historical moment to see beyond our moment to something we can agree
would be better.

Egan paints the picture of ourselves that Wittgenstein and Heidegger wanted us
to see, and paints his own of authenticity as playful, creative, attentive, and repon-
sive engagement with the world. The pursuit of an authentic philosophy, however,
amounts to offering one another illustrative points of comparison, along with an
invitation to see things differently. I will admit that I still find the picture Plato
painted for us of philosophy, the one in which it is more than just a play of pictures,
a more compelling way of understanding what we are up to.

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https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2020.1815173

*Kant on the sources of metaphysics. The dialectic of pure reason*, by
Marcus Willaschek, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 308,
£75.00 (hb), ISBN: 9781108560856

*Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics* interprets the Transcendental Dialectic of the
*Critique of Pure Reason*. Willaschek presents an original, well argued, and largely
plausible reconstruction of the main argument and four parts of the Dialectic.
Rather than focusing on Kant’s destructive critique of metaphysics in the Dialec-
tic, Willaschek sets out to isolate and defend its constructive account – what he
calls the Rational Sources Account (RSA). On his reading, RSA states that meta-
physical thinking (our tendency “to ask metaphysical questions” and “devise
answers to them”) arises from the “very structure” of human reason (3). The
fact that such thinking has a rational origin, however, does not mean that it is
bound to succeed. On the contrary, it leads us to fallacies and contradictions,
so that “the fate of human reason is thus a truly tragic one” (3). Against interpret-
ations that have downplayed this part of Kant’s project (e.g. Jonathan Bennett,
*Kant’s Dialectic*, Cambridge University Press, 1974), Willaschek argues that Kant
develops a highly complex argument for a view that is “provocative and exciting”
even today (11).

Willaschek distinguishes four levels of RSA. The first level, developed in Part I of
the book, provides the reader with the general framework of the account. In the
first three chapters, the author examines reason as the faculty that leads to meta-
physical speculations about transcendent objects. These speculations occur
through an ambiguous, albeit natural, ‘transition’ (to use Willaschek’s term)
from the logical to the real use of reason. The logical use of reason is guided
by the Logical Maxim. This principle, which considers only logical relations
between cognitions, directs us to look for “some unconditioned cognition” (59).
By contrast, the Supreme Principle of Reason, which considers cognitions in relation to their objects, requires us to seek, for each object, its real condition, up to the “unconditioned among objects” (123).

With a close reading of the Appendix, Willaschek clarifies the nature of the transition between the logical and real use of reason in Chapters 4 and 5. Crucially, the transition proceeds in two steps: the first one from the Logical Maxim to the regulative use of the Supreme Principle, the second from such regulative use to the constitutive use of the Supreme Principle. Although reason assumes that both steps are legitimate, only the first step is, while the second is the product of transcendental illusion.

This two-step transition sheds light on a crucial interpretative puzzle. In several places, Kant seems to suggest that only logical principles of reason are legitimate to regulate the system of our cognitions. In other passages, reason’s principles seem to be given a transcendental status similar to the one assigned to the categories. On Willaschek’s account, these passages have led to an almost inescapable “identification reading” (111–112), namely the identification of logical principles with regulative principles, and of transcendental principles with constitutive ones – for example, Michelle Grier (Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion, Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Henry E. Allison (Kant’s Transcendental Idealism, Yale University Press, 2004) seem to rely on this reading. Willaschek argues that such identification is mistaken and prevents us from understanding the transition from logical to transcendental principles of reason. Kant’s point is that in order to follow the Logical Maxim, we must apply it to objects. However, this application should only be regulative. That is, we should “hypothetically employ [transcendental principles] in order to generate hypotheses about objects of nature” (116). The illusion comes in when we transform regulative principles into constitutive ones by taking these principles as true of objects – according to Willaschek, an instance of transcendental realism.

In Part II of the book, Willaschek applies the general framework found in Part I to the remaining three levels of RSA. The second level corresponds to Kant’s derivation of the system of transcendental ideas. The author proposes, in an original way, to consider this system as unified by the concept of the unconditioned and distinguished into three classes of ideas (psychological, cosmological, and theological) comprising nine modes (ways in which objects can be regarded to be unconditioned, e.g. substantiality, simplicity, personality, and spirituality in the case of psychological ideas). The dialectical derivation represents the third level: paralogisms, antinomies, and the transcendental ideal are the “necessary inferences of reason” that lead to transcendental ideas (168). In each case, ideas are obtained through a transition from the logical to the real use of reason, which, under the assumption of transcendental realism, is mistaken for being constitutive (fourth level). In the final chapter, the author clarifies some problematic aspects of RSA. Most importantly, he sets out to detach Kant’s critique of metaphysics from his commitment to transcendental idealism – a doctrine that can be seen as controversial nowadays.
The success of this reconstruction depends on responses to two questions, the first of which is why we need to regulatively apply reason’s principles to objects. Willaschek argues that our system of cognition is, at any given time, incomplete, and a mere logical use of reason would be unable to provide us with the cognitions we lack. We therefore need to apply reason to objects “to search for new cognitions that fix the holes in the system of cognition” (130). Willaschek holds that reason’s principles are hypothetically assumed premises from which we can derive empirical hypotheses. He argues that although we cannot assume them to be true, they are still hypothetically descriptive of objects (115, 119–120). This may be disputed, for in the Appendix, Kant repeatedly rejects the idea that the principles of reason can be used in direct relation to objects (A643/B671, A670/B698). As Willaschek recognizes, the only relation reason can have with objects is indirect, through the empirical use of the understanding. Yet this implies that the principles of reason cannot be used to describe objects – not even hypothetically (A769–73/B797–801). They can only be used as rules for the empirical use of the understanding. This has important implications for the assessment of reason’s role. According to Willaschek, we need to presuppose transcendental principles merely in order to complete the system of cognition. However, Kant hints at a more fundamental function of reason in several passages of the Appendix, suggesting that reason is necessary for providing us with the basic components of the system – in particular, empirical concepts and truth (A647/B675, A650–4/B678–82). The author reads those passages as illustrative of transcendental realism, since they seem to imply that principles of reason are true of objects (130, 146). But note that this reading follows only if we take transcendental principles as descriptive statements. If read as rules for the understanding, we do not need to take them as true of objects. Consequently, there seems to be no transcendental realism involved in their contribution to empirical cognition as such. As a result, reason’s role may not be limited to expanding cognitions but rather required for any consistent use of the understanding.

The second question is: why are regulative principles mistaken for being constitutive? Willaschek’s answer is that human reason tacitly assumes transcendental realism, namely that empirical objects are things in themselves, and that we are able to cognize these objects. Given transcendental realism, it appears that “the Supreme Principle is true of nature itself” (145). Presupposing transcendental realism in the transition from regulative to constitutive principles elegantly systematizes Kant’s reconstruction of dialectical arguments. However, I find it somewhat unsatisfactory to assume transcendental realism as the tacit premise that leads to transcendental illusions. Transcendental realism plausibly explains why regulative principles about empirical objects are taken as constitutive principles about things in themselves. But I do not believe it sufficiently explains the possibility of transcendental illusions that are unavoidable and resistant to transcendental criticism (A297/B353–4) – that is to say, why regulative principles look like constitutive principles even when they are not taken as such. Although Kant is not particularly clear on the relation between transcendental illusion and transcendental realism, I think one should expect an explanation of the
transition from regulative to constitutive principles resulting in, rather than presupposing, transcendental realism. Further, the tacit assumption of transcendental realism may have the undesired effect of jeopardizing the possibility of a genuinely regulative employment of ideas. For if the derivation of ideas presupposes transcendental realism as a tacit premise, it is not easy to see how one could still employ them in a regulative sense without implicitly committing to such realism.

Despite inevitable points of controversy, Willaschek’s book is bound to become a critical landmark for understanding Kant’s Dialectic and the role of reason in the foundation of metaphysics. Not only does it put forward an unprecedented systematic reconstruction of the Dialectic with philosophical clarity and masterful scholarship, it also casts an exciting new light on it. As such, it will stimulate the discussion of these issues for many years to come.

Funding

This work was supported by the European Research Council under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme [European Consolidator Grant H2020-ERC-2014-CoG 647272, Perspectival Realism: Science, Knowledge, and Truth from a Human Vantage Point].

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https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2020.1813078

Nietzsche’s meta-philosophy: the nature, method and aims of philosophy, edited by Paul S. Loeb and Matthew Meyer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. xiv+284, £75.00 (hb), ISBN: 978-1-108-42225-3

Nietzsche thought of himself as heralding an era of ‘new philosophers’, philosophers who would produce new philosophical insights and practice a new kind of philosophy. This is one of the many signs of Nietzsche’s interest not only in doing philosophy but also in deliberately asking what philosophy’s proper place is. It was also a motivation for many of his later reflections on the essence, value, importance and possibilities of philosophy. This influences his practice of