions—·i.e. the theses of the four antinomies·—are just attempts to solve four natural and unavoidable problems of reason. [Kant's indigestible statement of *why* there are precisely four of them is omitted here. It's presumably meant to be equivalent to the explanation he has already given us.]

In presenting reason's pretensions when it tries to extend its domain beyond all limits of experience, I have hidden their *glitter*. Their full splendour is on show only when they're connected with empirical matters, and I have kept that connection out of sight: I have presented only the *basis* for their legal claims, doing this in dry formulas that have 491
(as befits a transcendental philosophy) been divested of all empirical content. But when the progressive extension of the

use of reason is connected with empirical matters—starting with the domain of our experiences and steadily soaring to these lofty ideas—philosophy displays a dignity which, if only it could *keep it up*, would make it much more valuable than any other branch of human knowledge. Why? Because ·in that role· philosophy promises a foundation for our highest expectations and prospects concerning those ultimate ends onto which all reason's efforts must ultimately converge. Look at the questions it promises to answer!

- •Does the world have a beginning ·in time· and a limit to its extension in space?
- •Is there anywhere, perhaps in my thinking self, something indivisible and indestructibly *one*? or are there only things that are divisible and transitory?
- •Am I free in my actions? or am I, like other beings, led by the hand of nature and of fate?
- •Is there a supreme cause of the world? or must our thoughts be limited to the things of nature and their order?

For answers to *these* questions any mathematician would gladly trade in the whole of his science! That's because mathematics can't yield satisfaction concerning those highest
492 ends that humanity cares most about. (Actually, mathematics—yes, even mathematics, that pride of human reason—gets its great value from allowing and encouraging a use of reason that extends beyond all experience! ·But its way of doing this doesn't create troubles·. What mathematics does is to guide reason to knowledge of nature •in its order and regularity. . . .and •in the astonishing unity of its active forces, bringing reason to a level of insight far beyond anything that could be expected from a science based on ordinary experience. And in doing this it also provides natural science with excellent materials for supporting its investigations—so far as their character permits—by suitable intuitions.)

Unfortunately for theory-building, though perhaps fortunately for humanity's practical concerns, reason in the midst of its highest expectations finds itself in trouble. It is so compromised by the conflict of opposing arguments that it's not safe—and isn't honourable—for it to withdraw from the quarrel, seeing it as a mere mock fight in which it doesn't have to get involved; and it's even less in a position to cry *Peace!*, because it has a stake in the matters in dispute. All reason can do, then, is to look into the *origin* of this conflict in which it is divided against itself, to see whether this has arisen from a mere misunderstanding. If that turned 493
out to be the case, both sides in the dispute might have to give up their grandiose claims, but a lasting and peaceful reign of reason over understanding and the senses would be inaugurated.

Before getting into that thorough investigation, let's consider this: if we had to choose one side or the other, which side would we prefer to take? Because we'll be approaching this question in terms of •our own interests rather than •the logical criterion of truth, we won't reach a decision about which side is *right*; but our enquiry will do some good: it will give us a grasp of what has led the participants in this quarrel to choose the side they have chosen, given that it wasn't any superior insight into the matter under dispute. It will also explain such facts as that one side in each conflict is upheld with passionate zeal, the other with calm assurance; and the fact that people in general warmly welcome one side and are dead set against the other.

To carry out this preliminary enquiry as thoroughly as it deserves, we need first to compare the principles from which the two sides start out. [The comparison turns out to be quite straightforward, but Kant's compact presentation of it is worth spreading out a bit, as it is here. **(i)** Each antithesis is wholly governed by *empiricism*, which gives uniformity to

the manner of thinking, creating a **simple and unmixed** approach to the topic. The antithesis has empiricism at work **(1a)** in explaining appearances within the world, and it stays with empiricism **(1b)** when wrestling with the transcendental ideas of the world-itself-as-a-totality. **(2)** In the assertions and arguments on the thesis side, two elements are at work: •empiricism is accepted as suitable for **(2a)** explanations of items in the series of appearances, but when the defender of the thesis comes to **(2b)** the problems created by reason's demand for *totality*, it switches off empiricism and becomes tolerant of the notion of 'intelligible' limits, i.e. ones that are to grasped purely through abstract thought. So the driving force of the thesis side is a **complex mixture**, unlike the simple unmixed empiricism on the antithesis side. But Kant says he will label the thesis side as involving 'the *dogmatism* of pure reason', thus picking on the non-empiricist element in it, the tolerance of intelligible beginnings, because that is the essential and distinguishing characteristic of the thesis side, the part that it doesn't share with the antithesis side.

..494 Kant now proceeds:]

In dealing with the cosmological ideas, we find these three things on the side of *dogmatism*, i.e. of the thesis:

·PAY-OFFS FOR DOGMATISM·

(i) First, a certain *practical interest* that every right-thinking man endorses if he knows what is truly good for him. That •the world has a beginning, that •my thinking self is simple and therefore indestructible, that •in its voluntary actions my thinking self is free and raised above the compulsion of nature, and finally that •all the order among the things that make up the world is due to a primordial being from which everything derives its unity and purposive connection—these are foundation stones of morals and religion. The antithesis knocks all supports out from under us, or at least appears to do so.

(ii) Secondly, reason has a *speculative interest* on the side of the thesis. When the transcendental ideas are postulated and used in the manner prescribed by the thesis, we can take 495
in *a priori* the *whole* sequence of conditions and conditioned items—because we'll be starting from something that isn't conditioned. The antithesis doesn't do this, and that's a very serious disadvantage for it. When you put to the antithesis a question about the conditions of any conditioned item, and then repeat the question for any conditioning item that is also in its turn conditioned, all the antithesis can do is to go on endlessly giving answers of the same general kind. According to the antithesis, •each beginning was preceded by an earlier beginning, •each part has still smaller parts, •each event is preceded by an event that caused it, and •the conditions of existence in general are also always conditioned, so that we can never steady ourselves by coming to rest in an unconditioned and self-subsistent primordial being.

(iii) Thirdly, the thesis has also advantage of *popularity*, which is a large part of its claim to favour. Common-sense has no trouble with the idea of the unconditioned start of any series. Being more accustomed to descend to consequences than to ascend to grounds, it doesn't puzzle over whether there could be something absolutely first; on the contrary, what it gets from such concepts are •comfort and •a fixed point to which to attach the thread by which it guides its movements. The alternative is a restless ascent from conditioned items to their conditions, always with one foot in the air; and there's no satisfaction in that! [The mixed metaphor 'ascend to grounds' is Kant's. A comparable mixture occurs when—e.g. on page 209—he speaks of our 'advance' along a 'regress'.]

·PAY-OFFS FOR EMPIRICISM· 496

In dealing with the cosmological ideas on the side of *empiricism*, i.e. of the *antithesis*, we find the following. **(i)** There is no practical gain, from pure principles of reason,

for morals and religion. Pure empiricism seems rather to deprive morals and religion of all power and influence. If these are true—

- •there is no primordial being distinct from the world,
- •the world never began and therefore had no author,
- •our will isn't free,
- •the soul is divisible and perishable like matter,

—then *moral* ideas and principles lose all validity, and share in the fate of the *transcendental* ideas that served as their theoretical support.

(ii) But there is a speculative pay-off; reason in its speculative activities gets advantages from empiricism that are very attractive and far surpass those that dogmatism can offer. According to empiricism, the understanding is always on its own proper ground, namely the domain of truly possible experiences, investigating their laws which it then uses for the indefinite extension of its sure and comprehensible knowledge. In this domain every object—and every relation between objects—can and should be represented in intuition, or at least in concepts for which the corresponding images can be clearly and distinctly provided in intuitions. There's
497 no need to leave the chain of the natural order and resort to *ideas*, the objects of which aren't known because they are mere thought-entities and so can't be *given*. [Kant goes on to say that the understanding not only doesn't *need* to leave its domain but isn't permitted to do so. He gives some details of what such wandering would involve—they amount to an unsympathetic sketch of the things he has said about what is going on on the thesis side.]

So the empiricist will never allow **(1)** any epoch of nature to be regarded as the utterly first, or any extent of nature that he has discovered to be the whole of it. He won't permit **(2)** any shift from the objects of nature. . . .to supposedly absolutely simple objects of which neither sense nor imagination can ever present an example. He won't admit **(3)** the legitimacy of assuming in nature itself any power of freedom that operates independently of the laws of nature. . . . And finally he won't grant **(4)** that a cause ought ever to be sought 498
outside nature, in a primordial being, because all we know is nature. . . .

Suppose that this were the situation:

> The empiricist philosopher's only purpose in offering his antithesis is to subdue the impertinent curiosity of those who misunderstand the right use of reason so thoroughly that they •proclaim their insight and knowledge at just the point where true insight and knowledge stop, and •represent as furthering our speculative interests something that is valid only in relation to practical interests. . . .

If *that* were the whole story, the empiricist would merely be presenting a principle that urges us to moderate our claims, to be modest in our assertions, while also extending the range of our understanding as far as possible through our assigned teacher—experience. Behaving like that wouldn't cut us off from bringing intellectual *presuppositions* and *faith* to bear on our **practical** concerns, but it wouldn't allow them to be labelled and celebrated as 'science' and 'rational insight'. All knowledge is **speculative**, and can't be 499
about anything that isn't supplied by experience. . . .

But most of the time empiricism itself becomes dogmatic about ideas, confidently *denying* whatever lies out of reach of the knowledge it can have through intuition. When that happens. empiricism shows the same lack of modesty ·that it has criticised in its dogmatic opponents·; and this fault is especially blameworthy because it does irreparable harm to reason's practical interests.

The contrast between Epicurus's teaching and Plato's
500 is like that.[14] Each of those two types of philosophy says more than it knows. Epicureanism encourages and furthers knowledge, though to the detriment of practical concerns; Platonism supplies fine practical principles, but to the detriment of natural science, because it allows reason to indulge in •ideal explanations of •natural appearances. . . .

(iii) Now for the third factor that might enter into one's decision about which side to take in these conflicts: It's extremely surprising that empiricism should be so universally unpopular. You'd have thought that common-sense would eagerly adopt a programme that promises to satisfy it through entirely empirical knowledge and the rational connections it reveals, in preference to the transcendental dogmatism that compels it to rise to concepts that far outstrip the insight and
501 rational faculties of the most practised thinkers. But this is precisely what makes dogmatism attractive to common-sense, which it puts in a position where the most learned can claim no advantage over it! If common-sense understands little or nothing about these matters, the same is true of everyone else. It can't express itself in such a scholastically correct way as others—·the experts·—can, but it can go on indefinitely spinning out sophistical arguments while it wanders around among mere ideas. In that territory, no-one knows anything, so everyone is free to be as eloquent as he pleases; whereas in matters that involve the investigation of nature, common-sense has to stand silent and to admit its ignorance. So convenience and vanity combine in support of these dogmatic principles. A philosopher ·or scientist· shrinks from •accepting a principle that he can't justify, and even more from •using concepts without knowing whether they apply to anything; but common-sense does this all the time! It wants to set out confidently from some starting-point, and it chooses for that purpose something that frequent use has made familiar to it. It isn't troubled by its inability to *conceive* this starting-point, because it is unaware of that (it doesn't really know what 'conceiving' means). For the ordinary plain person all speculative concerns shrink to invisibility in the presence of practical concerns; and when his fears or hopes incite him to assume or believe something, he fancies that it's something that he understands and knows. [Kant then remarks that empiricism can't be popular 502
in the way that idealising dogmatism is, and that however much harm empiricism may do to the highest practical principles, it won't ever come to influence the general run of people as much as the opposing dogmatism does.]

Human reason is by nature *architectonic*, meaning that it regards all our knowledge as capable of being fitted into a *system*; so the only principles it will accept are ones that don't make it outright impossible for all our items of knowledge to be combined into a system. But the propositions

[14] Actually, it's not clear that Epicurus ever did propound his principles as objective assertions. Perhaps he meant them as merely guiding rules for the speculative employment of reason; and if that is right, he showed in this regard a more genuinely philosophical spirit than any other ancient philosopher. The rules would be:

- •In explaining appearances, proceed as if the domain of your enquiry is not circumscribed by any limit or beginning of the world.
- •Assume that the stuff the world is made of is such as it must be if you're to learn about it from experience.
- •Explain events only in ways that will bring them under unalterable laws of nature.
- •Don't bring in any cause from outside the world.

These are very sound (though much neglected) principles for •extending the range of speculative philosophy while also •discovering the principles of morality without bringing in extraneous stuff. Those who require us in our speculative activities to *ignore* the dogmatic propositions ·that there is a limit and beginning to the world etc.· shouldn't be accused of meaning to *deny* them.

of the antithesis do make the completion of the edifice of knowledge quite impossible. According to them, •behind every state of the world there is a still earlier one ·that still isn't the first·, •in every part there are still smaller parts that have parts in their turn, •before any event there is an earlier event ·that caused it and· that was itself also caused, and •in existence in general everything is conditioned, so that any discovery of conditions is at the same time a discovery of more things that are conditioned ·and are therefore subjects of further enquiry·. So there we have it: the antithesis won't admit any beginning or a starting-point—won't admit anything that could serve as a *foundation* for a complete edifice of knowledge—so it makes such an edifice altogether
503 impossible. Thus reason's architectonic interest. . . .carries with it a natural recommendation for the assertions of the thesis.

If someone •could disown all such interests, and consider reason's assertions solely in the light of how good the grounds for them are and irrespective of their consequences, and if •his only escape from the throng ·of competing doctrines· was to subscribe to one or other of the ·two· opposing parties, his state would be one of continuous vacillation. Today he would be convinced that the human will is *free*; tomorrow, reflecting on the indissoluble chain of nature, he would hold that freedom is mere self-deception and that everything is simply *nature*. But if he were called upon to *act* in some way, this play of merely speculative reason would vanish like a dream, and he would choose his principles purely on the basis of his practical interests.

·That's enough about the prima facie attractions of the two sides of the antinomial conflict·. For a reflective and enquiring being—·such as you and I are·—it's only honest to devote a certain amount of time to examining his own reason, divesting himself of all partiality and openly submitting his results to the judgment of others. So no-one should be blamed for, let alone prohibited from, presenting for trial the two opposing parties, leaving them. . . .to defend themselves 504
as best they can before a jury of. . . .fallible men.

4. The transcendental problems of pure reason, considered as downright *having* to be soluble

To claim to solve all problems and answer all questions would be impudent boasting, and would show such extravagant self-conceit that one would instantly forfeit all confidence. But there are sciences whose very nature requires that every question arising within their domain should be completely answerable on the basis of what is known. Why? Because in these sciences it isn't permissible to plead unavoidable ignorance, because in each case the materials that generate the question also supply the answer. •·Morals provide an **example**·: We must be able in every possible case to know in a rule-guided way what is *right* and what is *wrong*, because this is a question about what we're obliged to do, and we have no obligation to do something if we can't know ·that we're obliged to do· it. •·Natural science provides a **counter-example**·: When we are explaining natural appearances, 505
much must remain uncertain and many questions must remain unanswerable, because what we know of nature sometimes falls a long way short of explaining everything that there is to be explained. •·Then what about this one·? In transcendental philosophy is there any question concerning an object presented to pure reason that we can be excused for not decisively answering because the answer can't be extracted from this same reason? In giving this excuse, we would have to show •that any knowledge we can get will still leave us completely unsure about what to say on the topic in question, and •that while we're conceptually equipped to

raise the question we don't have the ·conceptual· means to answer it.

Now I maintain that transcendental philosophy is unique among all domains of speculative knowledge, in that every question about an object given to pure reason can be answered by this same human reason. We can never shrug off the obligation to give a thorough and complete answer to such a question on the grounds that we are unavoidably ignorant or the problem is unfathomably deep. The very concept that puts us in a position to ask the question must also equip us to answer it, because (as in the case of right and wrong) the object—·the subject-matter of the question·—isn't
506 to be met with outside the concept.

What I have just been saying applies not across the whole of transcendental philosophy but only in **(2)** its cosmological part, ·i.e. the topics of the antinomies·. [Kant goes on to explain why the story doesn't apply to the parts of transcendental philosophy that involve **(1)** the paralogisms or **(3)** the theological 'ideals'. The explanation is that in **(1)** and **(3)** there isn't an *object* to ask about in the first place. The nearest Kant gets to being clear about why that is so is in the following paragraph about **(1)**, which he presents in a footnote:]

> Faced with a question about the constitution of a transcendental object, we can't give an answer saying *what it is*; but there's something we can say, namely that the *question* itself is *nothing*, because no object of it—·no item that it can be *about*·—has been given. Thus, all questions dealt with in **(1)** the transcendental doctrine of the soul are answerable—and indeed answered—in this second way, ·namely by saying that no real question has been asked·. The topic here is the transcendental subject of all inner appearances, ·the omnipresent *I*·, which isn't an appearance and consequently isn't *given* as an object. That means that it doesn't satisfy the conditions needed for any categories to be applied to it, and that's what the initial question was really asking—which *categories* apply to this transcendental item? This is a case where the old saying holds true, that *no answer is itself an answer*. A question about the constitution of something that can't be thought through any definite predicate—because it's completely outside the sphere of objects that can be given to us—is null and void.

[In contrast with that, Kant says, the cosmological ideas raise questions that really *are* about something, really *do* have an object, because each of those ideas involves a taking-to-the-limit of a concept that can be used empirically. He continues:] The cosmological ideas are the only ones 507
that can presuppose their object as being *given*, along with the empirical procedure that it conceptually involves—·the procedure or 'empirical synthesis' of exploring earlier and earlier times or larger and larger regions of space, finding smaller and smaller parts of things, probing further and further back into the causal ancestry of an event, digging deeper and deeper into explanations for states of affairs·. The question arising from these ideas concerns this ordinary empirical procedure, asking merely whether it is to carried so far as to contain *absolute totality*. That's what takes us from the empirical to the transcendental: the point is that this totality can't be given in any experience and therefore isn't empirical. [Kant's central point up to here is that in the case of **(2)** the cosmological ideas we are shifted from something comfortably empirical to something disturbingly transcendental by a shift from *some* to *all*; whereas with **(1)** the psychological and **(3)** the theological ideas it's not a matter of *shifting* in an intelligible way from something empirical to something transcendental; with **(1)** and **(3)** what we're dealing with is something that is transcendental in a more radical way.] Since we are

here dealing solely with a thing as an object of a possible experience, not as a thing in itself, the answer to the transcendent cosmological question can't lie anywhere except in the idea. We aren't asking about the constitution of any object in itself; and possible experience comes into our question *not* because we are asking

> •What actual fully detailed experiences could we have ·in pursuing the empirical synthesis·?

but only because we are asking

> •What is the content of the transcendental idea to which the empirical synthesis is a mere approximation?

And since the idea is a mere creature of reason, reason can't
508 duck its responsibility and pass it on to the unknown object.

So here we have a science that is in a position to demand and expect clear and assured answers to *all* the questions that arise within its domain, even if they haven't yet been found. This isn't as extraordinary as it seems at first, ·and transcendental philosophy isn't the only example of it·. Consider the other two pure rational sciences,. . . .pure mathematics and pure ethics. •Has it ever been suggested that, because of our necessary ignorance of the conditions, it must remain uncertain what exact relation, in rational or irrational numbers, a diameter bears to a circle?. . . . •There can't be anything uncertain in the universal principles of morals, because the principles, if they aren't altogether void and meaningless, must flow from the concepts of our reason. •In natural science, on the other hand, there are countless conjectures that can't be expected ever to become certain. Why not? Because natural appearances are objects that are given to us independently of our concepts, so the key to them lies not in us and our pure thinking but outside us, and in
509 many cases the key is not to be found and so an assured solution is not to be expected. . . .

So we are faced with questions that reason propounds to itself, questions for which we are obliged to provide at least a critical solution:

(1) Has the world existed from eternity rather than having a beginning? Does the world stretch out infinitely far in space rather than being enclosed within certain limits?

(2) Is anything in the world simple, rather than everything's being infinitely divisible?

(3) Does anything come about through the exercise of freedom, rather than everything's depending on the chain of events in the natural order?

(4) Is anything completely unconditioned and intrinsically necessary, rather than everything's being conditioned in its existence and therefore dependent on external things and intrinsically contingent?

We can't evade these questions by pleading the narrow limits of our reason and confessing, under the pretext of a humility based on self-knowledge, that it's beyond the power of our reason to answer them. These are all questions about an object that can be found only in our thoughts—the object being *the utterly unconditioned totality of the synthesis of appearances*. If our own concepts don't enable us to say 510
anything for sure about such an object, we mustn't blame the object—'It's hiding from us!' Such a thing isn't to be met with anywhere except in our idea; it can't be *given*; ·so it can't in any reasonable sense be *hidden* either·. We must look for the cause of failure in our idea itself. The idea is *a problem*, and it can't be solved if we go on obstinately assuming that there is an actual object corresponding to the idea. A clear account of the dialectic that lies within our concept itself would soon give us complete certainty about what we should think regarding the above questions.

If you maintain the pretext that certainty regarding these problems can't be had, I put to you a question that you must answer clearly: These ideas that are giving us so much trouble here—*where do you get them from*? [Kant follows this with something obscure that he may mean as a prima facie possible answer to this question. It leads on to something easier to grasp, namely this:] Suppose that the whole of nature were spread out in front of you, with nothing. . . .concealed from your senses or your consciousness, this still wouldn't provide you with a concrete empirical instance of any of the ideas. To have *that* you would need not merely •this intuition-of-everything but also something that empirical knowledge couldn't give you, namely, •a com-
511 pleted synthesis *and the consciousness that it* ***is*** *absolutely complete*. So your question doesn't have to be raised in the explanation of any given appearance, which means that it's not a question imposed on us by the object itself. You can never encounter the object, because it can't be given through any possible experience. In all possible perceptions we are always caught up among *conditioned* items, whether ·conditioned· in space or in time; we don't encounter anything *un*conditioned, which would raise the question of whether the unconditioned item consists in •an absolute beginning of synthesis or rather •an absolute totality of a series that has no beginning. In its empirical meaning, the term 'whole' is always only comparative—·as in 'I saw over the whole house, not just the ground floor·. As for the absolute wholes. . . .·involved in the four cosmological questions·: they have nothing to do with any possible experience. Suppose we're explaining the appearances of some body, and it occurs to us to wonder whether it is made up of simple parts or rather is infinitely divisible. Answering that question wouldn't enable us to explain the body any •better—it wouldn't even enable us to explain it •differently—because neither answer to it could ever come before us empirically. ..512

Thus the solution of these problems can never be found in experience, and that's why you shouldn't say that it's 'uncertain' what should be said about the object ·of our idea·. The object is only in your brain, and can't be given outside it; so all you need is to be consistent in your thoughts and avoid the trouble-making ambiguity that would transform your idea into a supposed representation of an object that is empirically given and thus knowable according to the laws of experience. Thus, the dogmatic answer ·to a transcendental cosmological question· isn't 'uncertain'—it's *impossible*! What can be completely certain is the critical treatment ·of the questions·. It doesn't tackle the questions objectively, but ·subjectively, i.e.· in relation to the foundation of knowledge on which the question is based.

5. A sceptical look at the cosmological questions raised by the four transcendental ideas

We would give up demanding that our questions be answered 513
dogmatically if we realized from the outset that a dogmatic answer, whatever it turned out to be, would serve only •to make us even more ignorant, and •to plunge us from one inconceivability into another, from one darkness into an even blacker one, and perhaps even into contradictions. If our question asks for a simple Yes or No, it would be smart of us to postpone the search for grounds for an answer, and first ask ourselves: what we would gain from the answer Yes? what we would gain from the answer No? If we find that in each case the answer is 'We would get nothing but nonsense', that will give us a good reason ·to stop thinking about the •answers Yes and No to our original question, and· to starting thinking critically about the •question, looking into whether it assumes something that is groundless and

fools around with a defective idea (one whose falsity can more easily seen by putting it to work and seeing where it leads than by looking at it in the abstract). That's what is so
514 useful about the sceptical way of dealing with the questions that pure reason puts to pure reason. It enables us, at a small cost, to keep clear of an enormous dogmatic tangle and engage instead in a sober critique, which as a true cathartic [= 'laxative'] will happily purge us of delusion and of the know-it-all punditry that it leads to.

A cosmological idea has to do only with an object of experience, which ·of course· has to fit a possible concept of the understanding. Suppose, then, that in preparing to tackle some cosmological idea I could see in advance that

> •the ·relevant· kind of conditioned item in the synthesis of appearances must be, depending on how you look at it, either *too large* or *too small* for any *concept of the understanding*.

That would teach me that the idea in question must be entirely empty and senseless, because it can't be made to fit its object, however hard I work to get them to agree. The reason why holding onto the world-concepts [= 'cosmological ideas'] is bound to get us caught in an antinomy is that they all have this 'too-large-or-too-small' feature. ·Let's see this, case by case·.

(1t) If *the world has no beginning*, then it is *too large* for your concept, which consists in a successive regress that can never reach the whole eternity that has passed. If *the world has a beginning*, it will cut off the necessary empirical regress, making *too small* for the concept of the
515 understanding. That's because a beginning is still something that is conditioned, because it presupposes an earlier *time*; and the law of the empirical use of the understanding requires you to look for a higher temporal condition. So the ·temporally limited· world is clearly too *small* for this law.

(1s) This also holds for the two answers to the question about the world's magnitude in space. If it is *infinite* and unlimited, it is too *large* for any possible empirical concept. If the world is ·spatially· *finite* and limited, you are entitled to ask what sets these limits. ·The answer can't be that it is set by empty space, i.e. that the limit of the world is the surface that has only the world on one side of it and only empty space on the other·. Empty space isn't an independently existing entity that can stand in some relation to *things*, so it can't be a condition at which you could stop ·in your thinking about the world's size·. Still less can it be an empirical condition, something that you could encounter in experience (how can there be any experience of something that is utterly empty?); yet absolute totality in an *empirical* synthesis always requires an empirical concept of the unconditioned item. Consequently, a *limited* world is too *small* for your concept.

(2) If every appearance in space (every specimen of *matter*) consists of infinitely many parts, the process of dividing and redividing and. . . etc. will always be *too great* for our concept; while if the division of space is to stop at some member of the division (the simple), the division process will be *too small* for the idea of the unconditioned. For this ·supposedly 516
end-of-division member will always still allow of a regress to further parts contained in it·.

(3) If we suppose that every event in the world happens in accordance with the laws of nature, every event will have a cause that is also an event, so that you'll have to keep working back to earlier and earlier causes, with no end ·to your process·. Thus, nature considered as working always through efficient causes is too *large* for any concept that you can use in the synthesis of events in the world.

If you sometimes accept the occurrence of self-caused events, i.e. production through *freedom*, then the question

Why? will still pursue you. The law of causality ·that governs· experience will compel you to look behind the supposedly free event, trying to discover what caused it; so you'll find that the totality of connection that you are allowing is too *small* for your necessary empirical concept.

(4) If you admit *an utterly necessary being* (whether it be the world itself, or something in the world, or the cause of the world), you'll be setting it in a time *infinitely* remote from any *given* point of time; because if you don't, the supposedly necessary being would be dependent on some other being that preceded it, ·and what's absolutely necessary doesn't *depend* on anything·. So this 'absolutely necessary being' is too large for your empirical concept: you can't reach it
517 through any process, however long you may keep it up.

If your view is that everything belonging to the world. . . .is *contingent*—·meaning 'contingent *on* something else', which means '*dependent* on something else·'—then •any existence that is given to you is too *small* for your concept. For •that existence will force you to look around for some other existence on which it depends.

I have said that in each case the cosmological idea is either too large or too small for. . . .any possible concept of the understanding. That found fault with the idea, saying that **it is too big or too small** for its job, namely fitting possible experience. Why didn't I make my points the other way around, finding fault with the empirical concept by saying that **it is too small or too large** for the idea? Here is why: It's only through •possible experience that our concepts can have any reality; without •it, a concept is a mere idea, without truth and without applying to any object. So the possible empirical concept is the standard by which we must answer the question:

> •Is this idea *merely* an idea, a thought-entity, or does it apply to something in the world?

If it's right to say that x is too large or too small for y, it must be the case that x is required for the sake of y and has to be adapted to y. Among the questions that the ancient dialectical Schools played around with was this: 518

> •If a ball can't pass through a hole, should we say that the ball is too large or that the hole too small?

In a case like this, it *doesn't matter* which we choose to say, because we don't know which exists for the sake of the other. In other cases there's a right answer: we don't say that a man is too tall for his coat, but that the coat is too short for the man.

This has led us to what is at least *a well-grounded suspicion* that the cosmological ideas, and with them all the mutually conflicting sophistical assertions, are based on an empty and tricked-up concept of how the object of these ideas is to be given to us. This suspicion may put us on track for exposing the illusion that has for so long led us astray.

6. Transcendental idealism as the key to sorting out the cosmological dialectic

I have sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic that everything intuited in space or time, and therefore all objects of any experience we could possibly have, are nothing but appearances. That means that they are mere 519
representations, having no independent existence outside our thoughts; and this applies when they are material things as well as when they are sequences of events. My label for this doctrine is 'transcendental idealism'. The 'transcendental realist' is someone who turns these states of our sensibility into independently existing things, i.e. turns *mere representations* into *things in themselves*.

It wouldn't be fair to credit me with accepting *empirical* idealism, that doctrine that has been so unpopular for so long. It admits the genuine reality of space, while denying—or at least finding doubtful—the existence of extended things in space; so that it doesn't make room for a well-grounded distinction between truth and dreams. As for the appearances of inner sense in time, empirical idealism has no problem regarding *them* as real things. It says indeed that this inner experience is a sufficient proof, and indeed the only proof, of the actual existence of its object (meaning the existence of its object as a thing in itself, complete with all
520 its temporal features!).

As against that, my transcendental idealism accepts the reality of the objects of outer intuition just as they are intuited in space, and the reality of all changes in time as they are represented by inner sense. Space is a *form* of the intuition that we call 'outer', and without objects in space there would be no empirical representation whatsoever; so we can and must regard the extended beings in space as real; and the same holds for ·inner events in· time. But this space and this time, and along with them all appearances, are not in themselves *things*; they are nothing but representations, and can't exist outside our mind. Even the inner and sensible intuition of

> our mind, as the object that we are conscious *of* when we are conscious, and that is represented ·to us· as having a sequence of different states through time,

is not the real self as it exists in itself—i.e. is not the transcendental subject—but is only an appearance of that unknown being, an appearance that has been given to our sensibility. We *can't* admit this inner appearance as something that exists in itself, because it is temporal, and no thing in itself can be in time. But the empirical reality of appearances in space and time is secured well enough, and is thoroughly separated from dreams, if both ·dreams and genuine ap- 521
pearances· cohere truly and completely in one experience, in accordance with empirical laws.

The objects of experience, then, are never given in themselves but only given in experience, and have no existence outside it. Of course the moon may have inhabitants that no human being has ever perceived; but that means only that in the possible advance of our experience we could encounter them. . . . They are real if they are empirically connected with my real consciousness, though that doesn't mean that they are real in themselves, i.e. real apart from this advance of experience.

Nothing is really given to us except perception and the empirical advance from this to other possible perceptions. . . . Calling an appearance 'a real thing' when we haven't yet perceived it is either •saying that in the advance of experience we must meet with such a perception or •not saying anything. [Kant goes on to say that all this applies only to appearances—things in space and time—and not to things in themselves. Then:]

The faculty of sensible intuition is strictly only a receptivity, a capacity of being affected in a certain way with representations. [Kant means not that the representations affect us, but that the representations are effects upon us, What does the affecting? Read on.]. . . . The non-sensible cause of these representations is completely unknown to us, and we can't intuit it as an object. Why not? Well, such an object would have to be represented as not being in space or time, because these are merely conditions of sensible representation; and we can't conceive of any intuition that doesn't involve space or time. Still, we can use the label 'the transcendental object' for the purely intelligible cause of appearances as such, merely so as to have something corresponding to sensibility viewed as a receptivity. [In calling it 'purely intel-

ligible' Kant means that we can have the utterly abstract *thought* of whatever-it-is-that-causes-all-our-appearances. The notion of *causing* enters the story because in respect of all our intuitions we are *passive* = acted-on = acted-on-*by-something*. It will have occurred to you that this use of 'cause' can't involve the regular *category* of cause, which Kant has insisted is usable only in connecting appearances with other appearances. He will deal with that point in the 'concluding note' on page 261, saying that our thought of the intelligible causes of experience is 'analogous to' our thoughts about cause-effect amongst appearances.]

We can regard this transcendental object as what produces
523 all our possible perceptions—it's responsible for how far they stretch, and how they hang together—and we can say that it is *given in itself prior to all experience*. But appearances, that are as this transcendental object makes them, aren't given •in themselves but only •in this experience; they are mere representations, and the only thing that enables them to mark out a real object is ·not

> •their relation to the transcendental object, their intelligible cause,

but·

> •their hanging together *with one another* according to the rules of the unity of experience.

So we can say that the real things of past time are given in the transcendental object of experience; but they aren't •objects for me, aren't •real in past time, unless the light of history or the tracks left by causes and effects lead me to think that

> •a regressive series of possible perceptions in accordance with empirical laws leads—i.e. •the course of the world leads—to a past time-series as a condition of the present time;

though this series can be represented as real only •in the connection of a possible experience, not as real •in itself. Thus, all the events that have occurred in the immense periods that have preceded my own existence really mean only the possibility of extending the chain of experience from the present perception back to the conditions that determine this perception in respect of time.

So if I give myself the thought of all existing objects of the senses in the whole of time and the whole of space, I don't set them in space and time prior to experience. All 524
I am having is the thought of a possible experience in its absolute completeness: the objects are nothing but mere representations, so they are given only in such a possible experience. To say of something that it exists before I have had any experience of it is only to say that it is to be met with if, starting from perception, I advance to the part of experience it belongs to. The *cause* of all the details of what happens in this advance—settling how far I can go and what episodes I'll encounter along the way—is transcendental, so that I can't possibly know it. But that's not my concern. What I care about is the rule of the experiential journey in which objects are given to me—meaning that appearances are given to me. In the upshot it simply doesn't matter whether I say that

> **(i)** in the empirical advance in space I could meet with stars a hundred times further away than the most distant stars that I now see,

or instead say that

> **(ii)** such stars are perhaps to be met with in cosmic space even though no human being ever did or ever will perceive them.

For even supposing those stars were given as things in themselves, without reference to possible experience, they still wouldn't be anything to me, and therefore wouldn't be objects. To be objects for me they would have to be contained in the series of the empirical regress. [The rest of this paragraph is expanded from what Kant wrote, in ways that the ·small dots· convention

can't easily indicate.] Thinking in terms of **(ii)** rather than **(i)**, and thinking of these 'stars' as things in themselves, won't do any harm because there's no content to such thoughts; they can't do harm because they have nothing to bite on. But isn't it sometimes harmful to think in transcendental terms about something that is really a matter of appearances? Yes indeed: harm comes about when we think in the wrong way about
525 the cosmological idea of an *absolute whole* of appearances of some kind, and get ourselves pulled into raising a question that oversteps the limits of possible experience. *That*'s where we must be on our guard against misinterpreting our own empirical concepts.

7. Critical solution of reason's cosmological conflict with itself

The whole antinomy of pure reason rests on the dialectical argument:

- If a conditioned item is given, the entire series of all its conditions is also given;
- Objects of the senses are given as conditioned;

therefore, etc. Through this inference of reason, the first premise of which seems so natural and evident, as many cosmological ideas are introduced as there are differences in the conditions (in the synthesis of appearances) that constitute a series. [Kant always calls the first premise 'the major premise'. That technical term in the logic of syllogisms contributes nothing here, and indeed isn't here being used correctly.] The cosmological ideas postulate absolute totality of these series, and *that*'s how they put reason into unavoidable conflict with itself. We'll be
525 better placed to detect what is deceptive in this sophistical argument if we first correct and tighten up some of the concepts used in it.

[In the next sentence, Kant will connect something's being 'given' (*gegeben*) with something's being 'set' (*aufgegeben*), meaning set as a task or a challenge. As you can see, it's neater in German than in English.] In the first place, it's obvious beyond all possibility of doubt that if the conditioned item is given, then a regress in the series of all its conditions is *set ·as a task·*. If something is conditioned, then it has a condition (that's what being 'conditioned' *means*), and if that condition is conditioned in its turn, then. . . and so on through all the members of the series. So the above proposition—·the 'set as a task' one·—is analytic, and has nothing to fear from a transcendental criticism. It is reason's logical demand that we track as far as we can a concept's connection with its conditions—I mean the connection that directly results from the concept itself.

And if the conditioned item as well as its condition are **things in themselves**, then when the conditioned item is given the regress to its condition is not merely *set as a task* but already really *given*. And since this holds of all members of the series, the complete series of the conditions. . . .is given (or rather presupposed) along with the initial conditioned item. Why? Because the conditioned item is given, and it is possible only through the complete series. The synthesis of the conditioned item with its condition is here a synthesis of the mere understanding, which represents things *as they are* and doesn't consider whether and how we can get in touch 527
with them. But if what we're dealing with are **appearances**, ·the story changes·. Because they are mere representations, appearances can't be given ·to me· except through my arriving at knowledge of them (or rather my arriving at *them*, for they *are* just empirical items of knowledge). I can't say that if the conditioned item is given then all the appearances that are its conditions are—in the same sense of the word—*given*. So I'm utterly unable to infer ·from the fact that a conditioned item is given· the absolute totality of

the series of its conditions. That's because the appearances are. . . .nothing but an empirical synthesis in space and time, and are given only in *this synthesis*. So we can't infer that if a conditioned item (in the domain of appearance) is given, the synthesis that constitutes its empirical condition is therefore given along with it. . . . This synthesis comes into being *in the regress*, and never exists without it. But there is something we *can* say about a •regress to the conditions, i.e. about a continuing empirical synthesis running up through the conditions, namely that •it is *set as a task*, and that it can't ever be brought to a halt by a lack of conditions.

This makes it clear that the first premise of the cosmological inference means 'conditioned' in the transcendental sense of a pure category, while the second premise takes it in the empirical sense of a concept of the understanding applied to
528 mere appearances. So the argument commits the dialectical 'fallacy of equivocation', as they call it. There's nothing •artificial about it; it's a quite •natural illusion of commonsense. When something is given as conditioned, this illusion leads us to assume (in the first premise) the series of its conditions, assuming them *uninspected*, so to speak. This assumption is just the logical demand for adequate premises for any given conclusion. Also, the conditioned item's connection with its condition doesn't involve any time-order; they are presupposed as being in themselves given *together*. And in the second premise it's just as natural as it is in the first to regard appearances as things in themselves and as objects given to the pure understanding, abstracting from all the conditions of intuition under which alone objects can be given. Yet in this—·i.e. in treating the second premise in that way·—we have overlooked an important difference between the concepts. **(i)** In the first premise, the synthesis of the conditioned item with its conditions (and the whole series of conditions) doesn't carry with it any temporal constraint or any concept of succession. **(ii)** But the empirical synthesis—i.e. the series of the conditions in appearance that the second premise is talking about—is necessarily successive, the members of the series being given one after another in time; so I can't assume the absolute *totality* of the synthesis and of the series represented through it. In 529
the first premise all the members of the series are given in themselves, without any temporal condition of time, but in this second premise they are possible only through the successive regress—an actual *procedure* whose episodes are given only by being carried out.

Once we have pointed out this error in the argument on which both parties base their cosmological assertions, we can fairly dismiss them both on the grounds that they can't justify their claims. But that won't end the quarrel—as it would do if one or both of the parties were proved to be wrong in their actual doctrines—·not just in their •arguments but· in their •conclusions. Granted, neither of them has argued soundly for his conclusion, but it seems utterly clear that, since one asserts that •the world has a beginning and the other says that •the world has no beginning and has existed from eternity, one of them must be right! But even if that's the case, it's impossible to decide which one that is, because the arguments on the two sides have equal *Klarheit* [usually = 'clarity'; perhaps here = 'persuasiveness']. The parties can be told to keep the peace before the tribunal of reason; but the dispute still drags on. The only way for it to be settled once and for all, to the satisfaction of both sides, is for the very fact that they can so splendidly refute one another to win them over to the view that they are really quarrelling about nothing, and that a certain transcendental illusion has mocked them with a reality where none is to be found. That's the path I shall 530
now follow in putting an end to this undecidable dispute.

* * * * *

Zeno of Elea, a subtle dialectician, was severely rebuked by Plato as a mischievous sophist who showed off his skill by setting out to prove a proposition through plausible arguments and then immediately overthrowing it by other arguments that were equally strong. For example: Zeno maintained that God (probably conceived by him as simply the world) is

(i) neither in motion nor at rest,

(ii) neither similar nor dissimilar to any other thing,

(iii) neither finite nor infinite.

His critics saw him as intending, absurdly, to deny both of two mutually contradictory propositions; but I don't think this was justified. As for **(i)**: if by the word 'God' he meant the universe, he would certainly have to say that it doesn't stay in one place (rest) and doesn't change its location (motion) either, because all places are in the universe, so the universe isn't itself in any place. As for **(ii)**: if the universe includes in itself everything that exists, it can't be either similar or
531 dissimilar to any *other* thing, because there aren't any *other* things—things outside it—with which the universe could be compared. If two opposed judgments presuppose an inadmissible condition, then the failure of that condition brings them both down. . . .

[Kant gives a homely example involving 'smells good', 'smells bad', and the 'condition' of each of these, namely 'has a smell'. He tries to harness this to a conflicting pair of judgments, and doesn't provide enough detail to see that he has failed. Still, you can get the general idea. Then:]

As for **(iii)**: The propositions

(a) The world is infinite in extent, and

(b) The world is not infinite in extent

are contradictory opposites, so that if I assert the falsity of **(a)** I am committed to the truth of **(b)**. But notice that in denying that the world is infinite I am not affirming that

(c) The world is finite in extent. 532

The propositions **(a)** and **(c)** could *both* be false. In merely denying **(a)** we are merely removing the infinitude, which we might do by denying the whole separate existence of the world. What the assertion of **(c)** does is to remove the infinitude while asserting the existence of the world in itself as something with a determinate size. And that assertion could be false along with **(a)**, because it could be that the world is not given as a thing in itself, and therefore not given as being either infinite or finite in size. Let me call this kind of opposition *dialectical*, and the opposition of contradictories *analytical*. Then I can say: two dialectically opposed judgments can both be false, because one is not a mere contradictory of the other, but says something more than is required for a simple contradiction.

If I regard **(a)** and **(c)** as contradictory opposites ·rather than dialectical opposites·, I am assuming •that the world (the complete series of appearances) is a thing in itself; •that the world is still *there*, even if I suspend my infinite or finite regress in the series of its appearances. But if I reject this assumption—or rather this transcendental illusion—and deny that the world is a thing in itself, the contradictory opposition of the two assertions is converted into a merely 533 dialectical opposition. Since the world doesn't exist in itself, independently of the regressive series of my representations, it doesn't exist *in itself* as an *infinite* whole or exist *in itself* as a *finite* whole. It exists only in the empirical regress of the series of appearances, and isn't to be met with as something in itself. So if this series is always conditioned, it can't ever be given as complete; and the world thus isn't an unconditioned whole, and doesn't exist as such a whole,

either of infinite or of finite size.

What has been said here about the ·spatial half of **(1)** the· first cosmological idea, i.e. about the absolute totality of ·spatial· magnitude in the ·realm of· appearance, applies also to all the other cosmological ideas. [If you need a reminder about 'regressive synthesis', see the passage starting on page 208.] The series of conditions is to be met with only •in the ·actual process of the· regressive synthesis itself, not •in the ·domain of· appearance viewed as a thing given in and by itself, independently of any regress. Thus, faced with **(2)** the question 'How many parts does it have?', asked of a given appearance, we have to say 'Neither finitely nor infinitely many'. For an appearance isn't something existing in itself. Its parts are first given in and through the actual process of going from a thing to its parts, then to their parts, then to *their* parts, and so on; and this process is never completely finished—so it never provides a finite total or an infinite total. This also holds for **(3)** the series of subordinated causes, and for **(4)** the series that goes from something conditioned
534 to unconditioned necessary existence. These series can never be regarded as being, *in themselves in their totality*, either finite or infinite. Because they are series of suitably inter-related *representations*, each exists only in the process associated with it; it can't exist independently of this process, i.e. exist in itself as a self-subsistent series of things.

Thus reason's conflictedness in its cosmological ideas vanishes when it is shown •that it is merely dialectical, and •that it is a conflict due to an illusion that arises from our applying •an idea of absolute totality (that holds only as a condition of things in themselves) to •appearances (that exist only in our representations). . . . Still, we can turn this antinomy—·this conflictedness·—to our advantage, not a dogmatic advantage but a critical and doctrinal one: namely, providing an indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances—a proof that ought to convince anyone who isn't satisfied by the direct proof I gave in the Transcendental Aesthetic. This present proof consists in the following dilemma:

—If the world is a whole existing in itself, it is either finite or infinite.

—It isn't finite (shown in the proof of the antithesis).

—It isn't infinite (shown in the proof of the thesis).

Therefore

—The world (the sum of all appearances) is not a whole existing in itself. 535

From this it follows that appearances in general are nothing independently of our representations—which is just what it means to call them 'transcendentally ideal'.

This is important. It lets us see that the proofs given in the fourfold antinomy aren't mere glittering tinsel; they are *grounded* on •the supposition that the appearances of which the sensible world is composed are things in themselves. On that basis we can derive each of the two conflicting propositions; this conflict shows that there is an error in •this assumption, which in turn leads us to the discovery of the true constitution of things as objects of the senses. The transcendental dialectic doesn't *at all* favour scepticism, but it certainly favours the sceptical method, which can point to such dialectic as an example of how useful the method can be: when reason's arguments roam free and tangle with one another, the sceptical method can always extract from the situation something useful and likely to help us correct our judgments—even if that's not what we set out to do!

8. Applying the regulative principle of pure reason to the cosmological ideas

536 The cosmological principle of totality doesn't **give** [*geben*] a maximum of the series of conditions in a sensible world, regarded as a thing in itself, but only **sets it as a task** [*aufgeben*]—the task of going through the process of working one's way back through the series of conditions. So the principle of pure reason has to be amended along these lines; and then it is still valid, not as the *axiom* that we think the totality as actually in the object, but as a *problem* for the understanding, and therefore for the person whose understanding it is. Given any conditioned item x, the task or problem is set by this command:

> Look into the conditions of x, then the conditions of those conditions, and so on backwards through the series of conditions; and in doing this, think of yourself as pursuing the completeness prescribed by the idea.

[Kant repeats that because x is an appearance, not a thing in itself, this completeness won't ever actually be achieved. Then:] The principle of reason is thus properly only a *rule*,
537 ordering us to work back through the series of the conditions of given appearances, and forbidding us to bring this process to an end by treating some item in it as utterly unconditioned. It isn't a principle of the possibility of experience and of empirical knowledge of objects of the senses, so it's not a principle of the understanding. Why not? Because the understanding's business is with experiences in space and time, and those are always enclosed within limits. It isn't

> •a **constitutive** principle of reason—·i.e. one that tells us what is the case·—enabling us to extend our concept of the sensible world beyond all possible experience.

Rather, it is

> •a **regulative** principle of reason, which serves as a *rule* ·or *regulation*·, telling us how to behave when working back through a series of conditions. Specifically, it tells us to continue and extend our experience ·as far as we can·, never accepting that we have reached an absolute empirical limit. [The link between 'rule' and 'regulative', via the Latin *regula* = 'rule', is even clearer in German where the words are *Regel* and *regulativ*.]

It doesn't say *in advance of any empirical exploration*—·i.e. prior to the regress·—what is present in the object as it is in itself. I call it a 'regulative principle' to distinguish it from a 'constitutive' cosmological principle, which would be one that speaks of the absolute totality of the series of conditions, viewed as actually present in the empirical object. My point in making this distinction is •to bring out the fact that there isn't any such constitutive principle, and so •to prevent us from ascribing objective reality to an idea that serves merely as a rule. [Without his intervention, Kant says, that mistake would be inevitable. He calls it a 'transcendental subreption', meaning roughly 'a transcendental bait-and-switch act'.]

This rule of pure reason can't tell us *what the object is*, 538
but only *how the empirical regress is to be carried out* so as to arrive at the complete concept of the object. [Kant repeats his reasons for all this, associating the would-be constitutive principle with believing that the subject-matter exists 'in itself' and therefore has properties independently of our experiencing them. The crucial point is that nothing unqualifiedly unconditioned is to be met with in experience'. Then:]

So the first thing we have to do ·in obeying the command of the regulative principle· is to settle what we are going to say about a synthesis of a series—·a process of empirical exploration·—that won't ever be complete. [Kant now

introduces the terms 'infinite' and 'indefinite', of which the former has been favoured by mathematicians and the latter by philosophers. He declines to explore the concerns *they* were dealing in using this terminology.] I want only to define these concepts precisely enough for my purposes.

It is all right to say of a straight line that it can be extended 'to infinity'. To distinguish between an •infinite advance and an •indefinitely great advance, in a case like this, would be mere nit-picking. When we say, 'Draw a line', it does indeed sound more correct to add **(i)** '. . . making it indefinitely long' than to add **(ii)** '. . . making it infinitely long'. Whereas **(ii)** means that you *mustn't* stop extending it—which is not what is intended—**(i)** means only that you may extend it as far as you like. And if we are talking only about what one *can* do, then **(ii)** is quite correct, for we can always make the line longer, without end. So is it in all cases in which we speak only of *the progress*, i.e. of the *advance* from the condition to the conditioned: this possible advance proceeds, without end, in the series of appearances. From a given pair of parents the **descending** line of generation may proceed without end, and we can quite well regard the
540 line as actually continuing without end in the world. For in this case reason never requires an absolute totality of the series, because it doesn't presuppose that totality as a condition that is *given*, but only something giveable that can be endlessly added to.

Now consider the question of how far the **regress** goes in an **ascending** series, running from something given as conditioned back up to its conditions, then to *their* conditions, and so on. Can we say that **(ii)** the regress runs to infinity, or only that **(i)** it extends indeterminately or indefinitely far? For example, can we **(ii)** ascend infinitely from the men now living through the series of their ancestors? Or can we only say that **(i)** we have never had empirical evidence that such-and-such is the first or top item in the series, and that we therefore may and indeed should *search for* the parents of each ancestor we come across, though we shouldn't presuppose them?

[Kant gives different answers for two different kinds of case. **(a)** One concerns the series that goes from an empirically given material thing to its parts, then to *their* parts, and so on; parts are 'inner conditions' of the thing they are parts of, and the series running from the thing through all its parts is infinite. His thought is this: suppose the first item in the series is a brick, which I hold in my hand; then in a good sense I hold the entire series in my hand; so the series is complete, rounded off, contained, in a way that makes 'indefinite' inappropriate and therefore makes 'infinite' appropriate. **(b)** When the series involves a condition-to-conditioned relation where the condition is a totally distinct thing from the item that it conditions, then the series has an indeterminate or indefinite character, because nothing rounds it off in the way the infinite series of brick-parts is rounded off by the whole brick's being in a limited space. Then:] 542

In neither case, whether the regress is infinite or indefinite, is the series of conditions seen as being given as infinite in the object. The series are not things in themselves, but only appearances linked by the 'x is a condition of y' relation, so they are given only in the regress itself, ·i.e. in the actual process of discovering them·. So we aren't facing the question

> •How long is this series in itself? Is it finite or infinite?

That question doesn't arise, because the series 'in itself' is *nothing*! The question we do face is this:

> •How are we to go about conducting the empirical regress? And how far we should continue it?

. . . .When **(a)** the whole ·series· is empirically given, it is *possible* to proceed back to infinity in the series of its inner conditions. When **(b)** the whole is not given ·from the outset·,

being given only through the empirical regress, we can only say that the *search* for still higher conditions of the series is *possible* to infinity. In case **(b)** we could say: 'There are always more members, empirically given, than I can reach through the regress of decomposition', ·i.e. the process of investigating smaller and smaller parts·. In case **(a)** we *can* always proceed further in the regress, because no member is empirically given as utterly unconditioned; so a higher member of the series is always possible; so the enquiry regarding it is necessary. In **(b)** we necessarily *find* further
534 members of the series; in **(a)**. . . .we necessarily *enquire* for them. . . .

The next section will show these observations in their proper light by putting them to work.

9. Putting the regulative principle of reason to work empirically, in connection with the cosmological ideas

I have already shown, more than once, that no transcendental use can be made of the pure concepts either of the understanding or of reason. The ·thought of the· complete totality of the series of conditions in the sensible world rests entirely on a transcendental use of reason, in which reason demands this unconditioned completeness from something
544 it assumes to be a thing in itself. Since the sensible world doesn't contain any such completeness, we should never ask, concerning the over-all size of a series in the sensible world, whether it is limited or *in itself* unlimited. The only question concerns the empirical regress in which we trace experience back to its conditions, and it is this: If we do this in conformity with the rule of reason, not stopping except with an answer to reason's questions that fit the object, *how far will that take us*?

What still has to be shown is **(i)** that the principle *is* valid as a rule for *continuing*. . . .a possible experience. I have shown well enough **(ii)** that the principle of reason *is not* valid as a constitutive principle of appearances ·viewed as things· in themselves. If we can keep **(ii)** steadily in view, reason's conflict with itself will be entirely at an end. [Translators have given different accounts of what should be kept 'steadily in view'. Müller **(2)**. Kemp Smith **(1)** and **(2)**. Pluhar **(1)**. Guyer and Wood **(1)**. The pronoun Kant uses favours **(1)** rather than **(2)**, but this fits so badly with the rest of the paragraph (as you'll see in a moment) that Müller has to be right—Kant's pronoun was a slip.] That's because this critical solution will both •destroy the illusion that put reason at odds with itself and •reveal the sense in which reason is in harmony with itself—the conflict having arisen solely through misunderstanding of this. In this way a principle that would otherwise have been *dialectical* is turned into something *doctrinal*—·i.e. a threatening source of error and confusion is converted into a solid bit of true theory·. In fact, if this principle holds good in its subjective role as leading to the greatest possible empirical use of understanding *in conformity with the objects of experience*, the upshot will be much the same *as if* it were an axiom that determined *a priori* the objects in themselves (though of course such an axiom couldn't possibly come from reason). Why? Because the only way such an axiom could have any influence in extending and correcting our knowledge of the objects of experience is by busying itself in producing the widest possible empirical use of the understanding, ·which is just what the regulative principle does·.

1. Solution of the cosmological idea of the totality of the composition of the appearances of a cosmic whole

..545 Here, as in the other cosmological questions, the regulative principle of reason is based on this proposition:

> •In the empirical regress we can't experience *an absolute limit*; we can't experience any condition as being *empirically* absolutely unconditioned.

That's because such an experience would have to involve perceiving a limitation of appearances by nothing, i.e. by the void, and it's impossible to perceive a void.

This proposition, which says in effect that the only conditions I can reach in the empirical regress must be regarded 546 as empirically conditioned in their turn, contains the rule that however far along the ascending series I may have gone, I must always enquire about a still higher member of the series, whether or not I find it.

For the solution of the first cosmological problem, therefore, all that's needed is to decide whether, in the regress to the unconditioned spatial and temporal magnitude of the universe, to call this never-limited ascent a regress to •infinity or only an •indefinitely continued regress.

The only general thought I have of •the series of all past states of the world, or of •the series of ever larger spheres of things that coexist in space, is merely an indeterminate ·or indefinite· thought of a possible empirical regress. . . .[15] 547 Now, I have a •concept of the world-as-a-whole but I could never have an •intuition of it. So I can't argue from the size of the world-whole to the size of the regress; that would be back to front; it's only by reference to the size of the empirical regress that I can even have a *concept* of the size of the world. . . . Since the world is not given to me in its totality through any intuition, its size isn't given to me independently of the regress. So we can't say anything at all about the world's size, not even that it contains a regress that proceeds to infinity. Saying the latter would be anticipating members that the regress hasn't yet reached, implying that *there are so many of them that no empirical synthesis could reach them all*; and this would be determining the size of the world (although only negatively) independently of the regress—which is impossible. 548

So I can't say that the world is *infinitely* old or *infinitely* large. That concept of magnitude involves the thought of *a given infinitude*; that is empirically impossible, and so in reference to the world as an object of the senses it is unqualifiedly impossible, ·i.e. impossible *period*·. Nor will I say that the regress from a given perception to everything in its series backwards in time or outwards in space proceeds to *infinity*, because that would imply that the world has infinite magnitude. And I won't say that the regress is *finite* either, because an absolute limit is likewise empirically impossible. So I can't say *anything* about ·the spatial or temporal size of· the whole object of experience, the world of sense; all I can talk about is the rule concerning how experience is to be obtained and further extended. . . .

Thus the first and **negative** answer to the cosmological question about the size of the world is that the world has **no** first beginning in time and **no** outermost limit in space.

To see why, suppose the opposite: the world is limited in one way by empty time and in another by empty space. 549 It can't be limited in either way *in itself*, because it's an appearance and not a thing in itself; so these ·supposed· limits of the world would have to be given in a possible expe-

[15] So this world-series can't be bigger or smaller than the possible empirical regress on which its concept rests. Since this regress can't provide us with a determinate infinite or a determinate finite. . . .it's clear that the spatial and temporal size of the world can't be taken to be finite or to be infinite. The regress through which the world's size is represented rules out both.

rience, i.e. we would have to have a perception of limitation by utterly empty time or utterly empty space. But such an experience, being completely empty of content, is impossible. Thus, an absolute limit of the world is impossible empirically, and therefore impossible *period.*[16]

Out of all this we also get an **affirmative** answer: the regress in the series of appearances, which is what gives us our grip on the notion of the world's size, **does** go on *indefinitely*. This is tantamount to saying that although the sensible world has no absolute ·spatial or temporal· size, the ·relevant· empirical regress. . . .has its own rule, namely:

> •From each conditioned item x in the series, •move back along the series to one that is more remote, namely a condition of x (doing this by means of your
550 own experience or the guiding-thread of history or the chain of effects and causes), and •never slack off from widening the range of the possible empirical use of your understanding.

·The second half of that is justified by the fact that· such extension of the scope of one's understanding is the main thing—the *only* thing—that reason's principles are *for*.

[Kant goes onto say that this rule doesn't require an endless regress, ruling out in advance (for example) finding ancestors that had no ancestor, or a star that is further away than any other star. But the rule does require that in carrying out the regress we must always go from appearances to appearances; and this means that the regress won't ever take us to something that *we recognize as* a limit or boundary. Kant repeats his reasons for this, through a couple more paragraphs.]

[16] Notice how different this proof is from the dogmatic proof of the antithesis of the first antinomy [page 214]. In that argument the sensible world was taken to be what the common and dogmatic view says it is, namely a thing given in itself in its totality, independently of any regress; and the argument said that unless the world occupies all time and all places, it cannot have any determinate position in either of them. So the conclusion of that argument was different from the conclusion I have just reached here, because the dogmatic proof concluded that the world is actually infinite.

2. Solution of the cosmological idea of the totality of the division of a whole given in intuition

If I take a whole thing that is given in intuition and divide ..551
it, I am going from a conditioned item to conditions of its possibility; and if I go on dividing and subdividing, I am pursuing a regress through the series of these conditions. The absolute totality of this series would be given only if the regress could reach *simple* parts, ·i.e. parts that didn't in their turn *have* parts·. If there aren't any simple parts, so that all the parts I encounter as I work through the regress of divisions are themselves also divisible, then the regress of divisions runs to *infinity*. [Kant repeats here the explanation reported in items **(a)** and **(b)** on page 243. Then:] But we aren't entitled to describe a whole that is divisible to infinity as *made up of infinitely many parts*. For although the intuition of the whole contains **all the parts**, it doesn't contain **the whole division**. All there is to the division is the continuous pulling-apart, i.e. the regress through which the series first becomes actual. Since there is no end to this regress, all the members or parts at which it arrives are contained in the given whole, viewed as an *aggregate*. But the whole *series of the division* is not so contained, because it is an infinitely long procedure, so it never constitutes a *whole*, so it isn't something of which we can say 'How many are there?'—'Infinitely many'.

This general point ·about items with parts, considered in the abstract·, is easy to apply to •space. Every space intuited as within limits—·i.e. every limited region of space·—is a whole whose parts, as obtained by decomposition, are

always themselves spaces. So every limited space is infinitely
553 divisible.

And from that we can naturally infer a second application of the position ·taken in the first paragraph of this section·, namely the application of it to outer appearances enclosed within limits, i.e. to •bodies. The divisibility of every body is based on the divisibility of ·every region of· space, for space is just the possibility of a body as an extended whole. So body is also infinitely divisible, though it doesn't consist of infinitely many parts.

One might think that the notion of divisibility applies to •bodies in a quite different way from how it applies to •space, because body has to be represented in space as *substance*. The thought goes like this:

> We certainly can agree that decomposition can never remove all compositeness from space; ·i.e. we can't make sense of the idea of a region of space that isn't made up of small regions·. That's because there's nothing self-subsistent about space; ·a region of space doesn't, metaphysically speaking, stand on its own feet·; so that **(1)** if you think away the region's being made of smaller regions, you have thought away *everything*. But it isn't similarly true that **(2)** if you think away all the compositeness from a portion of matter, you are left with nothing. What makes **(2)** false is the concept of a substance, because a substance is meant to be the subject of all compositeness—·when something is composite, that means that some smaller things or substances have been composed or put together to make it up·—and these substances must survive even if they are taken apart so as to dismantle the body that they make up.

But while this ·account of compositeness in relation to substance· is true of a thing in itself, as thought through a pure concept of the understanding, it doesn't hold for what we call *substance* in the ·domain of· *appearance*. For this latter isn't an absolute subject, ·a metaphysically basic *thing* that *has* various properties and relations·; rather, it is a permanent sensible image; the only way it is anything at all 554
is in intuition, and in intuition nothing unconditioned—·such as a thing that has properties and isn't itself a property of some more basic thing·—is to be found.

[Kant now says firmly that the notion of subdividing matter to infinity is all right when applied to matter regarded merely as **(i)** *stuff that fills space*, but is *not* all right when applied to **(ii)** an organised body—at any rate it's not all right if it means that however far we go in pulling apart the organised body we will always find *organised* parts of it. Leibniz thought that every animal is made up of smaller animals which are made up of still smaller animals . . . and so on to infinity; and Kant, without mentioning Leibniz, declares that 'this is not a thinkable hypothesis'. His point is this:

> In the case of **(i)**, the infinitely many parts come into existence *as parts* only through the process of division; since they are merely *portions of stuff*, there's nothing to mark them off from one another until *we* mark them off. But in the case of **(ii)**—an organism as conceived by Leibniz—the infinity of parts are all there already, marked off from one another by the facts of how they are organised. If there were such an infinity of already-demarcated items, the answer to the question 'How many of them are there?' is 'Infinitely many', and yet their how-many-ness, their cardinality, is perfectly determinate or definite. Kant says that this is self-contradictory.

He goes on to say that a 'how many' that is determinate or definite is 'equal to some *number*', and he clearly thinks that 'infinite number' is a contradiction in terms.]

[This version's awkward wrestlings with 'how many' are attempts to handle Kant's use of *Menge*. Its main dictionary meaning is as a concrete noun meaning 'multitude' or 'mob' (there was a *Menge* gathered in the plaza); but Kant often uses it as an abstract noun that is fairly like *Zahl* = 'number' in its meaning and exactly like it in its grammar. Thus, a phrase like

the *Menge* of parts in a given appearance

means

how many parts there are in a given appearance.

•Two translators have used 'number' to translate both words, but that's wrong because Kant explicitly distinguishes them. A *Zahl* is a definite, determinate, sharp-edged *Menge*; but there can be a *Menge* that isn't a *Zahl* because it is indefinite, indeterminate, fuzzy, or because it is infinite. •A third translator uses 'multitude', which is quite wrong because it's a concrete noun. •Two others translate *Menge* by 'multiplicity', which is better, but still not right because 'multiplicity' means *many-ness*, not ***how**-many-ness*. No one English word does the job; hence the awkwardness.]

Transition from the mathematical to the dynamical transcendental Ideas

556 When I presented the antinomy of pure reason in a list based on the transcendental ideas [see page 210], I showed what the source was of this conflict and showed that the only way to remove it is by declaring both of the opposed assertions to be false. Throughout all this I was making the common-sense assumption that all the conditions are *spatio-temporally* related to the conditioned items; and the conflict comes solely from that. It implies that all the members of the series of conditions for a given conditioned item—the series whose *totality* made all the trouble—are of the same sort throughout: a condition is always a member of the series along with the item that it conditions, and so is *homogeneous* with it. In such a series the regress was never thought of as completed; that would require thinking of some member of it as a first member, i.e. as unconditioned, and this would always be false because all the series' members are conditioned. That's how it came about that even when there was no special interest in the *size* of the conditioned items, the size of the series of its conditions was crucial. It 557
was the series' size that created the difficulty: reason made the series either •too long or •too short for the understanding. And there was no room for compromise there; the difficulty had to be resolved by cutting the knot.

But in all this I was setting aside an essential distinction that divides ·into two pairs· the four concepts of understanding that reason promote to being ideas. According my list, two of these concepts imply a *mathematical* synthesis of appearances, and the other two imply a *dynamical* synthesis of appearances. Until now it has been all right to ignore this distinction, but now we must attend to it because reason's troubles with the dynamical transcendental ideas are open to moves that couldn't be made with the mathematical ones. [Kant explains this somewhat elaborately, using a law-court metaphor; but his basic point can be put more simply and directly: In each of the mathematical kinds of series, the thought of a termination of the series had to be the thought of something that is *in* the series but isn't conditioned as everything else in the series is—**(1)** a first event or outermost shell of stars, **(2)** simple portions of matter. But in the dynamical series—the series of **(3)** ever-earlier causes, and of **(4)** ever-more-general-and-basic-states-of-affairs—there is at least a possibility that a series is terminated (or started) by something that is *not* itself a member of it, i.e. is not homogeneous with the members of the series. In Kant's words:] The heterogeneous can be admitted as at least ..558
possible in the case of dynamical syntheses, both **(3)** that of causal connection and **(4)** that of the connection of the necessary with the contingent.

Thus, in the **(1,2)** mathematical series of appearances the only conditions that we can come to are *sensible* ones, i.e. ones that are themselves parts of the series; but in the **(3,4)** dynamical series there can be conditions that are *merely intelligible* and are therefore not themselves parts of
559 the series. In this way reason obtains satisfaction, and the unconditioned item is posited independently of the appearances, without obscuring the always-conditioned nature of the appearances or cutting the series of them short in a way that violates the principles of the understanding.[17]

Because the dynamical ideas allow that an appearance may have a condition that is not itself an appearance, something happens here that is altogether different from the upshot of the mathematical antinomy. In **(1,2)** the mathematical cases we were forced to denounce the opposed dialectical assertions as **both false**. In **(3,4)** the dynamical series, on the other hand, it may be that the opposed dialectical assertions are **both true**. Here is why: If we trace a series back to some **(a)** unconditioned item that **(b)** isn't sensible and so doesn't belong *in* the series, **(a)** enables us to satisfy reason's demand for something unconditioned, and **(b)** enables us to satisfy the understanding's insistence that everything sensible is conditioned. . . .

3. Solution of the cosmological idea of the totality of the derivation of cosmical events from their causes

[The above **3.** will be followed by **4.** on page 259.] When we are dealing with events, there are only two kinds of causality that we can conceive: causality •according to *nature* and causality •arising from *freedom*. The former is the connection in the sensible world of one state with a preceding state on which it follows according to a rule. If that preceding state had always existed, it couldn't have produced an effect right now; so it must also be ·an event·, something that has happened, which implies that it must have been caused. And so we get the general result, required by a principle of the understanding, that every cause must also be an effect. 561

By 'freedom' in its cosmological sense I understand a thing's power to begin a state *on its own*, ·without help or stimulus from anything else·. So ·an exercise of· the causality of freedom won't result from a temporally prior cause such as is required by the law of nature. ·The concept of· freedom in this sense is a pure transcendental idea, ·its transcendental nature being secured by two facts about it·: First, there's nothing *in* the concept that is borrowed from experience. Second, the freedom that the concept *refers to* can't be given in any experience; because the very possibility of experience depends on its being a universal law that *every event has a cause* that is itself an event and therefore also has a cause. . . , and so on, so that the whole domain of experience, however big it is, is transformed into a sum-total of the merely natural. In this way, however, it isn't possible to get an absolutely complete causal chain, so reason creates for itself the idea of a spontaneity that can begin to act on its own, without having to be kicked into action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality.

It's especially important that this •*transcendental* idea of freedom is the basis for •the practical concept of freedom, and is the source of the difficulties that people have always had over whether practical freedom is possible. To be 'free' 562 in the practical sense is to have a will that isn't compelled by sensuous impulses. A will

[17] Understanding doesn't admit *among appearances* any condition that is itself empirically unconditioned. But if for some conditioned item that is an appearance we can conceive an *intelligible* condition x (one that isn't a member of the series of appearances), doing this without in the least interrupting the series of empirical conditions, x may be accepted as *empirically unconditioned*, without interfering with the continuity of the empirical regress.

•is **sensuous** to the extent that it is affected by sensuous motives; and

•is it is **animal** if it can be *necessitated* by sensuous motives.

The human will is certainly *sensuous*, but rather than being *animal* it is *free*; because its actions aren't *necessitated* by sensibility—a man has a power of self-determination, independently of any coercion by sensuous impulses. [Kant gives Latin labels to the three kinds of will.]

It's easy to see that if all causality in the sensible world were mere nature, then every event would be determined by a preceding event in accordance with necessary laws. The actions of the will would be the natural effects of appearances that were their causes, which means that the will's actions would be necessary. So the abolition of transcendental freedom would carry with it the elimination of all practical freedom. Why? ·The short answer is that if there were no transcendental freedom, all causality would be 'mere nature'. Here is a longer answer·: Practical freedom presupposes that something x that *hasn't* happened *ought* to have happened; and *this* implies that x's natural-world cause didn't determine x in such a way as to exclude a causality of our will—a causality that can act independently of and even contrary to the influence of those natural causes, •producing something that is determined in the time-order in accordance with empirical laws, •thus beginning a series of events *entirely of itself*.

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The question of whether freedom is possible poses a challenge to psychology, but the problem about it isn't a •physiological one [see note on page 1], ·i.e. it's not a problem that could be solved by an empirical study of how human minds work·. Why not? Because it rests on dialectical arguments of pure reason, so that its treatment and solution belong exclusively to •transcendental philosophy. (This is an example of a general fact: *whenever* reason gets into conflict with itself through venturing beyond the limits of possible experience, the problem that arises is *transcendental* and not *physiological*.) Transcendental philosophy can't decline the task of solving this problem, but before I get into that I must specify in more detail how it's going to go about the job.

[Kant begins this by saying that if appearances were things in themselves, all the series of conditions—the dynamical as well as the mathematical ones—would be homogeneous, so that in all four cases the trouble would concern series that were either too large or too small for the understanding. But in fact the dynamical ideas—our topic in this subsection and the next—differ from the mathematical ones in that they don't involve any issue about the *size* of the regress. They do raise an issue about whether in each case there is something unconditioned, but if there is it's something right outside the realm of appearances—neither a series that is cut off somewhere along its length nor a series that continues for ever. Kant continues:] So we can abstract from the size of the series of conditions, and consider only the dynamical relation of the condition to the conditioned. 564

·In this dynamical area, we won't have any difficulty about a series's being too big or too small; our concern will be purely with the question of whether anything in the series is conditioned by something that isn't in it·. So our present question about nature and freedom is this:

•Is freedom possible at all? If it is, can it co-exist with the universality of the natural law of causality? Is it right to say that every effect in the world must arise *either* from nature *or* from freedom, meaning that it can't arise from both? Shouldn't we rather say that a single event can arise in different ways from both?

All events in the sensible world are thoroughly inter-connected

in accordance with unchangeable laws of nature—that's an established principle of the Transcendental Analytic, and no exceptions are allowed. Our present question concerns whether freedom is completely excluded by this unbreakable rule, or whether an effect that is thus determined in accordance with nature might not *also* be grounded in freedom. This is a case where the common but deceptive assumption of the *absolute reality* of appearances—·i.e. the assumption that they are things in themselves·—exerts its harmful influence, throwing reason into confusion. If appearances are things in themselves, freedom can't be saved, for in that case nature will be the complete and sufficient determining
565 cause of every event. . . . If, on the other hand, appearances are taken for what they actually are—not things in themselves, but merely representations connected according to empirical laws—they must themselves have •grounds that aren't appearances. The effects of •such an intelligible cause are appearances, so they can be determined through other appearances, but the causality of the intelligible cause is not determined in that way. [The apparent equation of non-empirical *grounds* of appearances with intelligible *causes* of appearances is Kant's, not a by-product of any liberties taken in this version. For Kant those are two ways of talking about the thing-in-itself that a given appearance is an appearance *of*.] While the effects are to be found in the series of empirical conditions, the intelligible cause along with its causality is outside the series. Thus the effect can be regarded as

> •being free in regard to its intelligible cause

while also

> •resulting from appearances according to the necessity of nature.

Expressed in this general and abstract manner, this distinction is bound to seem extremely subtle and obscure, but it will become clear when I put it to work. All I have wanted to do here is to point out that because it's an unbreakable law that in a context of nature all appearances are thoroughly causally interconnected, the inevitable upshot of obstinately insisting on the ·transcendental· reality of appearances is to destroy all freedom. . . .

Possibility of causality through freedom, in harmony with the universal law of natural necessity

If an appearance x in the sensible world has in itself a 566
faculty ·or power· that isn't an object of sensible intuition but through which x can be the cause of appearances, x's causality can be regarded from two points of view: regarded as the causality of a thing in itself, it is **intelligible in its action**; regarded as the causality of an appearance in the world of sense, it is **sensible in its effects**. (I label as 'intelligible' anything having to do with an object of the senses that isn't itself appearance.) So we would have to form both an empirical and an intellectual concept of the causality of x's faculty, with a single effect, y, falling under both concepts. ·That is: we can say that x has a power or faculty to produce$_{emp}$ y, and a power to produce$_{int}$ y·. This two-sided way of conceiving a faculty possessed by an object of the senses doesn't conflict with any of our indispensable concepts of appearances or of possible experience. Here is why. Any appearance x, not being a thing in itself, is an appearance *of* some transcendental object that gives x the features that it has as an appearance; so the way is clear for us to ascribe to this transcendental object, besides 567
the features it has as an appearance, a *causality*—·a *way of producing*·—that is not itself an appearance though its *effect* is to be met with in appearance. Every cause must have a *character*, i.e. a law of its causality, without which it wouldn't be a cause. [Kant means that if A causes B it must do so because of some facts about A's nature, facts that hook into a law

dictating that anything whose nature is like A's in the relevant respect will have something like B as an effect.] In the case we are now envisaging, there would be a subject x belonging to the sensible world which had

(i) an *empirical character* through which its actions are thoroughly connected up with other appearances in accordance with unvarying laws of nature. . . .; this is x's character as an appearance; and

(ii) an *intelligible character*, through which x is indeed the cause of those same actions, but which is not itself an appearance; this is x's character as a thing in itself.

(These two kinds of causality or production, one an appearance and the other not, both have effects that *are* appearances: ·we are talking about empirical and intelligible causes of, for example, someone's uttering certain words or pulling a certain trigger·.)

Now this acting subject x would not, in its intelligible character, have any temporal features, because time is a condition only of appearances and not of things in themselves. In x ·in its intelligible character· no *action* would *begin* or
568 *cease*; so it wouldn't have to conform to the law governing everything that does happen in time, namely that every *event* must have its cause in the *appearances* that precede it. In short: x's intelligible causality wouldn't have a place in the series of empirical conditions through which the event is made to be necessary in the world of sense. Of course this intelligible character can never be immediately known, for nothing can be perceived except in so far as it appears. It would have to be *thought* in accordance with the empirical character—just as we can't help *thinking* a transcendental object as underlying appearances, though we know nothing of what it is in itself.

Thus, the subject x in its empirical character—i.e. in its role as an appearance—would have to conform to all the laws of causal determination. All it would be is a part of the world of sense, and its effects must, like all other appearances, be the inevitable outcome of nature. They can in principle be completely determined by and explained through outer appearances in accordance with the laws of nature. . . . 569

In its intelligible character (though all we have of *that* is a general concept), this same subject x must be considered to be free from all influence of sensibility and from all determination through appearances. Because it is a noumenon, nothing *happens* in it; so it can't involve any change that would have to come from a prior cause, and therefore it doesn't causally depend on appearances. Therefore, because natural necessity is to be met with only in the sensible world, this active being must in its actions be free from all such necessity. No action begins *in* this active being itself; but we can quite correctly say that the active being *of itself* begins its effects in the sensible world. That isn't to say that the effects in the sensible world can begin of themselves; *they* are always predetermined—though solely through their empirical character (which is merely the appearance of the intelligible character)—by antecedent empirical conditions, so that their occurrence is just another link in the natural causal chain. That is how •freedom and •nature, in the full sense of these terms, can exist together in the same actions, according as the actions are related to their intelligible or to their sensible cause.

How the cosmological idea of freedom connects with universal natural necessity

I thought I should sketch this outline of the solution of our 570
transcendental problem so as to give a better view of the course that reason takes in solving it. I'll now present the various factors involved in this solution, considering each in detail.

Here's a law of nature:

> •Every event has a cause; •what a cause C *does* to cause an effect E must occur earlier than E, and must be something that has *happened* rather than a state of affairs that has always obtained, so that C in turn must have been brought about by a still earlier cause in the realm of appearances; and therefore •all events are empirically determined in an order of nature.

It's only because of this law that appearances constitute a *nature* and become objects of experience. It's a law of the understanding, and *every* appearance falls under it with *no* exceptions. (If we allowed that some appearance wasn't bound by this law, we would be putting that appearance
571 beyond the reach of any possible experience, turning it into a mere thought-entity, a figment of the brain.)

From this it looks as though there can't be an *absolute totality* of any back-tracking causal chain; but we don't have a problem with that, because the point has already been dealt with in the general discussion of reason's conflictedness when in the series of appearances it proceeds to the unconditioned. . . . The only question here is this: Admitting that in the whole series of events there is only natural necessity, is it possible to regard a single event as being on one hand merely an effect of •nature and on the other hand an effect due to •freedom? Or are these two kinds of causality inconsistent with one another?

[Kant now has a paragraph insistently reiterating that events, appearances, can't contribute to a causal chain without having first been produced through a causal chain.
..572 It's no use looking to *them* for instances of freedom. Then:]

Given that effects are appearances and that their causes are appearances too, is it necessary that *the causality of* their cause is exclusively empirical? Mightn't the following alternative state of affairs be the real one?

> Although every effect in the ·domain of· appearance must be connected with its cause in accordance with the laws of empirical causality, this empirical causality is—without the least violation of its connection with natural causes—an effect of a causality that is not empirical but intelligible.

[On the preceding page Kant has said that the empirical character is 'merely the appearance of' the intelligible character; now he is saying that empirical causality is (not the appearance of, but) an effect of intelligible causality.] [Kant continues with some stunningly obscure remarks whose general tenor is that this causality of freedom is a self-starter that doesn't have a preceding cause (and indeed doesn't occur in time), though its effect in the realm of appearance is itself an appearance that fits into an entirely natural causal chain. Then:]

We *need* the principle of the causal connection of appearances if we are to be able to explore and learn about the •natural conditions of natural events, i.e. •events' causes in the ·domain of· appearance. If we accept this principle and don't allow any exceptions to it, •physical [see note on page 193] explanations can proceed on their own lines without interference , and •the understanding gets everything it can demand—I'm talking about how the understanding in its empirical use rightly insists on seeing nothing but nature. Nothing gets in the way of any of this if we assume the following (even if we adopt it only as a fiction):

> Some natural causes also have a faculty ·= power· that is ·not •sensible but· only •intelligible, because it is activated solely by •grounds in the understanding and never by •empirical conditions, though the action of these causes in the ·domain of· appearance conforms with all the laws of empirical causality. In this way the acting subject as a phenomenal cause is tied in with nature through the unbroken dependence

> of all its actions ·on their natural causes·, and it's only by ascending from the empirical object to the transcendental one that we find that this phenomenal subject contains, along with all its causality in the ·domain of· appearance, certain conditions that must be regarded as purely intelligible.

This won't interfere with our understanding's going about its legitimate business of determining what causes what in the domain of appearances, following the rules of nature, because in doing that we needn't *raise* the question 'What kind of ground for these appearances and their connections must exist in the transcendental subject that is empirically unknown to us?' This intelligible ground doesn't threaten our •empirical enquiries, and is solely the business of the •pure
574 understanding. The *effects* of what the pure understanding thinks and does are to be found among the appearances, but they ·won't interfere with disciplined empirical investigations because they· must be capable of complete causal explanation through other appearances in accordance with natural laws. Our explanations of them must be utterly based on their strictly empirical character; their intelligible character (i.e. the transcendental cause of their empirical character) won't come into it because it is completely unknown to us except in so far as the empirical is a sensible sign of it.

Let us apply this to experience. Man is one of the appearances in the sensible world, and therefore one of the natural causes whose causality is subject to empirical laws. Like everything else in nature, man must have an empirical character. We come to know this character through the powers and faculties that it reveals in its effects. In inorganic or sub-human animal nature we don't find any reason to think that there's a faculty at work that is conditioned in any but a non-sensible manner. But man ·is different: he· knows all the rest of nature solely through his senses, but knows *himself* also through pure self-awareness; and this knowledge concerns acts and inner states that he can't regard as impressions of the senses. He is thus to himself (on the one hand) •phenomenon, and (on the other hand) •a purely intelligible object because of certain faculties ·= powers· whose action can't be ascribed to the receptive- 575
ness of sensibility—faculties that we call 'understanding' and 'reason'. In particular we distinguish *reason* in a quite special and prominent way from all empirically conditioned powers. That's because reason views its objects exclusively in the light of *ideas*, and in accordance with them it shapes up the understanding, which then proceeds to make an empirical use of its own similarly pure concepts.

In all matters of conduct we use *imperatives*, which we impose as rules on our active powers; and that makes clear that our reason is causally active, or at least that we represent it to ourselves as being so. The word 'ought' expresses a kind of necessity, and a kind of connection with grounds ·or reasons·, that isn't found anywhere else in the whole of nature. All the understanding can know in nature is what

> •is, has been, will be.

It's impossible that anything in nature

> •ought to be

different from how it actually is at its given moment in history. Indeed, when it's only nature that we are dealing with, 'ought' has no meaning whatsoever. It's as absurd to ask what *ought* to happen in the natural world as to ask what properties a circle *ought* to have. The only legitimate questions are 'What *did* happen?' and 'What properties *does* the circle have?'

This 'ought' expresses a possible action, the reason for which is nothing but a mere •concept; whereas the reason for a merely natural action must always be an •appearance. 576
[In that sentence 'reason' translates *Grund* = 'ground'. Kant is using

it to contrast reasons or grounds like this: **(i)** 'Why ought I to help him?' 'Because that's the honourable thing to do'; **(ii)** 'Why did it burn?' 'Because lightning struck it'.] The action to which the 'ought' is being applied must indeed be possible under natural conditions, but these play no part in determining the will itself, only in determining what effect the act of the will has in the ·domain of· appearance. No matter how many natural grounds or how many sensuous impulses impel me to *will*, they can't give rise to the 'ought' but only to a willing that is far from being necessary and is always conditioned. The 'ought' *confronts* that kind of willing, limiting it, steering it, indeed outright forbidding or authorizing it. Whether what is willed belongs to mere sensibility (the pleasant) or to pure reason (the good), reason won't back down in face of any ground that is empirically given. In these situations reason doesn't follow the order of things as they show up in appearance. What it does instead, with absolutely no outside prodding, is to make for itself •an order of its own according to ideas; it adapts the empirical conditions to •this order, and on the basis of •it declares actions to be necessary even if they haven't happened and perhaps never will. Through all this, reason assumes that it can have causality in regard to all these actions, because otherwise no empirical effects could be expected from its ideas.

Now let's stick with this, and regard it as at least *possible*
577 for reason to have real causality with respect to appearances. If it does, then reason. . . .must exhibit an empirical character. Why? [The gist of Kant's explanation seems to be this: If the will is a *cause*, then it must operate according to rules of the 'if same-cause then same-effect' sort; so the will has to have features that enable it to fit under such a rule, and to the extent that these features have to show up empirically we can call them the 'empirical character' of the will. Kant continues:] This empirical character doesn't change, but the effects of it do, because of changes in the environment.

Thus every man's faculty of will has an empirical character, which is nothing but the facts about the causality of his reason that show up in a regular way in his reason's effects in the ·domain of· appearance. Because of this regularity or rule, people other than the man himself can draw conclusions about. . . .•what his reason does and •why, thereby making an estimate about the subjective principles of his will. This empirical character has to be discovered from the appearances that it gives rise to and from the rule to which experience shows them to conform; and from this it follows that:

> All men's actions in the ·domain of· appearance are causally determined by their empirical character and by other cooperating causes. If we could get right to the bottom of all the appearances of men's wills, there 578
> wouldn't be a single human action that we couldn't predict with certainty, and recognise as necessarily flowing from its antecedent conditions.

[That's the first time in this work that Kant has brought *predictability* into his statement of determinism—and the last.] As regards this empirical character, then, there is no freedom; yet it's only in the light of this character that a man can be studied—if we are simply *observing* him, like anthropologists, conducting a physiological [see note on page 1] investigation into the effective causes of his actions.

But when we consider these very same actions in the light of the man's practical or moral *reasons for* them, rather than the natural *causes of* them, we find a rule and order altogether different from the order of nature. ·That this practical order is different from the natural one is shown by something I said earlier·: It could be that everything that *has happened* in the course of nature (happening inevitably because of empirical causes) *ought not to have happened*.

·But the difference between them is real even when they don't diverge·: we sometimes find—or at least think we find—that •the ideas of reason have actually proved their causality in respect of men's action considered as appearances, and that •these actions have occurred not because they were determined by empirical causes, no, but because they were
579 determined by grounds of reason.

Granted, then, that reason can be said to have causality in respect of appearance, can its action still be said to be free, given that its •sense-related empirical character is completely and necessarily determined in all its detail? This empirical character is itself determined in the •thought-related intelligible character. But we don't know the intelligible character; our only indication of it is given by appearances; and the only immediate knowledge that these give us is of the sense-related empirical character.[18] ·We nevertheless *do* bring intelligible characters into our ways of thinking about people's behaviour, but let's understand what we're doing when we do this·. In attributing an action to a thought-related cause, ·i.e. to the person's intelligible character·, we aren't saying that the action *follows* from the intelligible character in accordance with empirical laws. The action isn't *preceded* by •the conditions of pure reason, but only by •their effects in the ·domain of· appearance of inner sense. Pure reason is a purely intelligible faculty, so there's nothing temporal about it—it doesn't enter into sequences of events. The causality of reason in its intelligible character does not, in producing an effect, *arise* or come into play at a certain time. If it did, it would be subject to the natural law of 580
appearances, according to which causal series are stretched out through time, in which case its causality would be nature, not freedom. So we can say this: If reason can have causality in respect of appearances, it is a faculty *through* which a sensible condition ·= cause· comes into play. The condition that lies within reason isn't sensible, so it doesn't come into play itself. In this way something comes into view that we couldn't find in any empirical series, namely that the condition of a successive series of events may itself be empirically unconditioned. For here the condition is *outside* the series of appearances—it's in the intelligible ·domain, not the sensible one·—so it isn't subject to any sensible condition or to having a temporally prior cause.

Yet this same cause does, in another relation, belong to the series of appearances. A man is himself an appearance. His will has an empirical character, which is the empirical cause of all his actions; and all those causings are contained in the series of natural effects and are subject to the law according to which everything that happens in time has an empirical cause. This implies that no given action. . . .can 581
begin entirely *of itself*, ·without any temporally prior cause·. But we ·can't talk in this way about pure reason. We· can't say that the state in which *it* determines the will is preceded and caused by some other state. That's because reason isn't an appearance, so it isn't subject to any conditions of sensibility, so even as regards its causality it isn't temporal, and the dynamical law of nature—embodying the rules about what temporally and causally follows from what—doesn't apply to it.

Reason is the permanent condition of all the voluntary actions by which a man takes his place in the domain of appearance. Each of these actions is, before it actually

[18] So the real morality of actions (merit and guilt), even that of our own conduct, remains entirely hidden from us. When we pass moral judgment on someone we can only be concerned with his *empirical* character. We can never know to what extent this character is to be attributed to the pure effect of freedom, and to what extent it's a matter of mere nature—innocent faults of temperament or sheer good luck in having a good temperament. So we can't make any perfectly just judgments about this.

happens, settled in the empirical character—·i.e. settled as something that is bound to happen·. In respect of the intelligible character (of which the empirical character is only the sensible schema) there's no role for *before* and *after*; and every action—no matter how it relates temporally to other appearances—is the immediate effect of the intelligible character of pure reason. So reason acts freely; it isn't acted on by temporally preceding natural causes, outer or inner. Don't think of this freedom only •negatively—'pure reason is *not* subject to empirical conditions'. Looked at only in that negative way, the faculty of reason would lose its
582 role as a cause of appearances. It should also be described in •positive terms, as the power to originate—·to start up, without being prodded to do so·—a series of events. So nothing begins *in* reason itself; as an *unconditioned* condition of every voluntary act, it can't have conditions that predate it. An effect of reason does have a beginning in the series of appearances, but it—·the effect·—never constitutes an utterly first beginning in the series.

Let's look at an example. I don't mean to *confirm* this regulative principle of reason by showing it at work empirically, because you can't prove transcendental propositions by examples. I want the example simply as an illustration. Let it be a malicious lie through which social harm has been done. We try first **(i)** to discover the motivating causes of the lie, and then in the light of these **(ii)** to determine how far the man who told the lie can be held accountable for the action and its consequences. In connection with **(i)** we trace the liar's empirical character to its sources, finding these in a bad upbringing, evil company, partly also in shameless viciousness of his natural disposition, and in frivolity and rashness; and we don't forget to look also into the on-the-spot causes that helped cause the lie. In all this we proceed just as we would in *any* inquiry into the causal chain leading to a natural effect. But although we believe that the action was determined by all these causes, 583
we still **(ii)** blame the man. We *don't* blame him for his unfortunate natural make-up, or for the circumstances that have influenced him, or even for his previous way of life. We adopt the supposition that we can •entirely set aside any facts about how his life has unrolled, can •regard the past series of conditions as not having occurred, and can •see his act as completely unconditioned by any preceding state, as if by this action the man had started up an entirely new series of consequences, doing this all by himself ·and without being caused to do so by any preceding cause·. Our blame is based on a law of reason according to which reason is to be regarded as a cause which—irrespective of all the above-mentioned empirical conditions—*could* have and *ought to* have made the man act otherwise. This causality of reason is to be regarded not as merely a co-operating agency but as complete in itself, even when the sensible (·empirical·) drives don't favour it but are directly opposed to it. The action is ascribed to the agent's intelligible character; at the moment when he utters the lie, the fault is entirely his. Whatever the empirical conditions of the act, ·his· reason is completely free, and its failure is to be given the whole blame for the lie.

This judgment of accountability clearly shows us as being in a frame of mind where we think that reason

- •isn't affected by those sensible influences;
- •isn't liable to alteration, although its appearances— 584
  i.e. the ways it shows up through its effects—do alter;
- •doesn't have earlier states and later ones;

and therefore

- •doesn't belong to any causal chain in which appearances necessitate other appearances in accordance with laws of nature.

Reason is present in all the actions of men at all times and under all circumstances, and is always the same; but it isn't itself in time, and doesn't fall into any new state that it wasn't in before. In respect to new states, it is *determining*, not *determinable*. So the question 'Why hasn't reason determined *itself* differently?' is illegitimate ·because reason hasn't been determined by anything, itself or anything else·; whereas the question 'Why hasn't reason through its causality determined the *appearances* differently?' is legitimate, except that no answer to it is possible! For a different intelligible character would have given a different empirical character, ·because the empirical character is just the appearance of the intelligible character·. When we say that in spite of his whole previous course of life the agent 'could have' refrained from lying, this only means that the act is under the immediate power of reason, and that reason in its causality is not subject to any conditions of appearance or of time. Although difference of time makes a basic difference to appearances in their relations to one another—for appearances are not things in themselves and therefore not causes in themselves—it can't affect how the
585 action relates to reason.

Thus in our judgments concerning the causality of free actions, we can get as far as the intelligible cause, but not beyond it. We can know that it is free, i.e. that it is determined independently of sensibility, and that in this way it may be the sensibly unconditioned condition of appearances. But as for the question

> Why in these circumstances does the intelligible character give just *these* appearances and *this* empirical character?

—that's something that our reason has no power to answer, and indeed no right to ask. (It's like asking 'Why does the transcendental object of our outer sensible intuition give us intuition in *space* only and not some other mode of intuition?') But the problem that we had to solve doesn't require us to raise any such questions. Our question was just this: 'Can freedom and natural necessity exist together without conflict in one and the same action?' and I have sufficiently answered this. I have shown that the conditions of •freedom are quite different from the conditions of •natural necessity, so that the law of •natural necessity has no affect on •freedom, which implies that •both can exist ·together·, without interfering with each other.

• • •

Please understand that in these remarks I haven't been trying to establish that the ·transcendental· causes of the 558
appearances of our sensible world *really do* include a faculty of freedom. Investigating whether *that* is so involves more than just concepts, so it couldn't be a transcendental inquiry. And anyway it couldn't have succeeded, because we can never •infer from experience anything that we can't •think in accordance with the laws of experience. I haven't even been trying to prove the *possibility* of freedom; because I couldn't have succeeded in that either: we can't from mere concepts show *a priori* the possibility of any causality, any real basis for anything. Freedom is here being treated only as a transcendental idea through which reason •plans to use something that isn't sensibly conditioned to start up a series of conditions in the ·domain of· appearance, and so •becomes tangled in a conflict—an antinomy—with the very laws that reason itself prescribes for the empirical use of the understanding. All I have shown, all I have *wanted* to show, is that this antinomy rests on a sheer illusion, and that causality through freedom is at least *not incompatible with* nature.

4. Solution of the cosmological idea of the totality of the dependences of appearances as regards their existence in general

587 [The above **4.** follows on from **3.** on page 249.] In subsection 3 we were looking at changes in the sensible world in their role as a dynamical series, with each member subordinate to another as effect to cause. Now we're going to use this series of states only to guide us in our search for a being that can serve as the highest condition of everything that is changeable, i.e. in our search for the *necessary being*. What this is about is not •unconditioned causality but the •unconditioned existence of substance itself. ·That is, it's not about events' being caused by something that wasn't itself caused, but about states of affairs' depending on the existence of something that doesn't itself depend on anything·. So our topic is not a series of •intuitions in which one intuition is the condition of the next, but rather a series of •concepts. [That contrast between intuitions and concepts presumably echoes the unannounced switch from a series of 'changes' in the first sentence of this paragraph to 'this series of states' in the second.]

[Kant now offers an obscure paragraph, which owes its difficulty partly to a misplaced and distracting argumentative flourish about what would be the case 'if appearances were things in themselves'. The relevantly working content of this paragraph is just the point that if we're looking for something whose existence is unqualifiedly necessary (i.e. not merely necessary *for* such-and-such), we won't find it •in the series of all appearances, because *they* are all 'conditioned in their existence', meaning that they all exist only contingently. The following paragraph says that perhaps we can find it •outside
..588 the series of appearances. Thus:]

But the dynamical regresses differ in an important way from the mathematical ones. Any mathematical regress is concerned only with **(1)** combining parts to form a whole, or **(2)** dividing a whole into parts; so the conditions of such a series must always be regarded as parts of the series—i.e. as appearances and as homogeneous with the rest. In a dynamical regress, on the other hand, we are concerned not with wholes and parts but with **(3)** the derivation of a state from its cause or **(4)** derivation of the contingent existence of substance itself from necessary existence. In **(3)** and **(4)**, therefore, the condition doesn't have to be a part of an empirical series along with the conditioned. [Just to make sure that it's clear: **(3)** concerns facts about *alterations in* substances that stay in existence throughout, while **(4)** concerns facts about the existence of those substances.—Not long ago we saw Kant writing in terms of **(3)** 'changes' versus **(4)** 'states'; now he is writing in terms of **(3)** 'states' versus **(4)** 'substance'. This is bad behaviour, but it probably has no doctrinal significance.] So there remains a way of escape from this apparent antinomy: perhaps the two conflicting propositions are both true when placed in different contexts. The situation may be this:

> All things in the world of sense are contingent, and thus have only an empirically conditioned existence; but there is a non-empirical condition of the whole series; i.e. an unconditionally necessary being.

This necessary being, as the *intelligible* condition of the series, wouldn't be a member of the series, ·whose members are all empirical·; so it wouldn't affect the *empirically conditioned* 589
status of each member of the empirical series. . . . This way of **(4)** laying an unconditioned being at the basis of appearance differs from the approach in **(3)** involving the empirically unconditioned causality of freedom. In **(3)** it was the causality of a certain thing that was intelligible and unconditioned; the thing itself, the substance, that *had* the freedom was thought of as a member of the series of conditions—·it was in fact just a plain empirical-world person such as you or me·.

Whereas here in **(4)** the necessary being must be thought of as itself lying outside the series of the sensible world, and as purely intelligible. That's the only way to save it from falling under the law that declares all appearances to be contingent and dependent.

The *regulative principle of reason*, in its bearing on **(4)** our present problem, says this:

> •Everything in the sensible world has an empirically conditioned existence, and isn't unconditionally necessary in respect of any of its qualities. For every member of the series of conditions we must •expect, and as far as possible •seek, an empirical condition in some possible experience. We never have any right to derive an existence from a condition outside the empirical series, or to regard anything *in* the series as utterly independent and self-sufficient.

Yet this principle doesn't *at all* debar us from recognising
590 that the whole series may rest on some intelligible being that is free from all empirical conditions and itself contains the ground of the possibility of all appearances.

I'm not trying to prove the unconditionally necessary existence of such a being; I'm not even trying to prove the *possibility* of a purely intelligible condition of the existence of appearances in the sensible world. ·My point is merely that if such a being *is* impossible, its impossibility can't come from any considerations concerning the sensible world. We lay down two limitations·. On the one hand:

> •We set limits to *reason*, preventing it from leaving the guiding-thread of empirical conditions and straying into the *transcendent* and explaining things in terms that can't be cashed out empirically.

And also, on the other hand (·this being my present point·):

> •We set limits to *the law of the purely empirical use of the understanding*, preventing it from •making decisions about the possibility of things in general—·i.e. of things of *any* sort·—and •ruling that intelligible things are not merely incapable of explaining appearances but are *impossible*.

What I have been arguing is that •the thoroughgoing contingency of all natural things and of all their empirical conditions is quite consistent with •the. . . .assumption of a necessary though purely intelligible condition; and that as there is no real contradiction between the two assertions, *both may be true*. ·This is a claim of the form 'Q is true and P is consistent with it', and *not* one of the form 'it is possible that P'·. Perhaps an unqualifiedly necessary being. . . .*is* in itself impossible, but its impossibility can't be inferred from •the universal contingency and dependence 591
of everything belonging to the sensible world, or from •the principle that forbids us to stop at any member x of the contingent members and appeal to a cause outside the world as explaining x. Reason goes along one path in its empirical use, and along its own special path in its transcendental use.

The sensible world contains nothing but appearances; these are mere representations that are always sensibly conditioned; the objects we encounter in this domain are never things in themselves. So it's not surprising that in dealing with a member—*any* member—of the empirical series we're never justified in making a leap out beyond the sensible network. Making such a leap would be treating appearances as if they were things in themselves that exist apart from their transcendental ground and can be left standing while we look for an outside cause of their existence. That ·procedure of leaping outside and looking around· is what we would eventually have to do if we wanted to explain the existence of contingent *things*; but with mere *representations* of things the procedure isn't legitimate. The point is that

their contingency is *itself* merely one of the phenomena, so it can be dealt with only in terms of the regress that governs the phenomena, i.e. solely in terms of the *empirical* regress. But the thought of an *intelligible* ground of the appearances. . . .as being free from the contingency of appearances doesn't conflict with •the unlimited empirical regress in the series
592 of appearances or with •their thoroughgoing contingency. That's all I had to do in order to dispose of the apparent antinomy; and this is the *only* way to do it. [Kant goes through the argument again, and again insists at length that allowing for a purely intelligible condition of appearances doesn't interfere in the slightest with the regulative principle that orders us always to expect and seek empirical conditions for empirical conditioned items.]

Concluding note on the whole antinomy of pure reason

..593 So long as our business with our concepts of reason has to do only with •the totality of conditions in the sensible world and •the question of what they can do to satisfy reason, our ideas are at once transcendental and *cosmological*—·i.e. transcendental and *about-the-world*·. But as soon as we posit something unconditioned (and that's what all this is really about) in something that is entirely outside the sensible world and thus outside all possible experience, the ideas become *transcendent*. Until that happens, they serve only for completing the empirical use of reason—an idea ·of completeness· that can't ever be fully achieved though it must always be pursued. But *now* the ideas cut loose entirely from experience, and make for themselves objects for which experience supplies no material, and whose objective reality is based not on completion of the empirical series but on pure *a priori* concepts. [To say that they 'make for themselves objects which. . . ' is to say that they purport to be ideas *of* something which. . .] Such transcendent ideas have a purely intelligible object. It's all right for us to admit this object as a transcendental object about which we know nothing else; but we can't have a determinate thought about it, picking it out in our thought as 'the item that is F and G and H', where those letters stand for predicates expressing what the object is intrinsically like. That's because we don't have *either* of the things that would be needed for such a thought: because this object is independent of all empirical concepts, •we are cut off from any reasons that could establish that the 594
object is even possible, and •we haven't the least justification for assuming that there is such an object. So it's a mere thought-entity. But we're pushed into risking this step by just one of all the cosmological ideas, namely the one that gives rise to the fourth antinomy. That's because the existence of appearances is never self-explanatory; it is always conditioned ·by something else·, so we have to look around for something different from all appearances, i.e. for an intelligible object in which this contingency may terminate. But once we have allowed ourselves to assume a self-subsistent [= 'self-explanatory'] reality entirely outside the domain of sensibility, appearances can only be viewed as contingent ways in which beings that are themselves intelligences represent intelligible objects. So ·in our attempt to get some sort of hold on things that are only intelligible·, all we are left with is *analogy*, through which we can use the concepts of experience to form *some* sort of concept of intelligible things—without knowing anything about these things as they are in themselves. Since anything contingent can be known only through experience, and we're concerned here with things that are not to be in any way objects of experience, we'll have to derive our knowledge of them from that which is in itself necessary, i.e. from pure concepts of things in general. Thus the very first step that we take outside the world of sense requires us to begin our search 595

for new knowledge ·of intelligible things· by investigating the unqualifiedly necessary being, and to derive from the concepts of *it* the concepts of purely intelligible things in general. That's what I aim to do in the next chapter.