

Critique in German Philosophy

From Kant to Schopenhauer

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In the 'Preface' to the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant calls his age "the genuine age of criticism, to which everything must submit."¹ His subsequent comments about the holiness of the church and the majesty of the state suggest that Kant's time was defined by a particular kind of criticism – a critique that questions the legitimacy of our most deeply held beliefs, long-standing traditions, practices that have almost become second nature, and powerful institutions. Yet there were more and different conceptions of critique at play in Germany in the eighteenth century than Kant's footnote suggests.

Very different conceptions of critique can be found in early modern philology, literary criticism, aesthetics, and logic. Philological critique was used to achieve an authentic understanding of ancient languages and texts, their authors and the cultures that produced them, as well as the historical and political contexts in which they were written. Literary criticism employed a number of different conceptions of critique, but critics in Kant's time were especially interested in identifying "those excellencies that should delight a reasonable reader."² Aesthetics was understood as a critique of taste, which included the general principles for judging music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and architecture. In the *ars critica* tradition in logic,

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp. 100-101 (Axi).

² Dryden, John. "Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic License." Included in *The Works of John Dryden (Second Edition, Volume V)*. Edited by Sir Walter Scott. Edinburgh: Constable, 1821. pg. 106.

critique provided the standards of practical judgment and determined the conditions under which different kinds of principles could be applied. All of these different conceptions of critique could be said to have some bearing on Kant's critique, since he does not explicitly connect his critique to the enlightenment critique of church and state, or specify which kind of critique is most similar to his own.

The search for authentic knowledge often required philologists to identify errors in the transcription, corruption in the transmission, and even clever forgeries of ancient texts. Similarly, the pursuit of literary excellence sometimes compelled critics to censure what Dryden called "slips of the pen." There were times when the guardians of good taste found it necessary to denounce crimes against elegance and refinement, just as there were times when logicians had to declare certain judgments false or the application of certain principles inappropriate. Yet none of this suggests that critique was an essentially negative concept during the eighteenth century. For every critique that condemned corrupt texts, poor writing, bad taste, and erroneous judgment, there was another that was concerned with authenticity, literary excellence, artistic beauty, and valid knowledge. Whether the critique of pure reason is more like the former or the latter can only be determined by looking more closely at the development of Kant's critique and the definitions he provides.

Many accounts of Kant's intellectual development and the evolution of his critical philosophy suggest that Kant became disillusioned with metaphysics during the 1760's and then made a dramatic return to metaphysics at the beginning of the 1770's.³ Some even claim that Kant came to doubt "not only the possibility but even the desirability of metaphysics" during the

³ See, for example, Schönfeld, Martin. *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: The Precritical Project*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. See also Zammito, John. *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

1760's and then reversed himself a decade later, when he tried to "revive speculative metaphysics" in his inaugural dissertation.⁴ These accounts are generally unconvincing and their strongest claims are almost certainly false, because Kant's correspondence and the works he published after the success of his *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (1764) in the prize essay competition sponsored by the Prussian Royal Academy in 1763 show that he remained committed to metaphysics during the 1760's. Kant even announced the publication of a new work called *The Proper Method of Metaphysics*, which he discussed in his correspondence with Johann Heinrich Lambert in 1765. When that work became too difficult, Kant decided to publish essays that would serve as examples of the method metaphysics should follow. His studies of the method of metaphysics continued in another work he published a few months later, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Elucidated by the Dreams of Metaphysics* (1766). Although *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* is said to represent "the height of Kant's growing disaffection with metaphysics," it is actually an attempt to purge metaphysics of the erroneous judgments and mistaken procedures that have prevented it from making better progress.⁵

Kant thought his inaugural dissertation *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World* (1770) would provide metaphysics with a new foundation, but he was disappointed by its reception. Convinced that his work did not win the approval of philosophers like Lambert, Sulzer, and Mendelssohn because it lacked "clarity, self-evidence, or even something more essential," Kant began work on a new book that would reformulate and extend

⁴ See Beiser, Frederick. "Kant's intellectual development: 1746-1781." Included in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. Edited by Paul Guyer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. pp. 42-43. It should be noted that the reference Beiser provides for this claim does not refer to a passage that indicates that Kant doubted the possibility or desirability of metaphysics.

⁵ "Kant's intellectual development: 1746-1781," pg. 45.

the principles he had proposed in his dissertation.⁶ In the end, his plans for *The Bounds of Sensibility and Reason* suffered the same fate as *The Proper Method of Metaphysics*. After a debate Marcus Herz in Königsberg, Kant realized that metaphysics could not be founded on the distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition, as he had claimed in his inaugural dissertation. That distinction could not answer the question concerning the ground of the relation between representations and objects. And while it seemed plausible that sensibility could explain the relationship between representations and objects, Kant concluded that there was no way to guarantee the validity of representations derived from sensible affection. So, he traced the ground of the relation between representations back to “principles that are derived from the nature of our soul” and tried “to reduce transcendental philosophy (that is to say, all the concepts belonging to completely pure reason) to a certain number of categories.”⁷ Kant would attempt something similar in the ‘Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding,’ but he abandoned his plans for the *Bounds of Sensibility and Reason* long before he began work on the deduction, because he realized the distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition could never explain the validity of those categories.⁸

Kant described the work he planned to answer the question concerning “the ground of the relation...” as “a critique of pure reason.”⁹ Unfortunately, there is little evidence from the period between 1772 and 1781 that explains why Kant thought this was an appropriate title for his new work. Because he never published an essay called “An Answer to the Question: What is a

⁶ *Kant to Herz (June 7, 1771)*, pg. 126 (X:122).

⁷ *Kant to Herz (February 21, 1772)*, pp. 133-134 (X:130-132).

⁸ See Carl, Wolfgang. *Der schweigende Kant: Die Entwürfe zu einer Deduktion der Kategorien vor 1781*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989. pp. 16-54.

⁹ *Kant to Herz (February 21, 1772)*, pg. 135 (X:132). There is no indication that Kant intended “*eine Kritik der reinen Vernunft*” (“a critique of pure reason”) as the title of a forthcoming work in his 1772 letter to Herz. The earliest unequivocal reference to the title of the work Kant would publish in 1781 is found in a letter from Johann Caspar Lavater to Kant in 1774. See *Lavater to Kant (April 8, 1774)*, pg. 150 (X:165). Kant must have mentioned his work on the first *Critique* to Lavater in previous correspondence, which is unfortunately no longer extant.

Critique of Pure Reason?” we will have to look at the definitions of a critique of pure reason that Kant provides in the work bearing that title, if we want to understand what Kant’s critique is and why he thought it was the only way to set metaphysics on the sure path of science. Unfortunately, Kant does not provide one standard definition of a critique of pure reason in any of his works. In the ‘Preface’ and ‘Introduction’ to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the first *Critique*, Kant actually provides four different definitions of a critique of pure reason, which emphasize radically different aspects of his critique.

In the ‘Preface’ to the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant calls his critique a “court of justice, by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws.”¹⁰ In the very next sentence, Kant provides a very different account of his critique. “Yet by this I do not understand a critique of books and systems,” he writes, “but a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all the cognitions after which reason might strive **independently of all experience**, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all, however, from principles.”¹¹ Both of these definitions are very helpful for understanding Kant’s critique. The first (“court of justice”) definition shows that Kant’s critique is intended to secure the “rightful claims” of reason and dismiss its “groundless pretensions.” The second (“critique of the faculty of reason”) definition explains how Kant’s critique will secure reason’s “rightful claims” by examining the sources, extent, and limits of *a priori* cognition and using them to determine the possibility of metaphysics.

¹⁰ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 101 (Axi-Axii).

¹¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 101 (Axii).

The definition Kant proposes in the ‘Preface’ to the second (B) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) goes beyond the task he sets for his critique in the ‘Preface’ to the first (A) edition. Kant says his critique is concerned with “that attempt to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics, undertaking an entire revolution according to the example of the geometers and natural scientists.”¹² He is careful to note that his critique is merely “a treatise on method” and does not contain a complete system of the science of metaphysics, because he argues, in the ‘Introduction’ to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the first *Critique*, that the critique of pure reason is a “special science” that serves as a “propaedeutic” to a system of transcendental philosophy.¹³ “To the critique of pure reason,” he writes, “there accordingly belongs everything that constitutes transcendental philosophy, and it is the complete idea of transcendental philosophy, but is not yet this science itself, since it goes only so far in the analysis as is requisite for the complete estimation of synthetic *a priori* cognition.”¹⁴ Together, the third (“transformed procedure”) and fourth (“propaedeutic to a system”) definitions suggest that the critique of pure reason will provide metaphysics with a new method that will allow it to become a science like mathematics or physics, though we cannot expect to find a complete system of the science of metaphysics in a mere critique. The critique of pure reason is only the idea, the method, and the outline of transcendental philosophy.

These four definitions tell us a great deal about Kant’s critique. The first confirms that Kant’s critique is not a polemic against traditional metaphysics, because it is just as concerned with the “rightful claims” of reason as its “groundless pretensions.” The second definition explains how the rightful claims of reason can be secured by a critique of “the faculty of reason”

¹² *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 113 (Bxxii).

¹³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 132-133, 149-151 (A10/B24-A14/B28).

¹⁴ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 134, 151 (A14/B28).

that determines the sources, extent, and boundaries of our *a priori* cognition. The *a priori* cognition derived from that critique can be used to demonstrate the possibility of metaphysics, though the third definition stipulates that a scientific metaphysics will need the new and better method, which is also supplied by the critique of pure reason. That method allows us to begin formulating the principles of a system of the science of metaphysics. And while the fourth definition reminds us that the completion of that system lays beyond the scope of a critique of pure reason, Kant's critique is still the first step towards that goal.

At first, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* did not fare much better than his inaugural dissertation. The most important philosophers in Germany did not read, review, or promote the book as Kant had hoped. Things became even worse when a series of negative reviews began to appear in leading journals. Instead of acknowledging that his critique must have "lacked something essential" and moving on to the next project, as he had done with his inaugural dissertation, Kant defended his critique in a series of polemical works published during the 1780's and 1790's. In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science* (1783), Kant summarized many of the arguments he had presented in the 'Transcendental Aesthetic,' 'Transcendental Analytic,' and 'Transcendental Dialectic.' He also responded to critics who alleged that he denied the reality of space and time and conflated his transcendental idealism with Berkeley's dogmatic idealism. Yet Kant emphasized that a critique of pure reason was necessary to demonstrate the possibility of metaphysics. He also argued that a critique of pure reason was necessary, if metaphysics was to become something more than a mere possibility. If metaphysics was to become an actual science, Kant thought it would have to pass through the fire of his critique.

Kant repeated many of his arguments about the necessity of a critique of pure reason in the ‘Preface’ and ‘Introduction’ to the second (B) edition of the first *Critique* (1787). The second (B) ‘Preface’ begins with a history of the sciences, which shows that metaphysics has still not found its way onto “the secure path of science,” even though it is older than logic, mathematics, or physics.¹⁵ Because it has not undertaken a critique of pure reason, Kant says metaphysics has remained a “natural predisposition” (*Naturanlage*) of human reason and has not made the same kind of progress as the other sciences.¹⁶ In addition to making metaphysics a science, Kant also claims that his critique will have a number of valuable “utilities” (*Nutzen*). The first of these utilities is negative, because it teaches us “never to venture with speculative reason beyond the boundaries of experience.”¹⁷ But that negative utility is hardly the only utility the critique of pure reason possesses. Kant maintains that his critique also makes positive contributions to practical philosophy, because it shows that the extension of the moral use of reason beyond the bounds of possible experience does not involve a contradiction; theoretical philosophy, because it demonstrates the ideality of space and time, the objective validity of the pure concepts of the understanding; and benefits the public by undermining the monopoly of the schools, calling philosophy back to matters of “universal human concern,” and forcing it to recognize the dignity and equality of mankind.¹⁸ Denying these positive utilities and emphasizing only the negative utility of his critique would be like saying “the police are of no positive utility because their chief business is to put a stop to the violence that citizens have to fear from other citizens, so that each can carry on his own affairs in peace and safety.”¹⁹

¹⁵ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 110 (Bxv).

¹⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 147-149 (B21-B24).

¹⁷ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 114 (Bxxiv).

¹⁸ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 114-120 (Bxxiv-Bxxxvi).

¹⁹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 115 (Bxxxv).

Kant defended the originality of his critique in a polemical work called *On a Discovery Whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason is to be Made Superfluous by an Older One* (1790). Written in response to a series of articles by Johann August Eberhard, who claimed that Leibniz's philosophy contains "just as much of a critique of reason" as Kant's critical philosophy, most of *On a Discovery* is devoted to the correction of Eberhard's misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the claims of Kant's critique.²⁰ In the end, Kant concludes that there never was any Leibnizian critique of pure reason or, if there was, "it was at least not granted to Mr. Eberhard to see it, to understand it, or at any other point to satisfy this need of philosophy, even at second hand."²¹ Interestingly, Kant goes on to argue that his critique "might well be the true apology for Leibniz," since it does better justice to the peculiarities (*Eigenthümlichkeiten*) of Leibniz's metaphysics – the principle of sufficient reason, the doctrine of monads, and the doctrine of pre-established harmony – than the critics who did not understand him or would-be followers like Eberhard, who neglect "the key to all accounts of what pure reason produces from mere concepts," which is nothing other than "the critique of reason itself."²²

The last line of argument Kant used to defend his critique concerns its historical necessity. Building on a claim he first made in the 'History of Pure Reason' at the end of the first *Critique*, where he declares "the critical path alone is still open," Kant drafted an essay answering the question posed by the Prussian Royal Academy for its prize-essay competition in 1792/1795: "What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz

²⁰ Eberhard, Johann August. "Das Gebiet des reinen Verstandes." Included in *Immanuel Kant: Der Streit mit Johann August Eberhard*. Edited by Marion Lauschke and Manfred Zahn. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998. pp. 58-59 (III.2.289). See also Kant, Immanuel. *On a Discovery Whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason is to be Made Superfluous by an Older One*. Translated by Henry Allison. Included in *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*. Edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. pg. 283 (VIII:187).

²¹ *On a Discovery*, pg. 332 (VIII:246).

²² *On a Discovery*, pp. 333-336 (VIII:247-251).

and Wolff?”²³ Kant never completed his essay, but his drafts show that he intended to focus on the various stages metaphysics had to traverse in order to determine the possibility and extent of *a priori* cognition. He maintains that the sequence of these stages is “founded in the nature of man’s cognitive faculty,” but argues that the last stage in this process is a critique of that faculty, which will bring metaphysics “into a condition of stability, both external and internal, in which it would need neither increase nor decrease, nor even be capable of this.”²⁴ In a short essay published in 1796, Kant even compares this condition to a state of “perpetual peace” in philosophy, whose treaty would be secured by his critique.

Unfortunately, neither the definitions of a critique of pure reason Kant proposed in the first (A) and second (B) editions of the first *Critique* nor the defense that he mounted in his later works determined the reception of Kant’s critique. Kant’s conception of critique was appropriated by those who wished to promote his achievements, those who wished to criticize them, and those who wished to go beyond them, according to their own needs. That makes the interpretation of Kant’s critique even more difficult, because our view of that critique has been shaped by their interests as well as our own.

Kant’s empiricist and rationalist critics both saw the critique of pure reason as an attempt to define the limits of reason. While the infamous Göttingen review (1782) criticizes Kant for denying the reality of space and time and for his idealism, it actually praises the first *Critique* for exposing “the most considerable difficulties of speculative philosophy” and providing “much material for salutary reflection to all those builders and defenders of metaphysical systems who

²³ *Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 704 (A855/B883).

²⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* Translated by Henry Allison. Included in *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*. Edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. pg. 357 (XX:264).

all too proudly and boldly depend on their imagined pure reason.”²⁵ Christian Garve, in his review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (1783), says “the real purpose of this work is to determine the limits of reason, and its content consists in showing that reason goes beyond these limits whenever it asserts something about the actuality of any one thing.”²⁶ Even a Wolffian like Eberhard saw the the determination of the limits of reason as the primary contribution of the Kant’s critique. Eberhard simply objected to the particular way in which Kant had “drawn the line” with respect to the limits of reason and promoted a different critique that affirms the possibility of extending reason beyond the bounds of possible experience.²⁷

The defenders of the critical philosophy, especially Johann Schultz and Jacob Sigismund Beck, did not see the determination of the limits of reason as the primary contribution of Kant’s critique. In his *Exposition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (1784), Schultz presents Kant’s critique as “a system, which has been deeply thought through, down to its smallest constituent parts.”²⁸ The purpose of that system is, Schultz argues, “to lead reason to true self-cognition, to investigate the legitimacy of reason’s claim to possess metaphysical cognitions, and precisely through such an examination, to mark off the true limits beyond which reason may not venture in its speculations, if it does not want to stray into an empty realm of nothing but phantoms of the brain.”²⁹ Beck also calls Kant’s critique a system at the beginning of his *The Only Possible*

²⁵ See Sassen, Brigitte. *Kant’s Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pg. 57.

²⁶ *Kant’s Early Critics*, pg. 59.

²⁷ Eberhard, Johann August. “Über die Schranken der menschlichen Erkenntnis.” Included in *Immanuel Kant: Der Streit mit Johann August Eberhard*. Edited by Marion Lauschke and Manfred Zahn. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998. pg. 3 (I.2.10). See also *On a Discovery*, pg. 284 (VIII:189).

²⁸ Schultz, Johann. *Exposition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by James C. Morrison. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995. pg. 3 (4). Schultz actually calls Kant’s critique a *Lehrgebäude* (“edifice of doctrine”) rather than a system in this passage, but he calls Kant’s philosophy a *System* (“system”) on pp. 5 (8) and 107 (188) and in many other passages.

²⁹ *Exposition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 9 (14).

Standpoint From Which the Critical Philosophy Must Be Judged (1796), though he usually uses the words “critical” and “critique” to distinguish Kant’s philosophy from the speculative and dogmatic systems it renders obsolete.³⁰ For Schultz and Beck, Kant’s critique is “the one true philosophy” that will answer every question, once its principles have been freed from Kant’s convoluted arguments and his unintelligible prose.³¹

Reinhold and Fichte were no less enthusiastic about Kant’s philosophy than Schultz and Beck, but they did not think his critique constituted a system. Referring to the definition of a critique of pure reason that Kant presents in the ‘Introduction’ to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the first *Critique*, Reinhold insisted that a critique of pure reason is merely a propaedeutic to a system Kant had failed to complete.³² He presented his own *Elementary Philosophy* (1789-1791) as a reformulation and extension of the principles of the critical philosophy, that built on the foundation Kant had laid and made philosophy into complete and unified whole. Fichte followed suit, arguing that Kant may have entertained the idea of a science and the thought of a system in his critique, but never actually constructed the system he envisioned.³³ This allowed Fichte to position his own *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/1795) as the culmination of Kant’s transcendental idealism, even though Kant regarded it as “a totally indefensible system.”³⁴

³⁰ Beck, Jacob Sigismund. *Erläuternder Auszug aus den critischen Schriften des herrn Prof. Kant (Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunct darstellt, as welchem die critische Philosophie zu beurtheilen ist)*. Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartnoch, 1796. pp. ix, 131.

³¹ Beck, Jacob Sigismund. *The Principles of Critical Philosophy*. London: Johnson & Richardson, 1797. pp. ix-x.

³² Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. *The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge*. Included in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism (Revised Edition)*. Edited by George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000. pg. 64 (62).

³³ Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. “Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*.” Included in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*. Edited and Translated by Daniel Breazeale. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994. pg. 62-63 (229-231/477-478).

³⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Public Declaration Concerning Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre*. Included in *Immanuel Kant: Correspondence*. Edited and Translated by Arnulf Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. pg. 559 (XII:370).

Like Reinhold and Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer thought Kant's critique was incomplete and imperfect. Yet they accepted the distinction Kant and his defenders had drawn between dogmatism and criticism. In his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795/1804), Schelling presents the *Critique of Pure Reason* as "a negative refutation of dogmatism" that demonstrates "the theoretical *indemonstrability* of dogmatism."³⁵ He nevertheless denies that Kant's critique can "ascend to the absolute" and "rise to that absolute unity" that is the ultimate foundation of philosophy, since "criticism proceeds from the point it has in common with dogmatism."³⁶ This distinguishes the critical philosophy from philosophy itself, which must proceed from an absolute first principle and articulates its system without reference to the principles and presuppositions of other philosophies.³⁷ Schopenhauer actually adopts a very similar attitude towards Kant's critique in the "Critique of the Kantian Philosophy" that he added to first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (1818/1844). According to Schopenhauer, Kant's achievement "rests on the fundamental distinction between dogmatic and critical or transcendental philosophies."³⁸ Critical philosophy assumes the standpoint, principles, and assumptions of dogmatic philosophy, in order to demonstrate their falsehood.³⁹ And while Kant failed to see that "appearance is the world as representation, and the thing in itself is the will," because he "pursued his symmetrical, logical system without giving enough

³⁵ Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*. Included in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Early Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*. Translated by Fritz Marti. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980. pp. 163-164 (293-295).

³⁶ *Philosophical Letters of Dogmatism and Criticism*, pg. 164-165 (294-296).

³⁷ *Philosophical Letters of Dogmatism and Criticism*, pg. 163 (293-294).

³⁸ Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation (Volume 1)*. Edited and Translated by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pg. 447 (498).

³⁹ *The World as Will and Representation (Volume 1)*, pg. 453-454 (505-506).

thought to the objects he was dealing with,” he was at least able to show that the dogmatic conception of metaphysics is impossible.⁴⁰

Just as there were those who questioned the correctness and completeness of Kant’s philosophy, there were also those who did not think the critical philosophy was so different from the dogmatic philosophy it claimed to overcome. In one of the fragments published in the *Athenaeum* (1798), Friedrich Schlegel said “the philosophy of the Kantians is probably termed critical *per antiphrasin*; or else it is an *epitheton ornans*.”⁴¹ Using critique as an *epitheton ornans* suggests that there is no essential difference between critical philosophy and dogmatic philosophy. Saying that Kantians used the word “critical” *per antiphrasin* means they are just as dogmatic as the dogmatists they oppose. Hegel held a similar view of Kant’s critique, which he outlined in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1840). According to Hegel, Kant’s philosophy is critical because “its aim... is first of all to supply a criticism of our faculties of knowledge; for before obtaining knowledge we must inquire into the faculties of knowledge.”⁴² While this might seem like an important pursuit, Hegel points out that inquiring into the faculties of knowledge requires knowledge of them, so that it becomes unclear how we are “to know without knowing” and “apprehend the truth before the truth.”⁴³ He denies that Kant’s critique can ever attain the knowledge it seeks, because that knowledge is “already with itself.”⁴⁴ In the end, critical philosophy is no different than dogmatic philosophy, because they both presuppose what they eventually conclude.

⁴⁰ *The World as Will and Representation (Volume I)*, pg. 460 (513).

⁴¹ Schlegel, Friedrich. *Athenaeum Fragments*. Included in *Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde and the Fragments*. Edited and Translated by Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. pg. 167 (§47).

⁴² Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Volume III)*. Translated by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1974. pg. 428 (XX:333-334).

⁴³ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Volume III)*, pg. 428 (XX:333-334).

⁴⁴ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Volume III)*, pg. 429 (XX:333-334).

The interpretation and appropriation of Kant's critique did not end with Hegel. Indeed, it continues to this day. In this book, I simply tried to reconstruct what Kant meant when he called the Critique of Pure Reason a critique. To do that, I have outlined the different ways in which the word "critique" was used in Kant's time, which prevents us from seeing his critique of pure reason as an entirely negative undertaking. My account of the development of Kant's critique also supports this view, because it shows that Kant wanted to define the proper method of metaphysics, just as much as he wanted to purge metaphysics of the erroneous judgments and mistaken procedures that prevented it from making better progress as a science. The definitions of a critique of pure reason that Kant provides in the 'Preface' and 'Introduction' to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the first Critique also support this view, because they suggest that Kant thought his critique would secure reason's rightful claims; demonstrate the possibility of metaphysics; provide metaphysics with a new and better method; and pave the way for a complete system of transcendental philosophy. Kant's defense of the originality, utility, and necessity of his critique in the works he published after 1781 also provides evidence that Kant's critique was intended to provide metaphysics with a new foundation, instead of denying its possibility or desirability. Kant's critics, defenders, or successors did not always accept the definitions or justifications that Kant offered for his critique, but that simply means there are more conceptions of critique at play in German philosophy than the one associated with Kant.

Moreover, German philosophy was supposed to critique everyday life rather than provide the intellectual tools to sustain it. The greatest German philosophers, including Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Heidegger, Karl Marx, and the Frankfurt School, gave us eviscerating analyses of the forces underpinning everyday life. In their struggle to keep German philosophy relevant, have its current champions forgotten what German philosophy once excelled at doing? If philosophy were to mean anything in Germany after Adorno's death, it would have to become something different from that. German philosophers Richard David Precht, left, and Jürgen Habermas, right, both shown in 2013. (Photo credit: Getty Images).