

The Necessity of the Discipline of Pure Reason for the Systematicity of the Practical Use of Reason in Kant's Critical Philosophy

Farshid Baghai¹

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Abstract. Kant's critical philosophy cannot realize its stated purpose to make metaphysics systematic unless it makes all metaphysical uses of reason, including the practical use of reason, systematic. Yet Kant's account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason is not entirely clear. In particular, none of the variations of his account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason explicitly discusses the role of the discipline of pure reason in making the practical use of reason systematic. The apparent absence of the discipline from Kant's account is contrary to indications in his writings indirectly suggesting that the discipline plays an indispensable role in the systematicity of the practical use of reason. This discrepancy remains unaddressed in the scholarship. Most interpreters reconstruct Kant's account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason without attributing any role to the discipline. This article aims to make explicit the role of the discipline in Kant's account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason. Specifically, it suggests that the discipline of pure reason is the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason: it prepares the ground for a justifiable conception of the ideal of the highest good and for legitimate postulates regarding the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

Keywords: Kant, critical method, discipline, systematicity, moral use of reason.

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Introduction

Kant's critical philosophy cannot realize its stated purpose to make metaphysics scientific or systematic unless it makes all metaphysical uses of reason, including the moral or practical use of reason, systematic.² Despite the indispensable significance of the systematicity of the practical use of reason for the entirety of his critical philosophy, Kant is not always clear and explicit in presenting all aspects of his account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason. In particular, none of the variations of his account explicitly discusses the role that the discipline of pure reason (hereafter: the discipline) plays in the systematicity of the practical use of reason.³ The apparent absence of the discipline from Kant's account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason is contrary to indications suggesting that the discipline plays an essential role in systematizing the practical use of reason (e.g., KrV A xiii, WDO 8:134, KpV 5:107). This discrepancy remains unaddressed in the scholarship.⁴ Most commentators interpret Kant's account of the systematicity of the practical use of reason

¹ Farshid Baghai is an Associate Professor in Department of Philosophy at Villanova University, United States. He can be reached at farshid.baghai@villanova.edu

² Kant uses *science* (*Wissenschaft*) for both critique and metaphysics. For metaphysics to become a science or system, first there must be "a special science, which can be called the **critique of pure reason**" (KrV B24). See also (KrV A15). Thus there are two levels of systematicity: the systematicity of critique and the systematicity of metaphysics. The systematicity of critique precedes and is necessary for the systematicity of metaphysics. This paper focuses on the systematicity of critique with regard to the practical use of reason. The systematicity of critique with regard to the practical use of reason consists in determining all possible conditions that are necessary to make the practical use of reason complete. These conditions include not only the principles of morality but also the possible ends that these principles can be directed at.

³ Kant uses the term *discipline* in a number of different senses, including in pedagogical and anthropological senses. This paper uses *discipline* only in its strictly methodological sense, i.e., the discipline of pure reason, as it is discussed in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique* (KrV A708/B736).

⁴ One of the major reasons that this discrepancy has remained unaddressed is insufficient attention to the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique* and particularly to the indispensable role that the discipline of pure reason plays for the critical project as a whole. The first *Critique* is primarily "a treatise on the method" of metaphysics (KrV B xxii) rather than a book on logic, metaphysics, or epistemology. As Kant's ordering of the chapters of the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique* indicates, the first component of Kant's critical method of metaphysics is the discipline of pure reason. This component is a necessary presupposition for the functioning of the subsequent components of his critical method, including his account of the systematic grounding of the practical use of reason in the canon of pure reason.

without attributing any role to the discipline.⁵ The secondary literature on Kant has taken up the question of the significance of the discipline for his theoretical philosophy, but it does not work out the indispensable role of the discipline for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. Articulating this role is important for appreciating why and how Kant describes the discipline as the most foundational use of reason in the *entirety* of his critical philosophy, that is, as “the greatest and perhaps only utility of *all* philosophy of pure reason” (KrV A795/B823, italics added). More specifically, such articulation demonstrates that it is only through subjection to its own discipline that reason can systematize the practical use of reason. That is to say, without the discipline, reason cannot determine the possible ends that the practical use of reason can be directed at and thus cannot establish a justifiable conception of the ideal of the highest good and legitimately presuppose the immortality of the soul or the existence of God. Neither the ideal of the highest good nor practical postulates can be legitimate unless they are motivated by and satisfy the systematic needs of reason in its practical use in the supersensible realm. The discipline is indispensable to properly identify and satisfy these needs.

This article aims to make explicit the indispensable role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason. It suggests that the discipline is the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. To be sure, the primary task of the discipline is to determine the boundaries of the theoretical use of reason. Yet in so doing, the discipline also performs two necessary functions for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. First, in constraining the theoretical use of reason to the sensible realm, the discipline also determines the supersensible realm as the proper domain for the practical use of reason. Without the determination of its proper domain, practical reason cannot be used systematically.⁶ Second, in preventing reason from making knowledge claims about supersensible objects, the discipline also subordinates and repurposes the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm to serve the needs of the practical use of reason in this realm.⁷ This subordination is necessary for a justifiable conception of the ideal of the highest good and thus for the legitimacy of the two presuppositions of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

The article proceeds in two sections. The first section discusses the role of the discipline as the first necessary condition for systematizing the practical use of reason in the first *Critique*. The second section outlines how Kant’s two subsequent works –“What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” and the second *Critique*– reaffirm his position in the first *Critique* on the role of the discipline as the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason.

1. The discipline as the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason in *Critique of Pure Reason*

In his discussion of the discipline in the first *Critique*, Kant’s main focus is to present the discipline as the constraint that limits the theoretical use of reason to the sensible realm. As a result, Kant does not thematically discuss the relation between the discipline and the practical use of reason. That said, an examination of some key passages in the Doctrine of Method can still reveal why and how the discipline is the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. This section discusses 1) a brief account of why Kant considers the systematicity of reason to be indispensable for his critical philosophy, 2) why the discipline matters for the systematicity of *all* metaphysical uses of reason, and 3) how the discipline informs the systematicity of the practical use of reason.

1.1. The significance of the systematicity of reason in Kant’s critical philosophy

Kant considers the systematicity or completeness of reason to be of ultimate significance in his critical philosophy because it is only by being systematic that reason can govern itself and all human affairs. If reason is

⁵ There are a number of rich commentaries on the systematicity of the practical use of reason. E.g., see (Kleingeld 1998, 311-339), (Guyer 2000, 333-371), (Buroker 2006, 298-302), (Rauscher 2010, 290-309), (Keller 2010, 119-144), (Watkins 2010, 145-167), (Willaschek 2010, 168-196), (Reath 2015, xxx-xxxiv), and (Wood 2020, 37-39). However, they do not attribute any role to the discipline of pure reason in making this use systematic. Likewise, there is a growing body of literature on the discipline of pure reason. E.g., see (Munzel 1991), (Moore 2010), (Chance 2015), (Baghai 2019), and (Baghai 2022). This literature is yet to engage with the question of the role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason. In effect, there is no secondary literature that addresses the indispensable role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason.

⁶ For Kant, using practical reason systematically is an act that not only follows the principles of morality but also rests on the presupposition that such act contributes to creating a moral world.

⁷ As will be discussed, Kant uses “speculative” in a few different senses. The repurposed version of the speculative use of reason is not a theoretical-speculative use, i.e., the use of reason to theoretically cognize supersensible objects. The repurposed version of the speculative use of reason is the *critical-methodological* use of reason, which Kant discusses in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*. The critical-methodological use of reason is not concerned with objects, sensible or supersensible. It is concerned with reason itself and its modes of operation in order to identify the needs of reason in its metaphysical uses and make such uses systematic. The first component of the critical-methodological use of reason, as it is built into the order of chapters in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*, is the discipline of pure reason.

supposed to be the ultimate authority in all human affairs—a premise that Kant shares with many enlightenment philosophers—it cannot be subordinated to other forms of authority such as the political authority of the state or the religious authority of the church. Rejecting the subjection of reason to other forms of authority and presenting reason as the ultimate authority, however, raises some questions: if reason judges everything, what authority judges reason? What is the standard or criterion by which the acts of reason are assessed and judged? Where does this standard or criterion originate if not from forms of authority other than reason?

Kant's case for the systematicity of reason is his most fundamental response to such questions. He begins with the assumption that neither un-reason nor incomplete reason can be the standard or criterion to judge reason, its acts, and thus all human affairs. In order to make such judgements properly, it is necessary to have a standard that not only originates from reason but is also complete. As Kant's discussion of the dialectical claims of reason indicates, not everything that originates from human reason is necessarily systematic. For example, an inference can naturally originate from human reason that there are supersensible beings, even though there is no systematic justification for such assertion in human reason. Thus, reason must conceive of itself as a complete system according to which all acts of reason and thereby all human affairs can be assessed and judged. Kant calls this conception of reason *critique*, and describes it in this way:

“pure reason is such an isolated domain, within itself so thoroughly connected, that no part of it can be encroached upon without disturbing all the rest, nor adjusted without having previously determined for each part its place and its influence on the others; for, since there is nothing outside of it that could correct our judgment within it, the validity and use of each part depends on the relation in which it stands to the others within reason itself, and, as with the structure of an organized body, the purpose of any member can be derived only from the complete concept of the whole. That is why it can be said of such a critique, that it is never trustworthy unless it is *entirely complete* down to the least elements of pure reason, and that in the domain of this faculty one must determine and settle either *all or nothing*” (Prol 4:263).

Kant takes the systematic and complete conception of reason, or critique, to be the necessary standard or criterion that enables reason to “recognize no other judge than universal human reason itself” (KrV A752/B780). Therefore, the self-standing character of reason as the judge of all human affairs requires that all acts of reason be subjected to critique, or the standard that the systematic and complete conception of reason supplies: “Reason must subject itself to critique in all its undertakings, and cannot restrict the freedom of critique through any prohibition without damaging itself and drawing upon itself a disadvantageous suspicion... The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom” (KrV A738/B766). Thus, as Kant argues, the systematicity and completeness of reason, or critique, is not a matter of personal choice or philosophical preference but a matter of necessity if human reason is to be able to legislate itself and all human affairs.⁸ As will be discussed in the next section, such systematicity is also the standard or criterion for making all metaphysical uses of reason systematic, for establishing metaphysics as science.

1.2. Why the discipline matters for the systematicity of all metaphysical uses of reason

In *The Discipline of Pure Reason*, Kant defines the discipline as follows: “the **constraint** [*Zwang*] through which the constant propensity to stray from certain rules is limited and finally eradicated is called **discipline**” (KrV A709/B737). This definition presents the discipline as reason's self-constraint to correct its dialectical (systematic) errors. The primary role or “special job” of the discipline consists in “**preventing error**” (Ibid.). The discipline serves to “preserve reason from straying and error” by “constrain[ing] reason's propensity to expansion beyond the narrow boundaries of possible experience” (KrV A711/739). In sum, the discipline is the negative use of reason that inhibits the theoretical use of reason in the supersensible realm, constrains this use to the sensible realm, and thus eliminates the very possibility of dialectical errors.⁹

Although in his definition of the discipline Kant focuses on the “**negative**” (KrV A709/B737) task of the discipline to constrain the theoretical use of reason and prevent dialectical errors, he also states that the discipline matters for *all* metaphysical uses of reason: “*the entire philosophy of pure reason* is concerned with this negative use” (KrV A711/B739, italics added). For Kant, the philosophy of pure reason is not identical

⁸ This is one of the most important distinctions between Kant and the rationalist philosophers of enlightenment. In Kant's account, it is necessary but insufficient to argue that reason is the ultimate authority in all human affairs. One must also work out *how* reason can be the authority that governs itself. Without successfully elaborating how reason can lawfully govern itself, Kant holds, the authority of reason in other realms cannot be on a solid foundation either. Such elaboration is the central task of Kant's critical project. The necessity of such elaboration lies behind Kant's criticism of “**indifferentists**” (KrV A x). Also see my discussion of Kant's criticism of Mendelssohn below.

⁹ There are different but related notions of discipline in Kant's corpus, including in his anthropology and philosophy of education. As earlier indicated, this article focuses only on the discipline of pure reason with regard to the metaphysical uses of reason. Kant discusses this methodological conception of the discipline in the *Doctrine of Method* of the first *Critique* and distinguishes it from “**teaching** [*Belehrung*]” and “**instruction** [*Unterweisung*]” (KrV A710/B738). In its methodological conception, the discipline of pure reason originates from pure reason itself and is not directed “to the content but only to the method of cognition from pure reason” (KrV A712/B740).

with the philosophy of the theoretical use of reason.¹⁰ It also includes the philosophy of the practical use of reason: “the philosophy of pure reason is either **propaedeutic** ... and is called **critique**, or ... **metaphysics**,” which “is divided into the metaphysics of the **speculative** and the **practical** use of pure reason” (KrV A841/B869). Thus, Kant implies that the discipline bears significance for all metaphysical uses of reason, including the practical use of reason, and he does so in the first edition of the first *Critique*, when he has no intention to write the second *Critique*.¹¹

In the opening paragraph of The Canon of Pure Reason, where Kant articulates his account of the ideal of the highest good in order to make the practical use of reason systematic, Kant goes further than mere affirmation of the significance of the discipline for all metaphysical uses of reason. He characterizes the discipline as the greatest use of reason in all philosophy of pure reason, and also indicates why the discipline matters for all metaphysical uses of reason. Kant writes:

“The greatest ... utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus merely negative, namely because it does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries, and instead of discovering truth it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors” (KrV A795/B823).

This passage states why the negative use of reason or the discipline is the greatest use of reason in all philosophy of pure reason. The discipline is the greatest use of reason “because it ... serves for the determination of [the] boundaries” of the theoretical use of reason (Nota 1). Kant takes the discipline to be the greatest use of reason because he holds that its greatest need is to determine the boundaries of its theoretical use. And this is pure reason’s greatest need because determining the boundaries of theoretical reason is necessary for making *all* metaphysical uses of reason, including the practical use of reason, systematic. The systematically foundational role of the discipline for metaphysics is implied in Kant’s diagnosis of why metaphysics has not become a science and is instead “despised on all sides” (KrV A viii). As Kant explains:

“Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason” (KrV A vii).

According to this diagnosis, the problems that are given to reason “by the nature of reason itself” do not by themselves impede making metaphysics systematic or scientific. Kant does not assume that these problems are simply pointless, although their inevitability does not meet the demands of systematicity or science either. What impedes making metaphysics systematic is theoretical reason’s natural predisposition to “overstep all possible use in experience” and “surpass the bounds of all experience” (KrV A viii). This transgression into the supersensible realm is the primary hindrance to making all metaphysics systematic. In this transgression, theoretical reason interferes with the practical use of reason, obstructs each of the metaphysical uses of reason from performing their special functions within their proper domains, and thus undermines the systematicity of theoretical *and* practical uses of reason. In light of such systematically self-destructive impact of the dialectical transgression of theoretical reason on *all* philosophy of pure reason, Kant views the determination of the boundaries of the theoretical use of reason to be the greatest need of reason in all philosophy of pure reason. The discipline is *the first necessary condition* for making *all* metaphysical uses of reason systematic, because it satisfies the greatest need of reason to make metaphysics systematic. The discipline remedies dialectical conflicts of reason and lays the foundation to educate reason, that is, to develop reason’s natural predisposition to metaphysics into scientific metaphysics. This means that Kant views the discipline of pure reason as the first step in the education of pure reason. The discipline educates reason to use itself without reducing itself to a mere tool, without curtailing the “the original right of human reason,” that is, the “holy” “right” of reason to be its own judge and govern itself (KrV A752/B780). This discipline or education of pure reason, which seeks

¹⁰ Kant acknowledges that *metaphysics* conventionally refers to “its speculative part, ... that which we call **metaphysics of nature** and which considers everything insofar as it is” (KrV A845/B873). He simultaneously speaks of “**metaphysics of morals**” and defines *metaphysics* in more general terms than the metaphysics of nature: “the system of pure reason (science), the whole (true as well as apparent) philosophical cognition from pure reason in systematic interconnection ... is called **metaphysics**” (KrV A841/B869). See also (MS 6:216). In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant uses *pure reason* in two senses: 1) pure reason as the object of critique. In this sense, pure reason is not differentiated in its metaphysical uses, and the theoretical use and practical use of reason are *not systematically* distinguished; 2) pure reason as the source of critique. In this sense, the two metaphysical uses of reason and their domains are systematically distinguished. In the *Dialectic and the Doctrine of Method*, Kant uses *pure reason* in both senses, often without clarifying which one he intends.

¹¹ In *Jäsche Logic*, published in 1800, Kant briefly addresses the issue of *the systematic form of all sciences of pure reason*—that is, the science of critique and the science of metaphysics. In *Universal Doctrine of Method of Jäsche Logic*, which “has to deal with **the form of a science in general**,” Kant remarks: “All cognition, and a whole of cognition, must be in conformity with a rule. (Absence of rules is at the same time unreason.) But this rule is either that of *manner* (free) or that of *method* (**constraint [Zwang]**)” (Log 9:139, bold added). The rule “of *method* (constraint)” is the systematically necessary rule to which all cognitions of reason must be subjected in order to be systematic. Kant refers to the rule of method as *Zwang*, the very term he uses to define the discipline in the first *Critique*.

to establish and sustain reason's self-governance, precedes other forms of education of reason, e.g., moral education, which concern the governance of reason in particular domains.

If, as discussed, the discipline is the first necessary condition for the systematicity of all metaphysical uses of reason, we can now turn to how the discipline informs the systematicity of the practical use of reason in particular.

1.3. How the discipline informs the systematicity of the practical use of reason

Kant does not directly discuss the role of the discipline in systematizing the practical use of reason. He nevertheless implies that, in delimiting the boundaries of the theoretical use of reason, the discipline *also* performs two necessary functions for the systematicity of the practical use of reason: first, it determines that the proper domain for the practical use of reason is the supersensible realm; second, it enables reason to subordinate its speculative use to the needs of the practical use of reason in this realm. This subordination repurposes the speculative use of reason to serve laying the foundation for a justifiable conception of the ideal of the highest good as well as for legitimate presuppositions regarding the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

The first necessary function of the discipline for the systematicity of the practical use of reason consists in identifying the supersensible realm as the domain for the practical use of reason. Without its own clearly delineated domain, the practical use of reason cannot be systematic. The delineating function is implied in Kant's characterization of the primary task of the discipline as "the determination of boundaries" (KrV A795/B823). Although Kant discusses "the determination of boundaries" *primarily* as the constraining of the theoretical use of reason to the sensible realm, this determination is *not merely* concerned with the theoretical use of reason. Kant takes the determination of any use of reason within critical philosophy to be necessarily part of a holistic organization of reason as a systematic unity:

"pure reason is such a perfect unity that if its principle were insufficient for even a single one of the questions that are set for it by its own nature, then this [principle] might as well be discarded because then it also would not be up to answering any of the other questions with complete reliability" (KrV A xiii).

Accordingly, the determination of the boundaries of the theoretical use of reason is not without major implications for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. Constraining the theoretical use of reason to the sensible realm entails that the supersensible realm is the proper domain for the only other metaphysical use of reason, i.e., the practical use of reason.¹² Kant notes:

"Pure reason has a presentiment of objects of great interest to it. It takes the path of mere speculation in order to come closer to these; but they flee before it. Presumably it may hope for better luck on the only path that still remains to it, namely that of its **practical use**" (KrV A797/B825).

He adds: "if there is to be any legitimate use of pure reason [in the supersensible realm] at all ... this will concern not the speculative [theoretical] but rather the **practical use of reason**" (Ibid.). Thus, in determining the sensible realm as the domain of the theoretical use of reason, the discipline also determines that the domain of the practical use of reason is the supersensible realm.¹³

The second necessary function of the discipline for the systematicity of the practical use of reason consists in *repurposing the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm to serve the needs of the practical use of reason*. This repurposing transforms the theoretical-speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm into the methodological speculation of reason to identify and satisfy the systematic needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. Without subjection to the discipline, theoretical inquisitiveness or "general lust for knowledge" (KrV A708/B736) drives the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm, not letting the systematic needs of practical use of reason guide the methodological speculation of reason. With subjection to the discipline, the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm is repurposed to serve, or methodologically satisfy, the systemic needs of its practical use.¹⁴

¹² Put generally, there cannot be any systematic unity of reason unless distinct domains of reason are first separated. Any unity of reason must first distinguish different functions of the different faculties in their domains.

¹³ Similarly, Kant remarks: "a critique that limits the speculative use of reason is, to be sure, to that extent **negative**, but because it *simultaneously* removes an obstacle that limits or even threatens to wipe out the practical use of reason, this critique is *also* in fact of **positive** and very important utility" (KrV B xxv, italics added).

¹⁴ The changing meaning of *the speculative (use of) reason* is also reflected in its different uses in Kant's writings, including those discussed in this article. Kant uses *the speculative (use of) reason* in one of these three senses: 1) as dialectical thinking of supersensible objects, which makes erroneous knowledge claims about them; 2) as systematically lawful thinking of supersensible objects, which avoids making knowledge claims about them and only aims to satisfy the systemic needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm; and 3) in a broad sense that contains 1 & 2. The second sense of the speculative use of reason is a critical-methodological use of reason, as it performs a *critical-methodological function* for the systematicity of the practical use of reason.

To appreciate the second necessary function of the discipline for the systematicity of the practical use of reason, it is useful to outline this function as it is implied in the first two sections of The Canon of Pure Reason.

As already discussed, in determining the sensible realm as the proper domain of the theoretical use of reason, the discipline also determines the supersensible realm as the proper domain of the practical use of reason. Although necessary, determining the legitimate domain of the practical use of reason is not sufficient for systematizing it. Such systematization also requires the a priori determination of the ultimate end for which practical reason can be used in the supersensible realm.

The first section of The Canon of Pure Reason, titled “On the ultimate end of the pure use of our reason,” takes the first step to determine the ultimate end for which practical reason can be used in the supersensible realm. In the opening paragraph of this section, Kant states:

“Reason is driven by a propensity of its nature to go beyond its use in experience, to venture to the outermost bounds of all cognition by means of mere ideas in a pure use, and to find peace only in the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole” (KrV A797/B825).

Kant explains that the determination of the ultimate end of the use of reason in the supersensible realm is necessary for establishing reason as “a self-subsisting systematic whole.” To completely determine this ultimate end and to outline how reason can be used for it, Kant proceeds to locate the origin of reason’s metaphysical propensity within reason itself. The ultimate end of the pure use of reason in the supersensible realm can be determined only if the motivating source of this use is identified. Hence the question that sets the agenda for the first section of The Canon of Pure Reason: “is this striving grounded merely in its speculative interest, or rather uniquely and solely in its practical interest?” (Ibid.) Kant answers that with regard to all three supersensible objects (the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God) at which reason is directed in its pure use, “the merely speculative interest of reason is very small” (KrV A798/B826). He concludes that the practical interest of reason lies at the origin of its propensity to extend itself beyond the sensible: “If, then, these cardinal propositions are not all necessary for our **knowing**, and yet are insistently recommended to us by our reason,” Kant concludes, “their importance must really concern only the **practical**” (KrV A799-800/B827-828).

Now that it is determined that the three supersensible objects matter for the practical interest of reason, the next step toward determining the ultimate end of the practical use of reason is to ascertain the ways in which they matter for practical reason, i.e., how practical reason should be used in the supersensible realm if it is to legitimately satisfy its interest in freedom, the immortality of the soul, and existence of God. Put differently, the question is: how practical reason should be used in the supersensible realm in order to be systematic or complete. Kant takes up this question in the second section of The Canon of Pure Reason, titled “On the ideal of the highest good, as a determining ground of the ultimate end of pure reason.” This question is methodological rather than moral: it does not primarily focus on what is necessary to be moral but on what is necessary to be systematic in the moral use of reason in the supersensible realm. The systematicity of the practical use of reason is necessary for Kant’s critical project even in its first articulation in the first edition of the first *Critique*, which is well before Kant has the idea of writing the second *Critique*.¹⁵ The systematic determination of how practical reason should be used in the supersensible realm belongs to the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*, which outlines “the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason” (KrV A708/B736), or the methodological principles governing all metaphysical uses of reason. More specifically, the methodological determination of how practical reason should be used in the supersensible realm is at the core of The Canon of Pure Reason, which seeks to lay out “the whole of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of” practical reason in the supersensible realm (KrV A796/B823).

To work out the a priori principles of the correct use of practical reason in the supersensible realm, or to determine how practical reason should be used to satisfy its interest in the three supersensible objects, Kant first situates the use of practical reason in relation to the other metaphysical use of reason. In other words, the end for which practical reason should be used can be determined only if the roles of each and every interest of pure reason are viewed as parts of a systematic whole. Hence, Kant outlines the interests of reason: “All interest of my reason (the speculative as well as the practical) is united in the following three questions: **1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?**” (KrV A804-805/B832-833).

Kant excludes only the second question from subjection to critique (the discipline). The first and third questions are subject to critique (to the discipline) because theoretical-speculative reason is involved in them and its illegitimate use in the supersensible realm can entangle the practical use of reason in dialectic.¹⁶ As

¹⁵ In his April 7, 1786 letter to Johann Bering, Kant wrote that he had started working on the second edition of the first *Critique*. He added: “I am ... putting off my own composition of such a system of [metaphysics of nature] for a while longer, in order to gain time for my system of practical philosophy, which is the sister of the former system and requires a similar treatment, though the difficulties are fewer” (Br 10:441). At this point, Kant seems to intend to publish the second *Critique* as an appendix to the second edition of the first *Critique*.

¹⁶ In numerous places in the first *Critique*, particularly in the Doctrine of Method, Kant uses *critique* to refer to its primary act, that is, the discipline. E.g., the first chapter of The Discipline of Pure Reason, which is titled and discusses “The discipline of pure reason with regard to its polemical

discussed above (section 1.2), Kant explicitly examines the role of the discipline regarding the first question in the first chapter of the Doctrine of Method. But he does not make the role of the discipline regarding the third question explicit. To make this role explicit and to demonstrate how the discipline is necessary for answering the third question, that is, for developing Kant's conception of hope, in what follows, I will discuss that the role of the discipline lies in subordinating the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm to the systematic needs of the practical use of reason in this realm. As mentioned earlier, this means repurposing the speculative use of reason so it can satisfy these needs methodologically.

In examining the three questions regarding the interests of pure reason in the supersensible realm, Kant states that "the first question is merely speculative. We have (as I flatter myself) already exhausted all possible replies to it, and finally found that with which reason must certainly satisfy itself and with which, if it does not look to the practical, it also has cause to be content" (KrV A805/B833). Thus, theoretical reason has no real interest in the supersensible realm, and accordingly it is already subjected to the discipline in order to determine its boundaries. Such determination also indicates that the freedom of the will concerns practical reason not theoretical reason. As concerns the two other problems of "Is there a God?" and "Is there a future life?" "with regard to which a canon of its [practical] use must be possible" (KrV A803/B831), Kant states that through critique "this much at least is certain and settled, that we can never partake of knowledge with respect to those two problems" (KrV A805/B833). Regarding the second question, Kant writes: "The second question is merely practical. As such, to be sure, it can belong to pure reason, but in that case it is not transcendental, but moral, and thus it cannot be in itself, subject for our critique" (Ibid.). This passage suggests that practical reason "in itself," or in its strict sense, is not concerned with the two metaphysical problems either. To determine what one should do, one does not need to subject practical reason to critique (the discipline). One does not need to assume the immortality of the soul or the existence of God. One should follow the moral law, doing what is morally right for the right reason. Finally, Kant characterizes the third question as being "simultaneously practical and theoretical, so that the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, *in its highest form*, the speculative question" (Ibid., italics added). Although at the point of the publication of the first edition of the first *Critique*, Kant has no intention to write a critique of practical reason, he holds that the third question must be subject to critique (discipline), as it involves the relation between the practical use and the theoretical use of reason.¹⁷ The third question leads to an inference that imagines nature as a purposive unity organized according to the commands of practical reason.¹⁸ Kant explains that hope "finally comes down to the inference that something **is** (which determines the ultimate final end) **because something ought to happen**" (KrV A806/B834). Thus, one may hope for the ideal of the highest good, in which "**happiness**" is distributed according to "the **worthiness to be happy**" (Ibid.). Such distribution in turn requires presupposing the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Only God can determine such a distribution in this or another life. Thus, "God and a future life are two presuppositions that are not to be separated from the obligation that pure reason imposes on us in accordance with principles of that very same reason" (KrV A811/B839).

In addressing the third question, Kant does not explicitly discuss the role of the discipline for determining what one may hope. He does not explain what precisely distinguishes hope as an "inference" (KrV A806/B834) from the dialectical inferences of theoretical-speculative reason, or how hope is distinguished from illusion. The role of the discipline in determining what one may hope, however, is implied in Kant's claim later in the text that

"moral theology has the peculiar advantage over the speculative one that it inexorably leads to the concept of a **single, most perfect, and rational** primordial being, of which speculative theology could not on objective grounds give us even a **hint**, let alone **convince** us. For neither in speculative nor in natural theology, as far as reason may lead us, do we find even a single significant ground for assuming a single being to set before all natural causes, on which we would at the same time have sufficient cause to make the latter dependent in every way" (KrV A814-815/B842-843).

Kant implies that moral theology has a peculiar advantage over speculative theology first and foremost because it arrives at the presupposition of the existence of God through the discipline of pure reason. Without

use" never uses *the discipline* and always uses *critique* in the sense of the discipline. This means that Kant's use of the term *critique* or *criticism* should be always scrutinized to determine what he precisely means. The discipline is the primary act of critique and no critique is possible without the discipline but this does not mean that critique can be reduced to the discipline. Critique is not just the disciplining of pure reason to determine its boundaries. It is also the internal organization of pure reason in its uses within such boundaries.

¹⁷ Kant's case for the subjection of the third question to critique can be arguably identified as an implicit anticipation of what he later conceives as the antinomy of practical reason in the second *Critique*.

¹⁸ Kant characterizes "the speculative question" –i.e., "what may I hope?"– as the "*highest form*" of theoretical question (KrV A805/B833, italics added). This question does not seek to theoretically cognize nature. The question belongs to the critical method, more specifically to The Canon of Pure Reason. It concerns how to guide the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. The subjection of the third question to critique (discipline) is implied in the order of the chapters in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*: The Discipline of Pure Reason precedes The Canon of Pure Reason.

its subjection to the discipline, the speculative use of reason cannot be subordinated to the needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm.

To show the advantage of moral theology over speculative theology, Kant begins with the common feature of their approaches to the third question. Speculative theology and moral theology both arrive at a concept of the divine being through seeking the systematic unity of ends in the ideal of the highest good. Yet they differ in how they conceive of “the system of morality” and “the system of happiness” being “inseparably combined” in the ideal of the highest good (KrV A809/B837). Most fundamentally, they differ in the way they determine the agreement between practical reason (freedom) and theoretical reason (nature), virtue and happiness.

Speculative theology conceives of the ideal of the highest good such that the combination of the system of morality and the system of happiness is *not exclusively derived* from the needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. Kant begins his explanation with a brief account of the physico-theological approach to the ideal of the highest good:

“The world must be represented as having arisen out of an idea if it is to be in agreement with that use of reason without which we would hold ourselves unworthy of reason, namely the moral use, which depends throughout on the idea of the highest good. All research into nature is thereby directed toward the form of a system of ends, and becomes, in its fullest extension, physico-theology” (KrV A815-816/B843-844).

Kant also explains how this failure to derive the ideal of the highest good exclusively from the needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm takes place in a more developed form of speculative theology:

“This [physico-theology], however, since it arises from moral order as a unity which is grounded in the essence of freedom and not contingently founded through external commands, brings the purposiveness of nature down to grounds that must be inseparably connected *a priori* to the inner possibility of things, and thereby leads to a **transcendental theology** that takes the ideal of the highest ontological perfection as a principle of systematic unity, which connects all things in accordance with universal and necessary laws of nature” (KrV A816/B844).

As implied in these passages, speculative theology determines the systematic purposiveness in the ideal of the highest good in a way that is influenced by some conception of the systematic purposiveness of nature. That is, in speculative theology, we arrive at a concept of the divine being that is *not exclusively derived* from what the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm needs. In this way, speculative theology does not follow the approach that Kant suggested earlier: “the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, in its highest form, the speculative question” (KrV A805/B833).

Contrary to speculative theology, moral theology determines the systematic purposiveness in the ideal of the highest good *exclusively* on the basis of what the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm needs. Moral theology arrives at a concept of the divine being and engages the speculative question of the existence of God with the guidance only of such needs. This does not mean that moral theology denies the need to contain the systematic purposiveness of nature in the determination of the ideal of the highest good. Moral theology includes the systematic purposiveness of nature in this determination by *completely subordinating* it to “the practical purposiveness which pure reason imposes on us” (KrV A817/B845). What primarily distinguishes moral theology from speculative theology is that the former utterly subordinates the systematic purposiveness of nature to the practical purposiveness that the systematic use of practical reason requires.

It is precisely in this complete subordination that the necessary role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm reveals itself. The complete subordination of the systematic purposiveness of nature to “the practical purposiveness which pure reason imposes on us” (KrV A817/B845) is possible only if theoretical reason is disciplined, i.e., constrained to the sensible realm and is thus prevented from exerting any influence on the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. In speculative theology, theoretical reason, which determines the systematic purposiveness of nature, is not constrained to the sensible realm.¹⁹ As a result, one way or another, theoretical reason extends itself into the supersensible realm and interferes with the practical use of reason. Constraining theoretical reason to the sensible realm, which is essential to the complete subordination of theoretical reason (nature) to practical reason (freedom), is the very task that defines the discipline (KrV A709/B736). This constraint prevents theoretical reason from transgressing

¹⁹ In the Appendix to the Dialectic of the first *Critique*, Kant takes the empirical determination of nature as theoretical cognition. This broad sense of theoretical cognition includes but is irreducible to its strict sense in the Analytic. In Kant’s later doctrine of faculties in the third *Critique*, the empirical determination of nature is not a theoretical (doctrinal) determination: “Teleology ... does not belong to any doctrine at all, but only to critique, and indeed to that of a particular cognitive faculty, namely that of the power of judgement” (KU 5:416). In the third *Critique*, Kant also indicates the disciplinary basis of the entire critical project: “*The critique of the faculties of cognition with regard to what they can accomplish a priori has, strictly speaking, no domain with regard to objects, because it is not a doctrine, but only has to investigate whether and how a doctrine is possible through it given the way it is situated with respect to our faculties. Its field extends to all the presumptions of that doctrine, in order to set it within the rightful boundaries*” (KU 5:176, italics added). This passage echoes Kant’s note written between 1776 and 1778: “The discipline is a limitation of the propensities or powers of the mind within their appropriate bounds. Discipline is negative. Not dogmatic” (Ref 18:71).

the boundaries of its legitimate use and interfering with the use of practical reason in the supersensible realm. It also enables the practical use of reason to follow exclusively what the methodological principles of pure reason require for its systematicity. Thus, it is through the discipline that “moral theology is ... only of immanent use” (KrV A819/B847) and reason can produce “a concept of the divine being that we now hold to be correct, not because speculative reason convinces us of its correctness but because it is in perfect agreement with the moral principles of reason” (KrV A818/B846). Unlike natural theology and transcendental theology, we arrive at this concept “without a contribution from either more ample acquaintance with nature or correct and reliable transcendental insights.” We do so through

“only pure reason although only in its practical use,” which “always has the merit of connecting with our highest interest a cognition that mere speculation can only imagine but never make valid, and of thereby making it into not a demonstrated dogma, but yet an absolutely necessary presupposition for reason’s most essential ends” (Ibid.).

Thus, the discipline is the first necessary condition to avoid a conception of the highest good that leads to speculative theology –a dialectical error that undermines the systematicity of the practical use of reason. Without the discipline, there can be no hope but only an unjustifiable inference or dialectical illusion. The discipline is the first necessary condition to determine the ideal of the highest good in a way that completely subordinates theoretical reason (nature) to practical reason (freedom). This complete and constant subordination is necessary to constrain “the constant propensity [of speculative reason] to stray from certain rules” (KrV A709/B737) and thereby enable reason to make legitimate assumptions regarding the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, which the systematicity of the practical use of reason requires. As Kant puts it later in the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique*: “I cannot even **assume God, freedom, and immortality** for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason unless I *simultaneously* **deprive** speculative reason in its pretension to extravagant insights” (KrV B xxix-xxx, italics added). In other words, there cannot be a canon of pure reason without the discipline of pure reason.

2. The discipline as the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason after *Critique of Pure Reason*

Kant’s writings after the first edition of the first *Critique* continue to indicate that he takes the discipline as the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason, although he does not thematically discuss the discipline. In particular, some passages in Kant’s essay on the pantheism controversy, “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (1786), and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) indicate the role of the discipline as the first necessary condition for the systematicity of the practical use of reason. In the essay on the pantheism controversy, this role is implied in Kant’s argument that the first principle of the orientation of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm is the discipline. In the second *Critique*, the role of the discipline as the first necessary condition of the systematicity of the practical use of reason is implied in the resolution of the antinomy of practical reason and what Kant calls the primacy of moral reason over theoretical-speculative reason.

2.1. The role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason in Kant’s essay on the pantheism controversy

The essay on the pantheism controversy takes up the question of the relation between faith and reason in Kant’s critical philosophy.²⁰ This question is of particular significance for the systematicity of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. Kant grounds the systematicity of the practical use of reason in the ideal of the highest good and ultimately in reason’s faith (*Vernunftglaube*) in God.²¹ As the title of the essay shows, to address the question of the relation between faith and reason, Kant reformulates the question: “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” More specifically, Kant asks: how can we legitimately think, or use reason, in the supersensible realm to serve the needs of practical reason? To address this question, Kant distinguishes his position from Friedrich Jacobi’s and Moses Mendelssohn’s. Contrary to Jacobi, Kant argues that, although reason cannot make any knowledge claims in the supersensible realm, reason must be

²⁰ The pantheism controversy was arguably the most important controversy in the eighteenth-century German intellectual life. It began as a dispute between Friedrich Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn regarding Gotthold Lessing’s philosophical views and legacy. One of the most important underlying disputes in this controversy was Jacobi’s opposition to and Mendelssohn’s defense of the claim, put forward by supporters of enlightenment, that reason should be the universal authority in all human affairs. For a detailed history of the controversy, see (Beiser 1987, 44-126).

²¹ The differences in Kant’s reasoning for the ideal of the highest good in the first *Critique*, the essay on the pantheism controversy, and the second *Critique* do not affect this article’s central claim that Kant’s conception of the ideal of the highest good presupposes the discipline.

considered as the highest authority in this realm, in which it should be used speculatively to serve the needs of practical reason. In contrast to Mendelssohn, Kant argues that the authority of speculative reason in the supersensible realm is not a theoretical or dogmatic authority.

The role of the discipline as the first necessary condition for orienting the speculative use of reason to serve the practical needs of reason in the supersensible realm is particularly explicit in Kant's criticism of Mendelssohn, where Kant argues that the authority of reason in the supersensible realm is a disciplinary authority. To make this argument, Kant first points out that reason does not have a dogmatic authority in the supersensible realm: reason cannot cognize supersensible objects. In the supersensible realm, reason

“is no longer in a position to bring its judgements under a determinate maxim according to objective grounds of cognition, but solely to bring its judgements under a determinate maxim according to a subjective ground of differentiation in the determination of its own faculty of judgement” (WDO 8:136).

To explain what he means by “a subjective ground of differentiation in the determination of its own faculty of judgement” (Ibid.), Kant suggests seeking justification for such grounding not in supersensible objects but in “*the right of reason's need*, as a subjective ground for presupposing and assuming something which reason may not presume to know through objective grounds” (WDO 8:137). Kant makes the disciplinary nature of this subjective ground more explicit when he states that “this guiding thread is not an objective principle of reason, a principle of insight, but a merely subjective one (i.e., a maxim) of the only use of reason *allowed by its limits*” (WDO 8:140, italics added).²² In Kant's account, not all speculative uses of reason in the supersensible realm are justifiable. Such use is justifiable only if it does not transgress the boundaries of reason, or only if it is subject to the discipline.

Kant reaffirms this point in another statement criticizing Mendelssohn:

“Mendelssohn erred here in that he nevertheless trusted speculation to the extent of letting it alone settle everything on the path of demonstration. The necessity of the first means [the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm] could be established only if the insufficiency of the latter [the demonstration] is fully admitted” (WDO 8:140).

Kant suggests that the justifiability of a speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm requires reason's full admission that it cannot legitimately make any dogmatic claims in the supersensible realm. Reason's full admission of its objective insufficiency in the supersensible realm is reason's subjection to the discipline. Only through the discipline can reason systematically deny its knowledge claims in the supersensible realm.

In the essay, Kant further indicates the primary role of the discipline in orienting the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm: “here [in the supersensible] the high claims of reason's speculative faculty, chiefly its commanding authority (through demonstration), obviously falls away, and what is left to it, insofar as it is speculative, is only the task of purifying the common concept of reason of its contradictions, and defending it against its own sophistical attacks on the maxims of healthy reason” (WDO 8:134, underline added). This passage attributes to the speculative use of reason in the supersensible the same task that the first *Critique* attributes to the discipline:

“where, as in pure reason, an entire system of delusions and deceptions is encountered, which are connected with each other and unified under common principles, there a quite special and indeed negative legislation seems to be required, which under the name of a **discipline** erects, as it were, a system of caution and self-examination out of the nature of reason and the objects of its pure use, before which no false sophistical illusion can stand up but must rather immediately betray itself” (KrV A711/B739).²³

Kant also more explicitly indicates that the discipline is the first necessary condition for orienting the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm:

“*arguing dogmatically* with pure reason in the field of the supersensible is the direct path to philosophical enthusiasm, and that only a critique of this same faculty of reason can fundamentally remedy this ill. Of course, the discipline of the scholastic method (the Wolffian, for example, which he recommended for this reason) can actually hold back this mischief for a long time, since all concepts must be determined through definitions and all steps must be justified through principles; but that will by no means wholly get rid of it. For **with what**

²² Here Kant does not abide by his own distinction between “**limits** [*Schranken*]” and “**boundaries** [*Grenzen*]” (KrV A761/B789), using the former while intending the latter.

²³ Another reference to the speculative use of reason as the discipline can be found in the *Groundwork*, where he speaks of “an indispensable task of speculative philosophy ... to clear the way for practical philosophy” (GMS 4:456) “so that practical reason may have tranquility and security from the external attacks that could make the land on which it wants to build a matter of dispute” (GMS 4:457).

right will anyone prohibit reason—once it has, by his own admission, achieved success in this field—**from going still farther in it? And where then is the boundary at which it must stop?**” (WDO 8:138, bold added).

This passage contrasts “a critique of this same faculty of reason,” or the discipline of the critical method, with “the discipline of the scholastic method.” It suggests that the two disciplines are fundamentally different. The discipline of the scholastic method focuses merely on the definitional clarity of concepts.²⁴ It fails to determine the systematically lawful maxim by which the boundaries of reason, or the distinction between the legitimate use and the illegitimate use of faculties of reason, are identified. As Kant states, this failure ends in enthusiasm. By contrast, the discipline of the critical method determines the boundaries of reason, or prohibits the theoretical use of reason in the supersensible realm in the name of reason’s systematic self-preservation against enthusiasm: “there is not a single means more certain to eliminate enthusiasm from the roots up than the determination of the bounds of the pure faculty of understanding” (WDO 8:144).²⁵

Thus, the determination of the boundaries of understanding in the discipline enables the speculative use of reason to avoid being entangled in dialectic and be completely at the service of the needs of practical use of reason in the supersensible realm. It is on the basis of this disciplinary foundation that the ideal of the highest good can be conceived such that practical reason completely subordinates theoretical reason to practical reason “in order to give objective reality to the concept of the highest good” (WDO 8:139). It is only through the discipline that one can avoid enthusiasm and meet “the *concept* of God and even the conviction of his *existence* ... in reason” (WDO 8:142). Without subjection to the discipline, any speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm, including claims about the ideal of the highest good and the presuppositions of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God are bound to end up in philosophical enthusiasm.

2.2. The role of the discipline in the systematicity of the practical use of reason in *Critique of Practical Reason*

In the second *Critique*, Kant argues that “pure reason always has its dialectic, whether it is considered in its speculative or in its practical use; for it requires the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned, and this can be found only in things in themselves” (KpV 5:107). Similar to the dialectic of theoretical-speculative reason, in the practical use of reason, the pursuit of the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned leads to a dialectical illusion. The illusion consists in taking “appearances as if they were things in themselves” (Ibid.). It comes about as a result of reason seeking “the unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*” (KpV 5:108). Kant appreciates the impulse behind the dialectic of practical reason and thus seeks to interpret the highest good in a way that avoids dialectic and makes the practical use of reason systematic: “We would do well to leave this word in its ancient sense, as a *doctrine of the highest good* so far as reason strives to bring it to *science*” (Ibid.). To conceive of the ideal of the highest good in a scientific or systematic way, Kant first explains how the dialectic of practical reason arises from variations of the same method of the determination of the ideal of the highest good. In particular, Kant discusses how, “in determining the concept of the highest good,” the Epicurean and the Stoic “followed *one and the same method* insofar as they did not let virtue and happiness hold as two different elements of the highest good and consequently sought the unity of the principle in accordance with the rule of identity” (KpV 5:111, italics added). The two schools pursued the rule of identity, or what Kant calls the “*analytic*” “combination” of virtue and happiness (KpV 5:113), although they did so differently: the Epicurean tried to derive the concept of virtue from happiness and the Stoic did the opposite. Kant articulates these two ways of conceiving the ideal of the highest good according to the rule of identity as the antinomy of practical reason. As will be discussed, the rule of identity in both cases rests on “one and the same method” (KpV 5:111) that ignores that the supersensible realm and sensible realm in which this rule is applied are not coextensive.

Although there is no consensus on the interpretive reconstruction of the details of the antinomy of practical reason,²⁶ at the most basic level, the antinomy articulates a dialectical conflict of reason with itself in its practical use. The antinomy refers to two ways of conceiving the ideal of the highest good, which contradict

²⁴ A year later after his essay on the pantheism controversy, in 1787, implicitly referring the problematic character of the discipline of the scholastic method, in preface to second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant writes: “if some moderns have thought to enlarge it [logic] by interpolating **psychological** chapters about our different cognitive powers (about imagination, with), or **metaphysical** chapters about the origin of cognition or the different kinds of certainty in accordance with the diversity of objects (about idealism, skepticism, etc.), or **anthropological** chapters about our prejudice (about their causes and remedies), then this proceeds only from their ignorance of the peculiar nature of this science. It is not an improvement but a deformation of the sciences when their boundaries are allowed to run over into one another” (KrV B vii).

²⁵ Kant distinguishes the discipline of the critical method from the discipline of the scholastic method: “I am well aware that in the language of the schools the name of **discipline** is customarily used as equivalent to that of instruction. But there are so many other cases where the first expression, as **correction [cultivation]** [*Zucht*], must carefully be contrasted to **teaching**, and the nature of things itself also makes it necessary to preserve the only suitable expression for this difference, that I wish that this word would never be allowed to be used in anything but the negative sense” (KrV A710/B738). Contrary to the discipline of the scholastic method, which is based on the principle of non-contradiction, the discipline of the critical method is negative not “merely on the basis of logical form but also on the basis of their [judgements’] content” (KrV A708/B736).

²⁶ E.g., compare (Beck 1996, 247), (Wood 1970, 104-105), and (Watkins 2010, 152).

each other: “the desire for happiness must be the motive to maxims of virtue” versus “the maxim of virtue must be the efficient cause of happiness” (KpV 5:113). Kant takes the first proposition to be “*absolutely false*” (KpV 5:114) because the desire for happiness is not moral and cannot be the ground for virtue. The second proposition is “*conditionally false*” because virtue cannot be “regarded as the form of causality in the sensible world” (Ibid.).

In Kant’s diagnosis, the antinomy of practical reason is based on “a misinterpretation” according to which “the relation between appearances was held to be a relation of things in themselves to those appearances” (KpV 5:115). In other words, both propositions of the antinomy of practical reason “found happiness in precise proportion to virtue already in *this life* (in the sensible world)” (Ibid.). This diagnosis indicates that the antinomy of practical reason is based on a systemic error in the use of practical reason: mistaking a relation between appearances with a relation between appearances *and* things in themselves. What is an “*analytic*” “combination” of virtue and happiness within the sensible realm is mistaken as their “*synthetic*” “combination” (KpV 5:113). Thus, Kant’s diagnosis of the source of the antinomy of practical reason points to the systemic error that underlies all dialectic of pure reason, whether in its theoretical-speculative use or in its practical use: *the conflation of the sensible realm and the supersensible realm within human reason*. In the second *Critique*, Kant indicates that the systemic correction of the dialectical error in the practical use of reason and indeed the principles of the systematicity of practical reason are already presented in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*. In the opening statement of the Doctrine of Method of the second *Critique*, Kant remarks:

“The *doctrine of the method* of pure *practical* reason cannot be understood as the way to proceed (in reflection as well as in exposition) with pure practical principles with a view to scientific *cognition* of them, which alone is properly called method elsewhere, in the *theoretical* (for popular cognition needs a *manner* but science a *method*, i.e., a procedure *in accordance with principles* of reason by which alone the manifold of a cognition can become a *system*)” (KpV 5:151, underline added).²⁷

It is in remedying, or a priori correcting of, such conflation of the sensible realm and the supersensible realm which the role of the discipline in the systematicity of practical use of reason in the supersensible realm becomes evident. The resolution of the antinomy and the proper formation of the ideal of the highest good first and foremost requires the same remedy as all dialectic of pure reason: a clear separation of the supersensible realm and the sensible realm as the respective domains in which practical reason and theoretical reason can be legitimately used. The separation is necessary for Kant’s conception of the ideal of the highest good. This conception requires acknowledging the two distinct realms and identifying which element of this ideal, namely virtue or happiness, determines their combination. To proceed correctly in conceiving this ideal, we must first avoid reducing either of its two elements to the other. It is only by assuming an elementary distinction between virtue and happiness that practical reason can be the one and only guide for combining practical reason and theoretical reason, virtue and happiness. Without such distinction, theoretical speculation can influence how practical reason and theoretical reason are combined in the ideal of the highest good.

I suggest that for Kant the discipline is the fundamental remedy to the antinomy of practical reason because it draws the boundary between the sensible realm and the supersensible realm as respective domains for the theoretical use of reason and the practical use of reason, and thus as respective domains for the element of happiness and the element of virtue. Although in his discussion of the antinomy of practical reason Kant does not explicitly refer to the discipline, he indicates that the systemic separation of the sensible realm and the supersensible realm within human reason is fundamental for the resolution of the antinomy. This separating task belongs to the discipline, although the second *Critique* refers to the discipline only indirectly. In the second *Critique*, Kant states that the conflation of appearances and things in themselves, the sensible realm and the supersensible realm, is “unavoidable” “in the absence of a *warning critique* [*warnenden Kritik*]” (KpV 5:107, italics added).²⁸ This warning critique, I suggest, is the discipline, which in the first *Critique* Kant also refers to as “a system of caution and self-examination” (KrV A711/B739) or as “the admonitory negative doctrine of a discipline” (KrV A712/B740). In short, the discipline resolves the antinomy of practical reason at the most basic level, indicating that the systematicity of the practical use of reason rests primarily on the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*.²⁹

²⁷ Kant devotes the doctrine of method of the second *Critique* to the teaching of virtue. Referring to metaphysics of morals, he writes: “Science (Critically sought and methodically directed) is the narrow gate that leads to the doctrine of wisdom, if by this is understood not merely what one ought to do but what ought to serve teachers as a guide to prepare well and clearly the path to wisdom which everyone should travel, and to secure others against taking the wrong way; philosophy must always remain the guardian of this science, and though the public needs take no interest in its subtle investigations it has to take an interest in the doctrines which, after being worked up in this way, can first be quite clear to it” (KpV 5:163). The “doctrine of wisdom,” which can be arrived only through the science of metaphysics of morals, does not belong to critique proper. For Kant, critique cannot be popularized, but the doctrine of wisdom should be popularized.

²⁸ Similarly, in The Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*, Kant states that the prevention of dialectical errors requires “all the warnings of critique [*alle Warnungen der Kritik*]” (KrV A295/B351).

²⁹ It is unsurprising that Kant initially intended to publish the second *Critique* as an appendix to the second edition of the first *Critique*. There is no symmetry between the first *Critique* and the second *Critique* in critical philosophy. The second *Critique* aims “merely to show *that there is pure*

In drawing the boundary between the sensible realm and the supersensible realm, the discipline completely subordinates theoretical reason to practical reason and thereby makes the speculative use of reason in the supersensible realm serve the needs of the practical use of reason in this realm. As examined in the first section of this article, Kant implicitly discusses this subordination in the first Critique. In the second *Critique*, he thematizes and presents it as “the primacy of pure practical reason in its connection with speculative reason” (KpV 5:119). This means that only the needs of practical reason determine how practical reason and theoretical reason, virtue and happiness, are synthetically combined. As discussed earlier, this determination, or the primacy of practical reason over theoretical reason, rests on the discipline. Kant views this primacy as necessary because “all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone” (KpV 8:121). The complete subordination of theoretical reason to practical reason assures that the connection between the sensible realm and the supersensible realm, or happiness and virtue, in the ideal of the highest good “belongs wholly to the supersensible relation of things and cannot be given in accordance with the laws of the sensible world, although the practical result of this idea –namely actions that aim at realizing the highest good– belong to the sensible world” (KpV 5:119). The formation of the ideal of the highest good on the basis of the disciplinary subordination of theoretical reason to practical reason is also necessary for thinking the ideal of the highest good in a way that avoids enthusiasm and legitimately –that is, merely on the basis of the needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm– presupposes the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

Conclusion

The discipline of pure reason in Kant’s critical philosophy does not concern only Kant’s theoretical philosophy, as interpreters have often supposed. The discipline is of particular significance for the systematicity of *all* metaphysical uses of reason, including the practical use of reason. In determining the boundaries of the theoretical use of reason and constraining this use to the sensible realm, the discipline also prepares reason for its legitimate speculative use in the supersensible realm. This is the first step in satisfying the systematic needs of the practical use of reason in the supersensible realm: the discipline lays the ground for a justifiable conception of the ideal of the highest good and thereby for legitimate presuppositions regarding the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.³⁰

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The following translations from The Cambridge Edition of The Works of Immanuel Kant are used in consultation with *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, (1900-). I occasionally modify the translations. Translation from titles in German are mine.

- BR** *Correspondence*, 1999
GMS *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. 2012.
KpV *Critique of Practical Reason*. 2015.
KrV *Critique of Pure Reason*. 1997.
KU *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. 2000.
Log *The Jäsche Logic in Lectures on Logic*. 1992.
MS *The Metaphysics of Morals*. 2017.
Prol *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. 2004.
Refl *Reflexionen zur Metaphysik*
WDO “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” in *Religion and Rational Theology*. 2001.

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practical reason” (KpV 5:3) whereas the first *Critique* is “a treatise on the method” of *metaphysics as such*, that is, the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals (KrV B xxii). The first *Critique* contains the methodological foundations of all metaphysical parts of critical philosophy.

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