

Kant's Microcosmic Doctrine(s) and his Transcendental Philosophy

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Abstract

Despite Conger's classic view that one can find very little of the microcosmic doctrine in any of the Idealists, the paper argues that Kant develops several little known microcosmic doctrines over the course of his development from his first *Critique* to his second *Critique* to his *Opus Postumum* and that these are intimately connected with his various notions of "transcendental" philosophy. First, the roots of the microcosmic doctrine in Plato are explored. Second, Kant's most basic microcosmic doctrine and its connection with his "faculty psychology" notion of transcendental philosophy in the first *Critique* are explored. Third, it is explained why, contrary to Conger, the Idealist tradition is a natural home for microcosmic doctrines. Fourth, Kant's *moral* microcosmic doctrine, which is implicit in the "starry heavens" remark in the conclusion to second *Critique* and related remarks in the *Opus Postumum*, is discussed in some detail. This includes a discussion of the microcosmic doctrines in the Stoics. Fifth, it is shown how Kant's various microcosmic doctrines shed considerable light on his *evolving* conception of transcendental philosophy from his first *Critique* to his final statement in the *Opus Postumum*.

Keywords: Kant, Plato, microcosm-macrocosm, transcendental philosophy, faculty psychology, Stoic ethics, the starry heavens, autonomy

I call transcendental all cognition that deals not so much with objects as rather with our way of cognizing objects in general insofar as [it] is ... possible a priori. (Kant 1992a, A11-12/B25)¹

Kant's "transcendental philosophy" in his first *Critique* (hereafter *C1*), is, roughly, the view that human beings can have synthetic *a priori* knowledge of objects of experience because these objects are dependent on human modes of cognition. The

spatial and temporal forms of objects of experience are contributed by our faculty of sensibility and the categorial features (the twelve “categories”) of the objects of experience are contributed by our faculty of understanding. Since these conditions refer to human cognitive faculties call this “faculty psychology” transcendental philosophy (hereafter *transcendental_{fp} philosophy*). Thus, *C₁* presents a “*transcendental_{fp} argument*” in the sense of an argument that there are certain necessary *transcendental_{fp}* conditions for the possibility of experience (See Bardon [I], § 1).

However, Kant’s *transcendental_{fp} philosophy* involves a difficult balancing act. Objects of experience must be independent of human minds but the most basic spatial, temporal and categorial features of these same objects *are* dependent on human mental faculties. This is not merely the relatively trivial claim that these mental faculties impose a certain structure on the *experience* of objects, but the much more challenging claim that they impose this structure on the *objects* of experience. Kant’s transcendental philosophy is modified in important ways in his 2nd *Critiques* (hereafter *C₂*), but in his final work, his *Opus Postumum* (hereafter *OP*), Kant appears to make such major modifications to his views that one can wonder if *OP* is consistent with his “critical philosophy”. The present paper argues that Kant’s little-known microcosmic doctrine sheds important light on Kant’s *evolving* conception of *transcendental_{fp} philosophy* from *C₁* to *OP*. § I describes the roots of the microcosmic doctrine in Plato. § II sketches Kant’s basic microcosmic doctrine in *C₁*. § III explains why the microcosmic doctrine fits naturally into *C₁*. § IV discusses Kant’s *moral* microcosmic doctrine in *C₂* and *OP*. § V explains how Kant’s *evolving* microcosmic doctrine from *C₁* to *OP* is fundamentally consistent with *C₁*’s conception *transcendental_{fp} philosophy*.

I. The Microcosmic Doctrine in the Plato’s Creation Story

The parallel of macrocosm and microcosm runs through the whole discourse. (Cornford 1966, 6)

The microcosmic doctrine originates in the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, but versions of it are found in numerous

philosophers (Conger 1922; McDonough [I] § 2.b). Plato's microcosmic doctrine is the view that the cosmos is a living organism and that the various living organisms in the world are modelled on the cosmic organism. The entire cosmos (the universe) is the *macrocosm* (the big world) and each living organism is a *microcosm* (a little world) that resembles the "big world". However, not every living organism is an equally good copy of the macrocosm. Since Plato's cosmos is intelligent (*Tim.* 30b-c, 92c), and since human beings are more intelligent and rational than lower organisms, human beings bear a *greater* resemblance to the macrocosm than those lower organisms. For this reason, the microcosmic doctrine is sometimes stated as the view that "[m]an is the microcosm" (Wittgenstein 1961, 84). For reasons that become clear later, Wittgenstein's sort of formulation is more adopted here. But why should anyone hold such a peculiar view?

Plato's seminal version of this view falls out of his creation story in the *Timaeus*. Plato's "God" is the *Demiurge*, which means *craftsman* in Greek. Plato's *Demiurge* does not create the world *ex nihilo*, but begins with primordial chaos and, looking to the eternal patterns (which can be assumed to be Plato's Forms or Ideas), crafts that primordial chaos into an orderly universe. Since the *Demiurge* looks to the Form of the Intelligible Animal (Sellars 1967, 6, 9), he crafts the primordial chaos into a perfect living cosmic animal. It is also an important feature of Plato's story that the heavenly bodies, being eternal like the cosmos itself, are also ensouled living creatures more perfect than earthly mortal organisms (Plato 1969b 896d-e, 898c-e; Carone 2011, 70, 99).

The second part of the story is that after creating the eternal organisms, the cosmos itself and the starry heavens, the *Demiurge* leaves it to lesser gods to craft the *mortal* organisms (humans, animals, plants) after the pattern of the cosmic organism. Since the mortal organisms are crafted by lesser gods they are not perfect copies of the cosmic organism or the stars—explaining their imperfections. Thus, Plato's universe is constituted by a *hierarchy* of living organisms, some of which bear a greater and others a lesser resemblance to the cosmos itself and the starry heavens. Animals bear a greater

resemblance to the cosmos than plants, and human beings bear a greater resemblance to the cosmos than the lower animals. This yields a hierarchy, from most to the least perfect organisms, in the perceptible cosmos: 1) The cosmos itself; 2) heavenly bodies; 3) human beings; 4) non-human animals; 5) plants. Each item in this hierarchy is a microcosm of the one's above it—which means that the human being is a microcosm, however imperfect, of the heavenly bodies. Since “is a microcosm of” is a transitive relation, the lowest items in this chain of life are also microcosms, however imperfect, of the cosmos itself. The closer one gets to the centre of the cosmos (the earth), the more imperfect/chaotic things are, and the closer one gets to the periphery of the cosmos (the heavens), the more rational and orderly things are.

It is a corollary of Plato's view that there is a reason why human beings can know the cosmos (to the degree that they can). Since the *Demiurge* makes human beings and the cosmos from *the same pattern* (the Form of the Intelligible Animal), a human being's capacity for knowing the cosmos is the same as their capacity to know themselves. Since both are instantiations of the Form of the Intelligible Animal, to know oneself (to know one's own Form) is to know the Form of the cosmos (because these are the same Form). Since, as Plato often states, “like knows like” (Parry 2012, § 1), and since human beings are “like” (are microcosms of) the cosmos, they can know the cosmos (to the degree commensurate with their level of perfection). This yields a Platonic notion of transcendental philosophy. Thus, Plato's cosmology involves an *objective-cosmological* transcendental (hereafter transcendental_{oc}) account of the “conditions of the possibility” of human knowledge, namely that the *Demiurge* crafts human beings as microcosms of the world. This is quite different from Kant's notion of a transcendental_{tp} philosophy in *C₁* where the “conditions of the possibility” of knowledge consist in certain *subjective* mental faculties.

Plato's microcosmic doctrine also has *ethical* dimensions. Since each organism in the hierarchy is a microcosm of those in the levels above it, and since the relevant Form is more perfectly instantiated at the higher level, an organism at a

given level *ought* to imitate those at the higher levels: *Timaeus* states (Plato 1969a, 47c) that human beings should “imitate” the perfect motions of the organisms on display in the heavens in order to “regulate our own vagaries” (Carone 2005, 99-100, 116). This theme is belabored in the *Epinomis* (Plato 1969c, 982d-e, 990a) where Plato’s Athenian explains that a noble person who successfully studies the heavens receives a “revelation” of the natural (microcosmic) interconnection between the earthly organisms and the heavenly organisms (*Epin.* 990a-992e).² The same theme is expressed in Plato’s *Laws* (1969, 817e-818a). Although the idea seems quaint, Plato’s microcosmic doctrine holds that the perfect movements in the starry heavens provide an ethical ideal for human life.

II. Kant’s Microcosmic Doctrine in the *Critique of Pure Reason*

As the questions raised by Locke passed through ... [the Idealists], the outer world was reduced to [subordinate] status, until it came to be of little importance whether man resembled it or not. [Thus, the language of] microcosmic theories [came to be] used with new [...] restricted connotations [...] [e.g., in C1] Kant used the words “macrocosmically” and “microcosmically” [to mean] the infinitely great and the infinitely small limits of the “mathematically unconditioned [...]”(Conger, 1922, 75-76)

Conger remarks that one find the word “microcosmic” in the “Antithetic of Pure Reason” in *C₁* with a restricted meaning, but holds that there can very little of a microcosmic doctrine in *any* of the Idealists. First, however, the German word “*mikrokosmos*” is *not* found in the “Antithetic,” but Kant does there use the rough equivalent, “*der Welt im ...Kleinen*” (“little world”). In his *LM* (Kant 1997a, 536), referring to Leibniz’s monads, Kant describes monads as microcosms and he does discuss the microcosmic doctrine in several places elsewhere in his corpus.³ However, since many of his own references to the doctrine occur in discussions of other’s views, this does not show that Kant himself endorses such doctrines. Thus, the argument

that Kant endorses various microcosmic doctrines is based on his views in the text, *not* on occasional uses of the word. For, contrary to Conger, there are few theories more conducive to microcosmic doctrines than those of the German Idealists.

Conger is simply incorrect that since the Idealists reduce the external world to subordinate status microcosmic doctrines cannot be of much importance to them. First, it would be news to the author of Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" (Kant 1992a, B274-279) that he reduces the external world to an insignificant status since he even claimed that it is a "scandal to philosophy" that the reality of the external world has not been proved (*ibid.*, *C₁*, xl note a). Second, even if the Idealists had reduced the external world to a "subordinate" status, it does not follow that there is *no* importance for them in describing "man's" resemblance to it. Kant did not reduce the external world to a subordinate status, but even if he had done so, the question of man's resemblance to it remains. Conger (2011, 85) tacitly admits this himself when he evinces surprise that Hegel does not make more use of the doctrine.

In fact, the view that man is similar to the world is a basic tenant of *C₁*. The central theme of the "Transcendental Aesthetic" is that space and time are forms of human intuition and the central theme of the "Transcendental Analytic" is that the categorial structure of "the world of appearances" is a reflection of one's own faculty of understanding (Kant 1992a, A42/B59-60, A65/B90-A66/B91). Thus, the space and time and categorial structure of "the world of appearances" *resembles* the structure of the human faculties of sensibility and understanding because the most basic structure of the former reflects the basic structure of the latter. Man is, in that sense, a microcosm of "the world of appearances". Since Kant holds that this is true *a priori*, his view is that it is *a priori* that man is a microcosm of the "world of appearances".

One might think that an illicit shift has been made here, namely that whereas the microcosmic doctrine is that man resembles the world the preceding discussion only shows that the *transcendental_{fp} self* resembles the world of appearances. But Kant does *not* in *C₁* attempt to show that the *transcendental_{fp} self* can have synthetic *a priori* knowledge

about the world. He sets out to show that *empirical* human beings-in-the-world can know have synthetic *a priori* structure of the world of appearances. There are not two selves, one transcendental_{fp} and another empirical, that are mysteriously joined. Rather, talk of the transcendental_{fp} self is talk of the human empirical self from a different perspective: “The distinction between the transcendental and the empirical belongs ... only to the critique of knowledge; it does not concern the relation of knowledge to its objects” (*ibid.*, A57/B81). Thus, what Kant’s “transcendental exposition” (*ibid.*, A25/B40) of the concept of human knowledge is intended to show is that “the condition of the possibility” of human knowledge is that the human empirical self is a microcosm of the “world of appearances” and it shows this by appealing to the view that the transcendental_{fp} self synthesizes both on the same plan.

III. Kant’s Subjectivist Creation Story

In the manifold to be encountered... there is... more than an empty manifold of somethings merely formally differentiated. ...We must view the unity with regard to which the chaos is to be separated and brought together. Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (88)⁴

An important part of Plato’s creation story, designed to explain how human beings can know things in the world, is that human beings and the cosmos are constructed by a creator out of chaos to make this possible. Thus, Plato’s transcendental_{oc} account of the “condition of the possibility” of human knowledge of items in the world is that both human beings and the cosmos are constructed by the *Demiurge* out of “chaos” on the same pattern (Form) so that the *same* order is imposed on both. This is important because human beings can only know the cosmos if they are “like” (are a microcosm of) the cosmos (See § I).

Kant tells a similar story to explain how human beings can know objects in the world (except that his story is updated in light of the subjectivist turn initiated by Descartes and Locke). An important part of Kant’s story is that since human

beings confront a “chaos” of *sensations* in the “manifold of sensibility” (see epigraph above), the transcendental_{fp} “conditions of the possibility” of knowledge of the objects given in this manifold is that this “chaos” of sensations can only enter human consciousness if it is ordered (synthesized) by the transcendental_{fp} self by reference to the *a priori* forms of sensibility (the forms of intuition) and the categories of understanding. Further, if the empirical self is to know objects in the world of appearances the principles employed to “construct” it must be *the same* as the principles employed to construct the “world of appearances.” This is the role of Kant’s transcendental_{fp} self. Indeed, in *OP* (Kant 1993, 172-175), in a discussion of his earlier transcendental_{fp} explanation how synthetic *a priori* knowledge of objects can be possible, Kant invokes the idea of the “*Demiurge*” as the “creator of the world”. The idea is that both the empirical self and the world of appearances are synthesized (crafted) by a transcendental_{fp} self, which plays a role in Kant’s system like the role the *Demiurge* plays in Plato’s, thereby enabling the empirical self to know the “world of appearances”:

The thinking subject ... creates for itself a world, as object of possible experience in space and time. (Kant 1993, OP, 227)

There are however several major differences between the role that the transcendental_{fp} self plays in in *C₁* and the role the *Demiurge* plays in Plato’s transcendental_{oc} cosmology. That is, Kant *reinterprets* each of the elements in Plato’s *objective-cosmological* story in terms of his own transcendental_{fp} idealism. Kant replaces Plato’s primordial cosmic chaos by the original “chaos” of sensations prior to synthesis by the understanding. He replaces Plato’s Forms, the patterns for imposing order on Plato’s primordial chaos, by his categories of the understanding. He replaces Plato’s *Demiurge* by his transcendental_{fp} self. Whereas Plato’s *Demiurge* crafts an ordered world from the primordial chaos by looking to the eternal Forms as patterns, Kant’s transcendental_{fp} self synthesizes an ordered “world of appearances”, which includes the empirical self, by employing the categories of understanding as patterns of synthesis. That is, Kant’s transcendental_{fp} self synthesizes *the empirical self* as a microcosm of “the world of

appearances” by employing the same forms of intuition and categories in both cases in order to explain how the empirical self can know the empirical world.⁵ The price to be paid for Kant's transposition of the elements of Plato's transcendental_{oc} cosmogony into those of his faculty psychology is that whereas Plato presents an account of “the conditions of the possibility” of human knowledge of objects in *the objective cosmos* Kant can only provide an account of human knowledge of *the world of appearances*.

It is worth noting that in *OP*, Kant uses a similar *Demiurgic* model to account for the generation of “organic systems” in nature,

Of the necessity of spiritual forces for the sake of organic bodies and even organic systems; because one must attribute an understanding to their cause in which the subject is thought as a simple being (of the sort which matter [...] cannot be).

Demiurge, universal world-spirit. (Kant 1993, OP, 177)

That is, Kant's *OP* views the generation of living organisms in nature on analogy with the genesis of “the world of appearances” by the transcendental_{fp} self—which insures that living organisms in nature will *also* be microcosms. Kant's use of this analogy in *OP* is not totally surprising since he did, after all, borrow the biological notion of *epigenesis* to name his most basic transcendental_{fp} doctrine in *C₁* (Kant 1992a, B167), “the *epigenesis* of pure reason,” which shows that the close connection between the generation of living organisms, the creation of the cosmos, and transcendental_{fp} philosophy, was there *from the beginning*.

IV. Kant's Moral Microcosmic Doctrine

Two things fill the mind with ever new increasing admiration and awe ...: the starry heavens [bestirnte Himmel] above and the moral law within. (Kant 2002a, 191)

The wise man (of the Stoics) is ... an ideal, that is, a man existing in thought only, but in complete conformity with the idea of wisdom. (Kant 1992a, A569/B597)

Kant's remark in the conclusion to *C₂* that what most fills him with awe is the starry heavens above him and the

moral law inside him (call this Kant’s “starry heavens” remark or KSH), is often quoted (Guyer 1992, 1). One might think KSH reflects Kant’s admiration for the new Newtonian science of mechanics that first rendered the movements of the heavens comprehensible (Smith 1962, lv-lvi). In that case KSH’s references to the starry heavens and the moral law refer to the two main areas, science and morality, for which he attempts to provide foundations in his critical philosophy (Guyer 1992, 2ff). However, this *dualism* of two entirely separate realms is puzzling. Guyer (1992, 2) suggests that the link between them is that the “validity” of both sets of laws are derived from the legislative power of the human intellect”. In that case, however, they are only *externally* linked as two separate products of the human intellect. But surely Kant also holds that the validity of the laws of humor or language must derive from the legislative power of the human intellect and yet these are *not* cited in the conclusion to *C*₂. Why not? Are the starry heavens and the moral law *really* entirely separate realms or does KSH intimate some deeper *unity* between them?⁶

Recall that Plato envisages an intimate link between the starry heavens and the moral law in his microcosmic_{oc} doctrine that since a human being is a microcosm of the perfect intelligences in the heavens these starry intelligences provide a model of perfect rational behavior to which human beings *ought* to aspire (see § I). Further, this ethical microcosmic doctrine is a centerpiece of Stoic ethics (Conger 2012, 12). After referring to the Stoic view that the beauty of the “starry heavens” is beyond compare, Stock (1908, 84-86) describes the Stoic view that “man is born to contemplate the universe and imitate its perfections”.⁷

Although this suggestion that KSH alludes to the microcosmic doctrine in Stoic ethics is not stated in *C*₂, there are microcosmic passages in *OP* that link the starry heavens and the moral law. The context (Kant 1993, *OP*, 244-245) is a discussion of Kant’s *new* notion of transcendental philosophy. Whereas *C*₁ explains transcendental_{tp} philosophy in terms of Kant’s faculty psychology, *OP* declares that “transcendental philosophy is autonomy” (Kant 1993, *OP*, 244), which means that his philosophical system proceeds “from the metaphysical

foundations of natural science to transcendental philosophy,' i.e., "from nature to freedom" (Kant 1993, OP, 245). In brief, the faculties of sensibility and understanding in C_1 's transcendental_{fp} philosophy are, in *OP*, traced to a deeper level of *autonomy*—which also just happens to be the fundamental concept of Kant's moral philosophy (Kant 2002a, 67, 128; Silber 1960, lxxxiii).

Immediately after asserting a hidden *identity* between the two aspects of man, as a "world-being" (an object in nature), and as "*noumenon*" (autonomous or free) (Kant 1993, OP, 245), Kant quotes from Virgil's *Aeneid*,

totamque infusa per artus mens agit molem magnoque se corpore miscet.

The editors identify this as Anchises' speech in which he explains "the order of things" (which they translate as follows):

To begin: the heavens, the earth, the watery
Wastes, the lucent globe of moon, the sun, the stars,
Exist through inward spirit. Their total mass
by mind is permeated: hence their motion. (Kant 1993, OP, 283,
n144)

There is, it seems, more in common between man and the starry heavens than that they both conform to Newton's laws. Since the whole cosmos, from humanity to the starry heavens, is animated by the same "inward spirit", a human beings *spiritually* resembles (is a spiritual microcosm_{nm} of) the starry heavens. Further, since human beings are animated by the same inner spirit as the starry heavens, but are less perfect than the starry heavens, human beings *ought* to imitate the starry heavens.⁸ Call this view Kant's "*Noumenal-Moral Microcosmic doctrine*" (or his microcosmic_{nm} doctrine).⁹

Some may view this microcosmic_{nm} reading of KSH by appeal to passages in *OP* to be too speculative. For *OP* is a very controversial book (Förster 1993, xv-xviii).¹⁰ Would it not be preferable if the case for the microcosmic_{nm} reading of KSH were taken from one of Kant's critical works? In fact, the *place* for this microcosmic_{nm} view is already prepared in *general* terms in C_1 . At A632/B660-A633/B661 Kant distinguishes between *deism* and *theism*, the former being the belief in "a blindly acting eternal nature as the root of [the world]" and the

latter being the belief in “a supreme being” that creates the world “through understanding and freedom [i.e., God]”—where theism is “the only one that interests us”. Theism has a *moral* dimension that distinguishes it from the mere “first cause” of *deism* (A634/B662). Further, even though C_1 (A700/B728) insists that one cannot *know* God’s existence via theoretical reason, the passage states that one is “entitled” view God as the creator of nature in order to “regard” nature as “systematically connected”. At A697/B725 Kant states that one may “without fear” conceive God *anthropomorphically*. At A700/B728 he adds that one is “entitled” to conceive of this “world cause ... according to a subtler anthropomorphism (*without which nothing whatsoever concerning this being would be thinkable [emphasis added]*)”.¹¹ One might think that this only means that man must be conceived as a microcosm of God but that this does *not* extend to nature. However, Kant adds at A701/B729 that “the philosophers of all times” (read Plato and the Stoics here) correctly treated the expression “the wisdom and foresight of nature” and the expression “the divine wisdom” as “synonymous expressions”. Thus, both man and nature must be conceived to resemble God. Since the God of theism is a *noumenal* “originator of the world” (A632/B660), but is also a *moral* being, C_1 holds that both man and nature must be conceived as microcosms_{nm} of God.

To be sure, these passages in C_1 only yield a very *general* microcosmic_{nm} doctrine. There is no explicit mention here of the “starry heavens”.¹² On the other hand, there are reasons why Kant would only flesh out his microcosmic_{nm} views later in *OP*. For, having completed his “critical philosophy,” Kant states that, he must “hasten to the doctrinal part”—the “transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics”. But physics here is not physics in the ordinary sense (e.g., calculating the path of projectiles in a gravitational field), but “rational physics” (Förster 1993, xvi, xxxii; Kant 1993, *OP*, 83, 86, 101). Kant’s rational “physics” is “the *a priori* system of all the moving forces of matter insofar as these are contained in a “natural system” constituting an “absolute whole” of objects of outer sense (Kant 1993, *OP*, 106)—which sounds like a cosmology. Indeed, Kant states that one must *begin* with a

“physical-cosmological principle of the elementary system of all world-matter” (Kant 1993, OP, 94). Thus, Kant’s uses of the word “physics” in *OP* is akin to the sense in which Plato’s *Timaeus* is often said to present a “physics” (Cooper 1997a, 1224-1225)—even though the *Timaeus* includes *moral* doctrines. This is why the microcosmic notions of the *Demiurge* and the world-soul are prominent in *OP* when they are not prominently featured in Kant’s “critical” works. Finally, since these moving forces of matter that comprise a unified physical system “must be conceived as emerging from the moral sovereign [God]” (Förster 2000, 142), Kant’s “physics”, which includes his microcosmic_{nm} doctrine, involves views *akin* to those in Plato’s *moral* cosmology. But this raises serious questions about the relation of Kant’s microcosmic_{nm} doctrine in *OP* to his notion of a transcendental_{fp} philosophy in *C₁*. Kant states that the “doctrinal” part of his system provided in *OP* fills a “gap” in his prior critical system (Förster 1993, xvi)—but what gap?

V. Kant’s Expanded Notion of Transcendental Philosophy in the *Opus Postumum*.

Transcendental philosophy is the act of consciousness whereby the subject becomes the originator of itself and, thereby ... of the whole object of technical-practical and moral-practical reason in one system ... Reason posits ... a universe of beings ... but only as subjective, belonging to ideas. (Kant 1993, OP, 245)

Kant’s microcosmic doctrine in *C₁* is consistent with his transcendental_{fp} philosophy since it is simply a re-description of *C₁*’s central doctrine that the transcendental_{fp} self synthesizes the world of appearances and the empirical self on the same pattern (see §’s II and III). The microcosmic_{nm} view attributed to *OP* (and to *C₂*’s KSH) in § IV is more problematic because *OP* involves an “entirely new approach” (Werkmeister 1986, 174-175). Since Kant had declared that his critical philosophy was completed (Förster 1993, xv) why is this new approach needed—and how can metaphysical “doctrines” reminiscent of

Plato's metaphysics be consistent with *C₁*'s opposition to dogmatic metaphysics?

In fact, Kant's microcosmic_{nm} doctrine in *OP* is *not* inconsistent with his critical philosophy because it is not asserted as an objective doctrine like its counterpart in Plato's *Timaeus*. Plato (*Tim.* 29d) qualifies his cosmological doctrine, calling it a mere "likely story" (*mythos*), but he does *not* mean that it is *subjectively* posited by Reason. Plato just holds that its truth is beyond human comprehension (*Tim.* 28c). By contrast, when Kant states that his cosmological system is a "posit" of reason "belonging to ideas" he means that it is a *subjective* "idea" constructed by Reason (see epigraph above). There is *nothing* like Plato's "transcendent" Ideas (and "dogmatic metaphysics") in Kant's microcosmic_{nm} view,

Ideas are images (intuitions), created a priori through pure reason, which, [as] merely subjective thought-objects ... precede knowledge of things. (Kant 1993, *OP*, 242)

Whereas Plato articulates an objective cosmological system within which the human being occupies a small part of the cosmos, Kant completely reverses the priorities and holds that human reason *creates* the system of ideas within which the microcosmic_{nm} system is a mere part of the total *subjective* system. Kant's entire cosmological system is a mere "part" of the whole system because "Transcendental philosophy ... precedes [that kind of] metaphysics and supplies [it] with principles" (Kant 1993, *OP*, 247). Thus, the "ideas" that Kant invokes in his cosmological doctrines consist in "laws of thought which the subject prescribes to itself. *Autonomy*" (Kant 1993, *OP*, 253). One might think of this on analogy with the way Kant's moral subject autonomously "gives the moral law to itself" (Kant 2012, *GMM*, 19-21, 24). Kant's transcendental_{fp} self in *OP* autonomously gives to itself the microcosmic_{nm} idea (that "the same inward spirit" of *noumenal* autonomy is shared by God, man, and world) to itself. Call *OP*'s new notion of a transcendental philosophy his Transcendental-Autonomy philosophy (or transcendental_{aut} philosophy)!¹³ Nothing in Kant's transcendental_{aut} philosophy *thus far* is inconsistent with his transcendental_{fp} philosophy in *C₁* but, rather, merely

constitutes a deeper layer of the former—the *place* for which had already been prepared in C_1 and C_2 (see § IV).¹⁴

Finally, Kant's transcendental_{aut} self does not autonomously “give” this microcosmic_{nm} system to itself for no reason. It does so because “it thereby becomes the originator of itself” (see epigraph above). The transcendental_{aut} self creates itself as a unitary autonomous being by creating the *idea* (in Kant's *subjective* sense) of a cosmos in which everything from lowly creatures to God share its own “inward spirit” (Kant 1993, OP, 247) of autonomy.

In order to appreciate this it is useful to consider the *evolution* of Kant's notion of transcendental philosophy from C_1 to *OP*. In C_1 transcendental_{fp} philosophy concerns the subjective *a priori* “conditions, specified in his “faculty psychology, of the possibility” of human knowledge (Kant 1992a, A111, B160-161).” But these mental faculties of sensibility and understanding were not the *most* fundamental “condition of the possibility” of knowledge in C_1 . At B136-140 he states that his “Supreme Principle of All Use of the Understanding is his principle of the “original” or “transcendental unity” of apperception (McCormick, [I] § 4). This principle of the transcendental unity of apperception is Kant's most basic principle C_1 .

It is, however, possible to ask, what is the “condition of the possibility” of C_1 's “original unity” of apperception? Kant did *not* ask this question in C_1 but in C_2 (Preface) he *answers* it when he states, in a surprise for those who had thought that C_1 had completely rejected the possibility of knowledge of *noumenal* freedom (Beck 1963, 27), that “transcendental freedom is ... established” and is “the keystone of the whole system, even the speculative”. *OP* goes further in this *same* direction and provides Kant's *final* statement of his supreme principle, namely, his view that the transcendental_{aut} subject “originates” itself as an original unity by autonomously creating the *idea* that its own *noumenal* autonomy pervades (thereby uniting) God, the world, and man—but that *is* Kant's microcosmic_{nm} principle.

Since, however, C_1 had established that one cannot know *noumenal* facts in C_1 's *theoretical* sense of bringing intuitions of

noumenal freedom under concepts, *OP*'s unifying microcosmic_{nm} principle can only be *consistently* endorsed as a *moral-practical* idea,

There is a fact of moral-practical reason: the categorical imperative, which commands for nature freedom under laws and through which freedom [...] demonstrates its own possibility [...]. (Kant 1993, *OP*, 245)

One creates oneself as a unitary autonomous being, thereby “demonstrating” the *reality* of freedom, by *actually* creating a world bound into a unity by autonomously *self-given* laws.¹⁵ What Kant's transcendental_{aut} philosophy *contributes* to this *practical* project is the creation of the (subjective) microcosmic_{nm} *idea* of this moral-practical *project*. Kant's microcosmic_{nm} doctrine is not, therefore, akin to Plato's transcendental_{oc} cosmology. It is, rather, a further development of Kant's view in *C*₁ (as explained in the Preface to *C*₂) that the moral-practical concept of transcendental_{aut} freedom is the “keystone” of the whole system”. The transcendental_{fp} philosophy in *C*₁ and *C*₂ is, therefore, only *completed* in the *moral-practical* transcendental_{aut} microcosmic_{nm} doctrine in *OP*.¹⁶ This new transcendental_{aut} microcosmic_{nm} doctrine does *not* add to our theoretical knowledge of the world. Rather, “[t]he final end of *all* knowledge is to know oneself in the highest *practical* reason [all emphasis added]” (Kant 1993, *OP*, 255). Kant's transcendental_{aut} microcosmic_{nm} idea is the idea (in Kant's, not Plato's, sense) of a moral-practical *program for life-in-the-world*, not a list of transcendental_{fp} *theories* suitable for some new “Scholastic edifice of doctrines” (Kant 1992a, A131/B170).¹⁷

NOTES

¹ The *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* are abbreviated, respectively, *C*₁ and *C*₂. The other abbreviations of Kant's works are: *Lectures on Metaphysics* (*LM*), *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* (*TM*₁), *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781* (*TM*₂), “The Metaphysics of Morals” (*MM*), *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals* (*GMM*), *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (*RWL*), *Opus Postumum* (*OP*), “Open Letter on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*” (*OLF*). References to *C*₁ are to the standard A and B

edition pages numbers. References to Kant's other works are to page numbers.

² The *Epinomis* is generally thought to be written by one of Plato's disciples but is believed to reflect Plato's views (Cooper 1997b, 1617).

³ In *MM*, Kant (1991, 157) discusses Herder's view that "man's *Gestalt* presents a microcosm of life". In *TP₁* (Kant 1992b, 550-51 n29) he criticizes the mystical and obscurantist elements Cabbalists microcosmic doctrines—not necessarily microcosmic doctrines *per se*. In *TP₂* (Kant 2002b, 299), he discusses Eberhard's microcosmic doctrine in a vaguely positive way. See also the editor's note 8 to *LM* (Kant 1997a, 553)!

⁴ In Appendix II to his (1990, 181, 189) Heidegger states that Hermann Cohen's view that Kant holds that the passively given "chaos" of sensations is actively synthesized "into a 'cosmos'" is not *sufficient* to resolve the problem of transcendence, but does *not* reject Cohen's cosmological picture outright. Indeed, Heidegger (1991, 76-78, 80) employs a similar picture, which he attributes to Kant, of the manifold of sensations as a "chaos" that is "schematized" (ordered). See also McDonough (2011, 256, 258-259 notes 23-24)!

⁵ One can imagine a bizarre divided mind constructed by a malicious *Demiurge* (perhaps Descartes' evil demon) which "constructs" its objects of experience on process-categories while it "constructs" its own empirical concepts of those objects on substance-categories. It would always seem to this mind that it employs the only conceivable way of cognizing the world but that the world, for reasons it cannot understand, never co-operates in being understood. For, it is "built" to look for substance but always finds process.

⁶ Given Kant's view of the close connection between the concept of God and the concept of morality (Kant 2002a, 14-15; 1960, 90-93; 1993, 198-201, 213, 225), the question in the text is effectively the question Kant asks at *OP* (Kant 1993, 241): "Do God and the world form a *system* [K's emphasis] together, or is ... the connection of the two [only] subjectively systematic?" *OP*'s answer would seem to be the latter. Whereas Kant's concept of God is the idea of a supremely *moral* being (*ibid.*, 227), his concept of the *Demiurge* is that of a morally neutral "first cause."

⁷ Kant mentions the Stoics fairly often and generally in favorable terms. See the epigraph to § IV of this paper, *C₁* (Kant 1992a, A569/B597), *C₂* (2002a, 46, 86), *LM* (1997a, 204, 304-306, 369), *TP₁* (1992b, 234 & note) and *TP₂* (1992b, 453)! Kant does criticize Stoic fatalism (1960, 50-51 & n) and shortcomings in the Stoic conception of the "purity" of the moral law that were only rectified with the appearance of Christianity (2002a, 98 n13).

⁸ One might object that Kant may, for example, think that, the validity of the laws of language or humor are derived from the legislation of reason, and, therefore, that there is no essential difference between these and the laws mentioned in *KSH*—but this misses the point. Kant probably believes that the "validity" of all sorts of laws derives from the legislative powers of reason, but in his critical system he chose to provide the foundation of scientific laws and the moral law, and it was these, and no others, that he mentions in *KSH*.

⁹ The story that Kant's daily walks were so predictable that members of his community set their clocks by them is often cited as a charming story about

Kant (Koerner 1983, xvi), but not usually invested with any philosophical significance. However, the fact that Kant's behaviour is so orderly that one can set one's clocks by it instead of looking to the usual measure of time in the starry heavens is precisely what one would expect of one who, regarding himself as a microcosm_{nm}, strives to imitate the perfect movements in the starry heavens.

¹⁰ Kant sometimes stated that *OP* filled a crucial "gap" in his system but at other times requested that it be burnt after his death (Förster 1993, xvi-xvii).

¹¹ Kant goes on in the passage to state that one is *also* entitled to attribute "infinite perfection" to the Supreme Being but that does not negate his view that God must be *conceived* anthropomorphically.

¹² It is not often remarked that at *C_I*, Kant (1992a, A257/B313) uses the same expression, "*bestirnten Himmels*" (starry heavens), from KSH. Although a thorough treatment of A257/B313 would require a lengthy treatment, note that, significantly, it occurs in *C_I*'s discussion of the distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena* and, second, that Kant states that in "an idle fiddling with words", modern distinctions between the sensible and intelligible world "deviate completely from the sense employed by the ancients".

¹³ No claim is made here to provide a *complete* account of Kant's notion of his transcendental_{aut} philosophy in *OP* but only one sufficient to clarify the status of *OP*'s microcosmic_{nm} doctrine in his system.

¹⁴ This is not the claim that *nothing* in *OP* is inconsistent with Kant's critical philosophy. There are some inconsistencies (Förster, 2000, 84). See note 15 below!

¹⁵ Despite Kant's denunciation of Fichte's reading of his views (Kant 1986, *OLF*, 253-254), some remarks in *OP* suggest Fichte's views that the self "posits" (creates) both itself and the world (Werkmeister 1986, 202). However, there are significant differences between Fichte's notion of transcendental philosophy and *most* of *OP*'s views. Whereas Fichte (1982, 37-38) speaks of the self as "originally posited by itself" and states that "all reality should be absolutely posited through the self," *OP* states that the transcendental self "originates" itself *in the sense that* it gives itself a certain system of *ideas* (i.e., *subjective* products of Reason). Admittedly, after describing his notion of "transcendental philosophy" as "a capacity of the self-determining subject," Kant adds: "*To make oneself, as it were*" (Kant 1993, *OP*, 254)—but the "as it were" is a crucial qualification one does *not* find in Fichte. See also Förster (2000, 75-76). The difference boils down to that between creating a world and creating a subjective *idea* of a world. Despite this qualification, following Werkmeister, *OP* does contain certain remarks that suggest Fichte's views—as at *OP* (Kant 1993, 227). See also Shell's (1996, 298-305, 443-444 and note 117) remarks on certain ironies in Kant's critique of Fichte.

¹⁶ Hegel (1979, para. 2) would put this by saying that the "truth" (the blossom) of Kant's transcendental_{fp} philosophy in *C_I* is his transcendental_{aut} philosophy in *OP*.

¹⁷ Since Husserl is like Kant in so many ways one also finds microcosmic doctrines in Husserl (Banchetti-Robino 2006), but a discussion of Husserl's microcosmic views requires a separate extended treatment.

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