

## The Resolution of the Antinomies

Kant provides us with the resolutions of the antinomies in order, starting with the first and ending with the fourth. The first antinomy, as we recall, concerned the question whether the world has a beginning in time and is limited in space. The arguments of the antithesis against this notion are that this suggests that time and space are limited by either nothing or the void and that either seems incoherent. In order to try to determine whether it is possible to conceive of limits to time and space we have to work out the conditions of such a representation. Clearly we could never intuit, in any possible experience, such limits. Hence it would only be on the level of concepts that we could arrive at the notion of such limits. However since in fact space and time are only measurable by a combination of any concept we have with the intuitions of them that we possess the formation of a coherent concept of such limits is, indeed, impossible. As Kant puts it: “Since the world is not given me, in its totality, through any intuition, neither is its magnitude given me prior to the regress. We cannot, therefore, say anything at all in regard to the magnitude of the world, not even that there is a regress *in infinitum*.” (A519/B547) All we can in fact form, by any measurement it is possible for us to carry out, is an *indefinite* regress but not an infinite one. Hence, not only are we not able to show that space and time have limits, but we also are incapable of demonstrating that they do not. The notion of infinity when it comes to space and time is hence *empirically* indemonstrable.

Kant goes even further than this, however, pointing out that the adoption of the assumption of the limits of space and time is impossible due to the fact that appearances would then have to be conceived of as inherently limited and this would require the adoption of the view that there was some possibility of knowing this limit and hence of reaching beyond appearances to things in themselves. Advance must be

available from one appearance to another that is taken to precede it as this is something like the rule of measurement of appearances in general (hence related to the Axioms of Intuition). This gives us our complete conclusion with regard to the First Antinomy: “All beginning is in time and all limits of the extended are in space. But space and time belong only to the world of sense. Accordingly, while appearances *in the world* are conditionally limited, *the world itself* is neither conditionally nor unconditionally limited.” (A522/B550)

Turning to the Second Antinomy we remember that this concerns the question of whether there are simples or not. The argument to the effect that there are such is given in the thesis though there is some dispute whether this is really intended to represent Leibniz’s monadology since Kant talks here about what is an element of the composite and not what is immediately given as simple (A442/B470) before going on, however, to term the thesis principle one of monadology (AA442/B470). The point seems to be that what is at issue in the statement of the thesis concerns substances in a very general sense but, because it is so general, the simple being argued for cannot be simply identified with a Leibnizian monad which latter is understood in an immaterial sense. On the other hand, if the division of parts does not reach simples then it would appear that such division is itself infinitely possible. One of the points of the antithesis argument is to invoke space and, by means of this, to rule out the notion of the simple. Because of this reference to space the antithesis argument is less general than the thesis argument. However, whilst this seems to lead to a sense that Kant is favouring the argument of the antithesis there is nothing in its argument to suggest that space is transcendently ideal. In fact, quite the contrary, the antithesis argument seems to lead to a transcendental realist view of space.

The peculiar effect of the statement of the antithesis, however, is that if things are infinitely divisible then this suggests that what is so divisible is never itself able to be divided into anything more ultimate than itself so that if space for example is infinitely divisible still the smallest parts of space are themselves still spaces. On this basis Kant suggests a problem concerning the antithesis as if this is true of space it would appear also true with regard to bodies that each split in them would still produce bodies in turn and never anything inorganic. This is precisely the point of introducing the distinction between appearances and things in themselves as with appearances we are dealing not with pure concepts of the understanding as the two sides of the antinomy both think but only with sensibility and sensibility is always attached to conditions of intuition. We hence are always only dealing with things in space, the conditions of which is that we view them as discrete quanta. On these conditions the divisibility of bodies into things that are no longer bodies but something inorganic is possible so that there is no reason to think that material substances are composed of simples.

Whilst the first two antinomies are mathematical and hence contain a synthesis of homogeneous parts the second two antinomies are dynamical and contain a synthesis of heterogeneous parts. The third antinomy concerning the relation of freedom and causality, for example, is fought on the ground of whether there is only one type of causality in the world or two with the thesis arguing for such a duality, the antithesis denying it. If there is freedom in this cosmological sense then there is a power to spontaneously begin a series. To deny that there is freedom in this sense is however, Kant thinks, to deny reality to “practical freedom”, the notion used in moral thought as this notion can have no reality if our investigation shows that all appearances are determined and hence my will is also. But it would appear, after the

argument of the Second Analogy, that we must grant the interlocking determination of all appearances as a basic principle of experience. Here again, however, we need to remind ourselves of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, a distinction which denies the absolute reality of appearances. Since we grant this then there is no contradiction in assuming that whilst all appearances are determining grounds of each other that there could be a principle transcending them which also determines them in principle (and is hence intelligible).

This can be granted an image if we think of the notion of character for example as not being exhausted by reference to empirical events but also as including an intelligible element which latter is hence not placed under the conditions of time. Furthermore, we clearly conceive of our reason as having such causality every time we judge according to the basic rule of morality which requires us to ask of ourselves and others what *ought* to be done in any given case. “Reason does not here follow the order of things as they present themselves in appearance, but frames for itself with perfect spontaneity an order of its own according to ideas, to which it adapts the empirical conditions, and according to which it declares actions to be necessary, even though they have never taken place, and perhaps never will take place.” (A548/B576)

In following this rule of reason we move beyond all the conditions of action that may well be taken in following the procedure of understanding to have a relationship to events preceding it. (A554-5/B582-3) Hence we here adopt in fact the principle of an intelligible cause although we are quite unable to prove its effective action. Thus it is wholly conceivable to think the order of two forms of causality but only if we ensure that the order of free causality is distinguished as applying to the order of noumena, that of effective causality to that of phenomena. Whilst this does not prove that freedom is real nor even show that it is possible it does demonstrate

that it is *not inconceivable* and this is all that is required to demonstrate that the arguments of the two sides of the antinomy are reconcilable.

The fourth antinomy concerns the question whether there is a necessary being in the world or an unconditioned substance. Since we are here speaking of substance it would appear that this refers us only to concepts but since, in fact, everything we experience is contingent the nature of this contingency seems to belong to the series in which things are presented to us. If appearances were absolutely real therefore we could never have any ground for assuming such a being and the argument of the antithesis would here prevail with ease. All things of the world can well be accepted to be contingent once we view them only as appearances however without this ruling out the possibility of the existence of a necessary being as a thing in itself. It has to be thought as purely intelligible however and entirely apart from the sensible (which is not how it is given in the argument of the thesis). Hence Kant neither attempts to prove the existence of such a being nor its non-existence but instead presents us with grounds for being unable to assert either of such propositions. To think the existence of such a being is not impossible but nor is it demonstrable.

The treatment of the Antinomies as a whole is a part of Kant's overall proof of transcendental idealism. With regard to the first two mathematical antinomies he points out that a result of the Transcendental Aesthetic is that whilst space and time are understood as genuinely real they are "not in themselves *things*" (A492/B520), a point that is built on in the resolution of these two antinomies. The general assessment of the antinomies also relates to how each of the arguments is based on a syllogism that mixes conditions together: "the major premise of the cosmological inference takes the conditioned in the transcendental sense of a pure category, while the minor premise takes it in the empirical sense of a concept of the understanding"

(A499/B527) so that the fallacy underlying each of them is the same as that underlying the Paralogisms. Kant argues that the error that generates the arguments of the antinomies is a natural one for us and productive of a “transcendental illusion”. (Empirical regulative point of ideas.)