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Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason by Marcus Willaschek (review)

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Journal of the History of Philosophy, Volume 58, Number 1, January 2020,
pp. 181-182 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2020.0018>



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Marcus Willaschek. *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xii + 298. Cloth, \$105.00.

This book is about the Transcendental Dialectic in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (*CPR*). Unlike most other treatments of this subject matter, it does not focus on Kant's criticisms of metaphysical arguments. Rather, it considers Kant's account of why "metaphysical speculation about the unconditioned"—for instance, about objects like God or the entire world—"arises naturally and inevitably out of the very structure of human reason" (8).

Willaschek posits "a three-part template underlying" Kant's account of how we are led to make unwarranted metaphysical judgments: "(1) a transition from the logical to the real or transcendental use of reason and its ideas and principles, (2) the tendency to misuse the latter by treating them as constitutive rather than regulative, and (3) the tacit assumption of transcendental realism as an explanation of that tendency" (264–65). Overall, Willaschek makes a plausible case for the explanatory potency of this template as a clue to reading the different parts of the Dialectic. I want to consider two features of his interpretation that seem to me especially interesting and controversial.

With regard to (1) and (2), Willaschek suggests (107–9, 120–24) that Kant's account of why various logical principles presuppose transcendental principles, in the Appendix to the Dialectic, allows us to understand his argument in the Introduction, when he makes his fundamental move from a merely logical principle to *the* Supreme Principle of speculative metaphysics: an unconditioned totality of conditions exists for every given conditioned object. However, it is not clear whether one can read the Appendix argument into the Introduction. In the Appendix, Kant accepts the transcendental assumption that nature contains (some indeterminate degree of) unity as legitimate. But he denies that nature could contain the unconditioned. Willaschek argues that the legitimate transcendental assumptions in each case are only regulative (160). For Willaschek, this means that we must not take these assumptions to be true: rather, we should assume the relevant features (the homogeneity of nature, or the unconditioned) only problematically, in the hypothetical use of reason (114–25, 131–34). However, for Kant, a merely hypothetical status is, arguably, not sufficient for the transcendental assumptions he considers in the Appendix (*CPR*A 649–54/B 677–81). Moreover, granting Willaschek's (controversial) view that the hypothetical use of reason does not involve (any degree of) assent, making a hypothetical assumption requires at least that it *might* be true. But, for Kant, the assumption that an unconditioned totality exists in nature is necessarily false. Thus, it is not clear whether Kant could assign the Supreme Principle a regulative-transcendental status that is modeled on the principles he discusses in the Appendix. This raises some doubts about Willaschek's interpretation of the status and origin of the Supreme Principle.

With regard to (2) and (3), Willaschek argues that human reason tacitly identifies empirical objects with things in themselves. For Willaschek, this amounts to the assumption that empirical objects are noumena in the positive sense qua objects of a divine intellect (141–45). We conflate a regulative with a constitutive use of rational principles *because* we assume that nature must exhibit a rational, divinely ordained order (161–62, 240, 245). This is a plausible take on how Kant conceives the road into rationalist metaphysics. But I am not sure how it could apply to Kant's conception of the empiricist (or, as we might say, naturalistic) metaphysics that underlies materialism, universal determinism, and atheism. Kant distinguishes between two basic kinds of realism (*CPR* A 781/B 809; cf. A 466/B 494): one posits special unconditioned objects outside nature, the other claims that there is nothing outside nature and that the principles of nature or experience govern all things in general. Willaschek tends to assimilate the latter to the former version of realism (148, 245–51).

This worry also affects Willaschek's suggestion that one can accept Kant's critique of metaphysics without accepting his idealism because there are good reasons apart from his idealism not to accept the realist idea that nature is a perfectly rational order (250–51). This

idea pertains only to one side of Kant's complex story. In Kant's account of metaphysical antinomies, the rational closure that some try to find in unconditioned objects clashes with the insistence that unconditioned objects are impossible. It is not obvious that within a realist framework one can critique (and, in some cases, salvage) *both* of these stances.

The book includes a wealth of other thought-provoking material (such as the claim that transcendental ideas are derived not from logical forms of inference but from dialectical metaphysical inferences: 168, 174). It offers an original account of a neglected yet central topic, is very clearly written, and shows a superb command of primary and secondary texts as well as sensitivity to broader philosophical issues. Thus, it is obligatory reading for Kant scholars, and worth consulting for anyone interested in the history and fate of metaphysics.

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Christian Krijnen, editor. *Metaphysics of Freedom? Kant's Concept of Cosmological Freedom in Historical and Systematic Perspective*. Critical Studies in German Idealism, Volume 23. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp x + 221. Cloth, \$195.00.

This volume of essays, written in English and German, focuses primarily on Kant's concept of transcendental freedom. The first *Critique* famously introduces this concept of freedom in the third antinomy, where Kant examines the apparent tension between the world's need for an uncaused cause and the world's thorough causal determination. Thus, Kant's concept of transcendental freedom is, as this volume emphasizes, a cosmological conception of freedom. Although the volume claims to consider Kant's conception of cosmological freedom from both historical and systematic perspectives, the bulk of the essays focus more heavily on historical matters. Most of the essays in the volume compare and contrast Kant's conception of cosmological freedom to alternative conceptions of freedom found in other thinkers, ranging throughout the history of western philosophy from Socrates to Habermas. This broad historical sweep is perhaps the volume's chief merit, helping the volume illustrate the specific character and place of Kant's theory of freedom within the larger historical tradition. However, the individual essays vary in quality. Moreover, the volume does not examine the details of Kant's specific arguments in the third antinomy (or the relevant interpretative controversies regarding those arguments) to the degree that one might expect. The volume will perhaps be of most interest to people looking for a broad overview of the relationship between Kant's own conception of free will and its historical alternatives. The volume's specific contents are as follows.

The volume begins with a brief introduction by the editor, Christian Krijnen, which sets forward the main theme and describes the essays' contributions. Michael Forster's interesting essay describes the development of freedom throughout antiquity and, then, uses this description to illuminate Kant's own conception of free will. Forster contends that the concept of freedom developed throughout antiquity in four distinct stages that he identifies with Socrates and Plato, the Stoics, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and early Christian thinkers like Augustine and Origen. Drawing on his description of these different stages, Forster then aims to show both that Kant's theory can avoid the well-known Reinhold-Sidgwick problem regarding the imputation of evil actions and that Kant's concept of negative freedom is, nevertheless, unsatisfactory. The essay by Gábor Boros discusses Spinoza's conception of freedom. Thomas Sören Hoffmann's contribution explains how the early modern period's move away from scholastic conceptions of the will helped set the stage for Kant's own approaches to freedom in the pre-critical and critical periods. Klaus Erich Kaehler supplies an overview of Leibniz's conception of free will and, then, notes how Kant's disagreements with Leibniz over the status of metaphysics inform Kant's alternative approach to freedom. Heiner Klemme's helpful contribution provides a good overview of Wolff's theory of freedom and then shows how Christian Garve's writings displaced Wolff's contrast between freedom and coercion [*Zwang*] in favor of a contrast between freedom