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THE ANTI-NOMIES OF KANT AND SOME NEO-SCHOLASTIC REPLIES

Joseph M. McCarthy

Lecturer in History and Philosophy of Education
Boston College
Campion 317
Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167

In his Transcendental Dialectic, Immanuel Kant put transcendent metaphysics on trial. Part of this trial was an examination of the "antithetic of pure reason," the mathematical and dynamical antinomies. To put them in their place, it is necessary to trace the progress of the Transcendental Dialectic.

For Kant, the categories can be considered not only relatively, i.e. as proportioned to sense content, but also absolutely, i.e. as having a merely logical content. Since the latter omits "reference to the empirical conditions required for the real possibility of objects . . . the categories have a nonobjective significance, pointing in a vertical or transempirical direction."¹ It is this "pointing in a . . . transempirical direction" which lures reason into metaphysical speculation by providing a basis for distinguishing noumena and phenomena and thereby tempting the reason with the impossible possibility of a direct knowledge of noumena, "things in themselves." But Kant holds that what we know for certain is confined to phenomena, things-as-they-seem-to-us, things organized and given form by us. To him, noumenal concepts have quite a limited significance: indeterminate in that they indicate what the "thing-in-itself" may really be like; negative in that they limit phenomena by indicating that which is not phenomena; and problematic in that they cannot be verified.

It is the reason, not the understanding, which attempts to follow the transempirical clue left by the pure categories. "If the understanding is the faculty which by its rules introduces unity into phenomena, the Reason is the faculty which by its principles establishes unity among the rules of the understanding."² Thus reason is regulative (transcendental), urging the understanding to a more consistent and comprehensive synthesis of phenomena. When the understanding imposes classification (categories) on sense impressions, this classification requires further organization lest it float always in "a phenomenal series which extends itself indefinitely in space and time."³

¹James Collins, *A History of Modern European Philosophy* (Milwaukee, 1959), 491f.

²Friedrich Ueberweg, *History of Modern Philosophy* (New York, 1894), 173.

³Carmin Mascia, *A History of Philosophy* (Patterson, N. J., 1957), 386.

Thus the reason urges on the understanding what Kant terms the "ideas of reason," points of reference: the soul, unifying principle of internal phenomena; the world, unifying principle of external phenomena; God, the unifying principle of all phenomena from without.

Reason may also, improperly, be constitutive (transcendent), seeking to gain positive knowledge through its ideas rather than using them regulatively. In so doing, the reason applies the a priori forms of the understanding in a transempiric way. This is quite futile, for without experiential matter, form is void of content. Thus, whenever the mind tries to apply a priori forms to the idea "world," a contradiction, or antinomy, results.

Kant saw the antinomies of pure reason not only as one of the two great proofs of his system, but also as manifestly destructive of traditional Natural Theology. The line of reasoning which produces them takes the search for God completely out of the realm of reason, while they expose the futility of seeking "eternal verities" by reason.

Because the pure categories give some indication of noumenal reality, "the mind can ask questions about a first cause, a necessary substance."⁴ But any answer can never be more than an hypostasized question, as content can come to the categories only experientially, through the forms of space and time, and we cannot perceive a first cause or necessary substance in an empiric sensuous intuition.

It follows that God resists all categorization. "Since God is not an object apprehended in the a priori forms of sensibility, space and time, he cannot be related to anything else by the category of causality."⁵ This may be extended also beyond causality to all the categories. God cannot be described by or subsumed under any of the categories, for if he were, he would be within the range of our empiric sensuous intuitions. With some variations, this line of reasoning appears in the objections of Barth and Tillich to Natural Theology.

The antinomies, product of reason's avid but vain quest of noumena, challenge certain other ideas basic to religious belief. Kant proudly noted: "That the world had a beginning, that my thinking self is of simple and therefore indestructible nature, that it is free in its voluntary actions and raised above the compulsion of nature, and finally that all order in the things constituting the world is due to a primordial being, from which everything derives its unity and purposive connection — these are so many foundation stones of morals and religion. The antithesis [of each antinomy] robs us of all these supports, or at least appears to do so."⁶

⁴Maurice Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York, 1959), 423.

⁵Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, 1959), 111.

⁶Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (N. K. Smith, trans; New York, 1933), 424.

Within the framework of his Transcendental Dialectic, Kant was able to resolve the antinomies in such a way as to provide a logical possibility for the thesis of each, which possibility is realized by the practical possibility of the categorical imperative. Yet his resolution of the antinomies fulfilled them in their character of proofs of his system, for the thesis, representative of the stand of Rationalism, and the antithesis, representative of the stand of Empiricism, remain intact in each antinomy before the onslaught of the two systems, and yield themselves to resolution only by the Transcendental Idealist.

The four antinomies which Kant presented correspond roughly to the four-fold classification of categories: quantity, quality, relation, and modality. He divided them into mathematical and dynamical antinomies, the former dealing with the totality of appearances as world (i.e. as essentially quantitative and homogeneous), the latter dealing with the totality of appearances as nature (i.e. as essentially qualitative, dynamic, and causal).

The First Antinomy

Thesis. The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.

Antithesis. The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space."⁷

In proof of the thesis, let us at once assume the contrary, that there is no beginning in time for the world. Since time is measured by the successive states of things, at each moment there has elapsed an infinity of successive states of things. But it is quite impossible that an infinity of states elapse. Thus the world must have had a beginning in time. Again, let us assume that the world is infinite as regards space. Since we are able to determine one space only by relation to another, and that to still another, "to think of it as infinite would require infinite enumeration of parts which would require infinite time . . ."⁸ But this too is impossible, and therefore the world must be limited regarding space.

In proof of the antithesis, let us suppose that the world had a beginning in time. To begin, a thing must be preceded by a time in which it did not exist, and therefore there must have been an "empty time" before the world began. But in such a case there would be nothing in this "empty time" to determine whether this world should exist or not. Let us further suppose that the world is limited regarding space. In that case, it must exist in an empty, unlimited space, and things must be related not only in space, but also to space. But a relation to empty space would be a relation to nothing, and therefore the world cannot be limited as regards space.

⁷*Ibid.*, 396.

⁸Russell J. Collins, Unpublished Notes on the History of Modern Philosophy for the Private Use of Students at St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Mass., n.d.

The Second Antinomy

Thesis. Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing anywhere exists save the simple or what is composed of the simple.

Antithesis. No composite thing in the world is made up of simple parts, and there nowhere exists in the world anything simple."⁹

In proof of the thesis, suppose that composite substances are not made up of simple parts. Then if we mentally remove composition, nothing will remain. Therefore either we cannot perform this mental removal of composition, or something uncomposed must remain after such a removal. It follows that composite substances are made up of simple parts, and moreover all things are simple and composition is but an external state of these things.

In proof of the antithesis, suppose that a composite substance is made up of simple parts. Then the whole and its parts must exist in space, and, since whatever exists in space must be extended, each of the parts must be extended and hence further divisible. Yet, ". . . however far you go in your process of imaginary divisions, the ideal result of division at which you stop must still be extended or it is no longer matter; and yet if it is extended it must consist of parts, and the division must begin again."¹⁰ Therefore no composite can be made up of simple parts, nor can anything simple exist in the world.

The Third Antinomy

Thesis. Causality in accordance with the laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can one and all be derived. To explain the appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom.

Antithesis. There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature."¹¹

In proof of the thesis, we may note that if the sole causality is a limited, natural causality, everything that takes place requires a previous state which must have taken place in its turn. But this supposes an infinite regress in which there is never any absolutely first beginning, never a cause which is not also an effect, and such a regress supplies no sufficient reason for its events. Therefore there must be a first cause, and ". . . the last unconditioned term must be metaempirical, causally independent, endowed with absolute spontaneity, in brief must be a free cause."¹²

In proof of the antithesis, if we assume that there is a spontaneous causality in which a series of phenomena has its abso-

⁹Kant, 402.

¹⁰Henry Sidgwick, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant* . . . (London, 1905), 154.

¹¹Kant, 409.

¹²Joseph Marechal, *La Critique de Kant* (3d ed., Paris, 1944), 236.

lute beginning and determination, the first cause must be preceded in its causal activity by a state to which it has no causal connection, for to precede its causality with a state to which it is causally connected merely extends the causal series. But this is to act without determination, and to do so is to destroy a law of causality.

The Fourth Antinomy

Thesis. There belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary.

Antithesis. An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause."¹³

In proof of the thesis, we may note that in the sensible world there exist changes, each of which has a prior change as cause. Thus each cause is itself an effect, and we can trace a series of causes which stand in cause-effect relationship to each other. But such a series must terminate in the absolutely conditioned, the absolutely necessary, because an infinite series would render change unintelligible because we cannot "sum up an infinite series of phenomena, which are contingent in themselves, but necessary in relation to one another."¹⁴ This absolutely necessary being must belong to the sensible world, else it could have no relation to its effects by the category of causality.

In proof of the antithesis, if we assume that there is a necessary being, such a being must be conceived of as existing either in the world or outside of it. If the former be true, then either the series of changes will have an undetermined first cause, which is unintelligible, or the series, although contingent, will have no first cause, which is self-contradictory. Yet if the latter be true, that necessary being will still be the first cause of a phenomenal series of changes in time, and the causality it exercises must therefore be cloaked in time. But if its causality be exercised in time, the cause itself must be in time, for if it were infinite in time, its effect must also be infinite in time. But this contradicts the hypothesis. Therefore an absolutely necessary being does not exist, either within or outside of the world, as its cause.

Kant's solution of the antinomies of pure reason is completely consistent with his philosophy and is testimony to its logical coherence. Reason, he says, when using its idea "world" improperly, follows this argument: "If the conditioned is given, the entire series of all its conditions is likewise given; objects of sense are given as conditioned; therefore, etc."¹⁵ Non-critical philosophers arrive at the antinomies because they consider the major "either as an expression of absolute reality, or at least as a reality which abstracts from the particular circumstances of

¹³Kant, 415.

¹⁴Edward Caird, *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant* (Glasgow, 1877), 564.

¹⁵Kant, 443.

the phenomenal order," while at the same time they think that the minor "treats the phenomenon as a thing in itself, or at least as a reality released from certain restrictions essential to the phenomenal order."¹⁶ Thus they obtain a valid syllogism because they fail to admit the distinction of noumena and phenomena. When they then attempt to follow that syllogism in their reasoning, the Rationalists arrive at the thesis by applying the major to appearances, while the Empiricists arrive at the antithesis by regarding appearances as "things in themselves."

When this syllogism is approached from the Kantian viewpoint, however, it is seen to be fallacious. The major presents the conditioned as pure category with no reference to space or time. The minor, on the other hand, presents the conditioned as a category applied to appearances, inextricably bound up with space and time. The syllogism thus has four terms.

Kant sees as given in the major a completed synthesis of the conditioned and all its conditions. If the same is to be given in the minor, because of the limitations of the understanding it must be carried out in a successive regress before it can be regarded as complete, for the understanding can determine objects only in relation to other objects. But to complete such a synthesis in experience is impossible. Thus, Kant concludes, we must abandon the pretensions of Reason to knowledge and confine it to its regulative office.

Kant's key to the individual solution of the antinomies is his division of them into mathematical (the former two) and dynamical (the latter two). Because the succession described in the mathematical antinomies moves from temporal event to temporal event and from spatial part to spatial part, the conditioned and its empiric conditions are always considered homogeneous, so that the unconditioned must be sought in experience.¹⁷ Thus the thing-in-itself is considered simultaneously as independent of space and time and as subject to them, with the result that both thesis and antithesis in the mathematical antinomies must be considered false.

Since completed measurement of the totality of appearances is impossible in experience, reason cannot prove the world in space and time to be either finitely or infinitely extended. It can be proven only to be potentially infinitely extensible. For the same reason, space and the matter in it of the second antinomy cannot be proven to be either finitely or infinitely divided, but only potentially infinitely divisible.

In the dynamical antinomies, the succession described embraces cause and effect, necessity and contingency. But since these are categories, the elements they relate need not be homogeneous, but may be heterogeneous. No similarity is required between the conditioned and its conditions, so that the unconditioned need not be sought in experience. "Hence there is no necessary, intrinsic conflict between the assertions made in

¹⁶Marechal, 240.

¹⁷Caird, 586.

thesis and antithesis The thesis may refer to the **intelligible** order of things-in-themselves, whereas the antithesis certainly considers only the requirements within the order of appearances."¹⁸ Thus both thesis and antithesis will be true if the former be affirmed in the noumenal order, the latter in the phenomenal order, while both will be false if they are both affirmed in the phenomenal order.

Since no empirical regress can give us a cause which is not also an effect or a necessity which is not merely problematic, the antithesis of the dynamical antinomies must be true when affirmed from a phenomenal viewpoint. Yet at the same time the theses of these antinomies will be no less true if affirmed from the noumenal viewpoint, for the phenomenal world may easily result from a free causal activity in the noumenal order, while the contingency of the world of appearances may be grounded in a necessity in the world of "things-in-themselves." Kant does not intend his solution as proof either of the existence of a free cause or necessary being. He intends to leave the question open, that affirmation may come by the categorical imperative.

It is obvious that any solution of Kant's antinomies undertaken from the neo-Scholastic viewpoint must differ radically from his own solution. This is so because neo-Scholastics deny his principle of transcendental ideality, that true knowledge must be restricted to the phenomenal. For them, all objects preserve a transcendental relation to the Absolute in that they are its created participations. Thus there is a bridge of being between that which is sensibly experienced and that which is not. By reason of this homogeneity, neo-Scholastics hold, they are able to derive some knowledge of "noumenal" reality by abstraction from the phenomenal. Thus any neo-Scholastic solution must differ from Kant's solution.

The neo-Scholastic approach to the first antinomy notes that if the major is to make any sense at all, the conditioned and its conditions must be admitted as somewhat similar in being. As regards the minor, the conditioned is given as phenomenal but capable by abstraction of approximating the noumenal conceptually. Finally, in the conclusion, the whole series of conditions is given along with the conditioned as noumena, but as phenomena the whole series is given only with the restrictions imposed by experience. The syllogism is now valid and capable of solving the antinomies.¹⁹

The fact that the world, if it is the created participation of the Absolute, must therefore be finite and limited, does not tell us whether it is in fact limited in space and time. Nor does the positing of a temporal succession and concrete extent in sensible objects tell us anything about an infinity of spatial and temporal series. Kant's concepts provide a solution of the first two antinomies in that his space and time are organizing

¹⁸Joseph Marechal, *Le Thomisme devant la Philosophie Critique* (2d ed., Paris, 1949). 574f.

¹⁹James Collins, 499.

concepts akin to the neo-Scholastic's "imaginary space and time." In this sense they are only formal laws presiding over the operation of mental constructs. As such, they are infinitely extensible; yet even if they tended toward a limit, they would tell nothing about the universe as a "thing-in-itself" in absolute space and time.

Thomas Aquinas admitted the dogma of the world's beginning, but he did not feel that reason could prove whether or not the world began in time. Likewise, he rejected the actual infinity of an extent while admitting the potential infinity of the law of that extent. Similarly, neo-Scholastics may suspend rational assent to either thesis or antithesis. Unlike Kant, they do not argue that the limitation of the experiential series destroys the infinity of the absolute series.

A parallel approach illumines the second antinomy. Space, considered as a law of thought, can neither affirm nor deny the indefinite divisibility of real objects; ". . . it doesn't assign any necessary limit of division, which depends on other conditions than simple continuity. . . ." ²⁰ Again, neo-Scholastics are able to leave both conclusions of the antinomy open for possible affirmation.

Since the third antinomy consists not so much in the opposition of ontological determinism and free will as in the opposition of empiric determinism and metaempiric causality, the neo-Scholastic solution is again similar to Kant's. He relegates causality to the noumenal order, determinism to the phenomenal; each can be affirmed in its order. In like manner, neo-Scholastics may admit that metaempiric causality works in the world within the framework of empiric determinism (the irreversible series of definite phenomena). Because this causality is not sensible, it need not be denied. Indeed, rational thought demands it. Yet by virtue of their non-admission of the principle of transcendental ideality, neo-Scholastics are able to reject the total absence of homogeneity in those elements which are related as cause and effect.

The fourth antinomy is founded on the notion that reason demands an absolutely necessary being to render intelligible the series of contingent beings. Yet such a being cannot be affirmed in the order of sense experience, and Kant admitted its noumenal existence only as problematic. Thus Marechal notes: "Our solution is similar to Kant's only in the sense that we admit, as he does, the possibility of the thesis in the purely noumenal order. We differ from him in that we show not only the negative possibility but the objective necessity of an absolute Being. . . ." ²¹

With these general approaches, neo-Scholastics attempt to pull the teeth which Kant through the antinomies sank in the throat of man's quest for God through reason. What is presented here is little more than a sketch of position and refutation, but the lines of battle should be evident.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 579.

²¹*Ibid.*, 582.

THE TESTING MOVEMENT AND BLACKS

When Blacks first entered America, it was necessary for the "good" men of America to justify their retention of slavery, to invent reasons where none existed. Initially religion was employed to subjugate Blacks. At this historical juncture racism was explained primarily on religious grounds. Blacks were branded as heathens, barbarians, savages, descendants of Ham, cursed by God and doomed to be servants forever as the price of some ancient sin. With the passing of time and the conversion and evangelization of Blacks, traditional rationalizations no longer served as a satisfactory buttress to justify the institution of human bondage. It was a religious age, and the reasons put forward for Black enslavement and for their incapacity were religious. Gradually the biological, physiological or "scientific" argument came into prominence. During the nineteenth century the scientific era emerged. Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth century, the reasons put forth for the limitation of the educational opportunity of Blacks became "scientific." Actually, modern apologists for discrimination against Blacks are simply using the old arguments, couching them in modern terminology.¹

Educators and politicians during the nineteenth century argued against the education of Blacks on the basis of their inferiority and enforced their arguments by quoting pseudo-theological and pseudo-scientific data. Contemporary racists who advocate the limitation of educational opportunities of Blacks on the basis of alleged mental inferiority and quote test results as the foundation for their opinion are spiritual and genetic descendants of these seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century pseudo-theologians and pseudo-scientists. The major difference is that they couch their racism in twentieth century disguises.

With the development in 1905 of the first tests to quantitatively measure intelligence by Alfred Binet, the noted French psychologist, seemingly a scientific instrument was at hand to substantiate white intellectual superiority. Authorities alleged that the Binet was a true test of inborn intelligence, relatively free of the disturbing influences of environment. But investigations based upon the Binet and related tests revealed that racial and ethnic groups differed markedly in the "innate" intelligence the Binet proposed to measure. Only immigrants from Britain, Holland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries made high scores on the Binet Tests. Despite evidence to the contrary, Robert M. Yerkes, Chairman of the committee of psychologists that designed intelligence and aptitude tests for the United States Army during the first World War declared:

¹Horace M. Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order* (New York: Octagon Books, Incorporated, 1966), pp. 306-307.

Intelligence tests brought into clean relief . . . the intellectual inferiority of the Negro. Quite apart from educational status, which is utterly unsatisfactory, the Negro soldier is of relatively low grade intelligence . . . it suggests that education alone will not place the Negro race on par with its Caucasian competitors.²

In contradiction to Yerkes' statement, Southern White soldiers made the lowest scores of any registered by white soldiers in America. The South had the highest percentage of white people of Scotch, Irish, and English ancestry in the country. But states like Massachusetts and Connecticut with the heaviest percentage of foreign-born residents scored much higher than states like Georgia, Kentucky, and South Carolina, where the white population was almost 100 percent "Nordic" in origin.³ According to theories of racial superiority and if Alpha test results were valid, Southern White soldiers should have the highest scores among white Americans. Actually they made the lowest scores. Black soldiers from certain Northern states made scores higher than the White soldiers from Southern states. Such performances on the part of Black soldiers during the first World War on the Alpha Test might compel some to suggest that Northern Blacks are biologically superior to Southern Whites or to conclude that superior environmental influences and conditions accounted for the superior performance. The Alpha Test, considered by some to be an excellent test of "native intelligence," in reality was simply an excellent gauge of the educational and environmental advantages enjoyed by different social and racial groups. To assume that the Army Alpha Test is an excellent test of native intelligence is to assume that Northern Blacks were biologically and racially superior to Southern Whites with their almost pure Anglo-Saxon heritage.⁴

Even though some writers willingly grant superiority to those blacks from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Illinois who scored higher on the Alpha Test than whites from Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Georgia, the conclusion cannot be escaped that the Army intelligence tests were merely instruments which measured environmental and educational experiences.⁵ In 1929, 1930, and 1931 Fisk University freshmen made gross median scores superior to those shown by freshmen at such white colleges as the Universities of Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia.⁶

During the 1930's authorities began to seriously question intelligence tests in terms of their ability to measure innate, native intelligence. Investigators discovered that social and cultural factors influenced test results.⁷ Studies indicated that

²Robert M. Yerkes, "Psychological Examining in the United States Army", National Academy of Sciences, *Memoir*, 15 (1921), p. 870.

³Bond, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-320.

⁴The median scores for White Mississippians was 41.25; Kentuckians 41.50; Arkansas 41.55; Georgians 42.12 and for Blacks from Ohio 49.50; Pennsylvania 42.00; New York 42.02; Illinois 47.35.

⁵Bond, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 324.