



Dariusz Kubok

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

ORCID: 0000-0003-3360-9667

e-mail: dariusz.kubok@us.edu.pl

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/RF.2022.020>

Kant and Zetetic Scepticism

This much is certain, that whoever has once tasted Critique will be ever after disgusted with all dogmatical twaddle which he formerly put up with, because his reason must have something, and could find nothing better for its support.

Kant, *Prolegomena*, § 60

When reflecting on criticism or critical philosophy,¹ certain historians of philosophy assert that it is a notion that appeared in modern times, finding its fullest representation in the thought of Immanuel Kant.² Some scholars understand philosophical criticism solely from the perspective of Kant's thought, which refers to the idea of *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience. Such a historical location of the problem not only ignores the achievements of the earlier tradition but also presents

¹ See e.g. W. P. Krause, "Das historische Spektrum der philosophischen Kritik", *Studium Generale* 12, fasc. 9 (1959): 539–571; W. P. Krause, "Philosophische Kritik", *Studium Generale* 12, fasc. 8 (1959): 523–538; Dariusz Kubok, "Critical Thinking and Philosophical Criticism – An Outline of the Problem", in: *Thinking Critically: What Does It Mean? The Tradition of Philosophical Criticism and Its Forms in the European History of Ideas*, ed. Dariusz Kubok (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 1–10.

² Publication co-financed by the funds granted under the Research Excellence Initiative of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

the thought of the Königsberg philosopher in the perspective of not-entirely-legitimate originality, disregarding antecedents that Kant himself had indicated. Reflections on criticism date back to the ancient Greek roots of the Western thought, and thereby the assumption that Kant's doctrine encompasses all the aspect of such a position in research is as fallacious as is the conviction that all preceding and following traditions of critical thought need to be seen through the lens of his writings. In trying to reconstruct the Greek sources of criticism, valuable comparative material will be provided to show both the uniqueness of Kant's critical philosophy, possible similarities and differences, as well as the patterns of continuity and change in this cognitive approach. It seems necessary to synthetically present Kant's criticism and his attitude towards his Greek predecessors to prevent the imposition of Kantian conclusions on the earlier, and in this case the earliest, tradition. The additional value of these analyses lies in the fact that they necessitated the formulation of clear definitions of basic terms related to criticism in the context of the identification of the sources of Kant's thought, which process accounted for the evidence confirming his own awareness of his indebtedness to tradition.

1. Revolution as a return

Reflections on Kant's philosophy often include the phrase 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy, referring to the term 'revolution' used by Kant himself in his Preface to the Second Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For Copernicus, the word 'revolution' did not signify 'a coup' or 'an upheaval,' but the rotation of celestial bodies – upon which Kant also reflected. In terms of the word's 17th- and 18th-century usage, Jan Garewicz asserts that Kant, "like Copernicus, wishes to change the initial assumptions to then apply existing research methods. A revolution in philosophy is as much an overturn as a return".³ According to Garewicz, Kant, as a problem-oriented thinker rather than a system-oriented thinker (in accordance with Nicolai Hartmann's suggestive distinction), not only refrains from seeking a sole guiding principle to justify a system, but also accepts doubts and even aporias (the antinomies of pure reason) as inevitable components of philosophical thinking. This approach is associated with a positive attitude toward the tradition of analyzing a par-

³ Jan Garewicz, "Inaczej o rewolucji kopernikańskiej w filozofii", *Studia Filozoficzne* 2 (1984): 122–123.

ticular problem: while system's thinking may ignore previous intellectual achievements, problem-oriented thinking cannot afford to do this. The so-called Copernican revolution is simultaneously a return to historical examinations of a given problem, including its Greek roots. "It could be said that to stage a coup, one is forced to return to the ideas [...] once preached".⁴ Since a revolution is a return, including a return to the sources, it is necessary to consider the very beginnings of critical thinking in order to demonstrate Kant's originality (in the above sense).

Generally speaking, Kant understood criticism as a cognitive attitude opposed to both dogmatism and scepticism. This belief is based on his typology of the necessary phases of philosophical reflection, beginning with dogmatism, through scepticism, and arriving at criticism.⁵ Kant describes dogmatism in the general sense as a way of thinking which blindly trusts in the power of reason expanded *a priori* by concepts themselves – that is, a mode of reflection based on the trust in knowledge without any prior examination of one's ability to pass judgments about objects beyond possible experience. Scepticism, in turn, assumes the thinker's inability to reach certainty. For Kant, criticism was to transcend both dogmatism and scepticism. It is worth considering how Kant conceives of dogmatism and scepticism, and what his idea of transcending these two stances towards criticism is. In his *Logic*, Kant clearly contrasts the sceptical method of philosophizing with the dogmatic way of thinking. The former assumes the impossibility of achieving certainty, the latter – as mentioned, the trust in reason *a priori*.⁶ Further in this work, Kant states that there are both subjects that cannot be treated dogmatically, as well as those in reference to which affirmative statements cannot be done away with. To complicate matters further, in other passages – as will be discussed in detail later on – Kant states that his own procedure is dogmatic, simultaneously declaring that the sceptical method is useful.⁷ The notion of criticism as a stage of reflection

⁴ Ibidem: 126.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, "Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolff's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?", in: *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Herausgegeben von der Preussisch-Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, hrsg. von G. Lehmann, Bd. 20 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1942), 253–332.

⁶ Kant's original texts are usually quoted according to: *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie-Ausgabe (hereafter AA). See AA, IX: 83–84.

⁷ See Rudolf A. Makkreel, "Kant's Responses to Skepticism", in: *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800. Skepticism in Philosophy, Science and Society*, hrsg. von Johan van der Zande, Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Springer, 1998), 101.

contingent on the departure from dogmatism and scepticism is understandable only in the light of the German philosopher's general understanding of these last positions. For as Kant clearly states in *Logic*: "Beide Methoden sind, wenn sie allgemein werden, fehlerhaft".⁸ Thus, the sceptical and dogmatic methods are not wrong or harmful in themselves; they only become faulty when their use becomes applied universally.

2. Dogmatism – scepticism – criticism

In the light of the above, it may be claimed that dogmatism and scepticism in the Kantian sense can be expressed by means of terminology referring to Sextus Empiricus' division into three philosophies:⁹ dogmatic (δογματική), characteristic of those who claim to have found the truth; academic (Ακαδημαϊκή), also known as negative dogmatism, which denies the possibility of finding truth; and sceptical (σκεπτική), which boils down to a persistent search for the truth. In addition, I accept the division of scepticism (and analogically negative dogmatism) into global scepticism (including global negative dogmatism) and partial (local) scepticism; the former applies to all things, truths or judgments, the latter refers only to a certain class of assertions (including: certain types of judgments – logical scepticism) or judgments about certain distinguished areas of reality (ontological scepticism).¹⁰ In the light of these divisions, global scepticism in Kant's understanding is definitely a dogmatic position, because it determines the impossibility of knowledge (certainty), and therefore can be described as negative dogmatism. For this reason, Kant's criticism can generally be described as an anti-dogmatic attitude, and thus opposed to both global positive dogma-

⁸ AA, IX: 84.

⁹ "Τοῖς ζητοῦσί τι πράγμα ἢ εὕρεσιν ἐπακολουθεῖν εἰκὸς ἢ ἄρνησιν εὐρέσεως καὶ ἀκαταληψίας ὁμολογίαν ἢ ἐπιμονὴν ζητήσεως. διόπερ ἴσως καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ζητουμένων οἱ μὲν εὐρηκέναι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔφασαν, οἱ δ' ἀπεφήναντο μὴ δυνατὸν εἶναι τοῦτο καταληφθῆναι, οἱ δὲ ἔτι ζητοῦσιν. καὶ εὐρηκέναι μὲν δοκοῦσιν οἱ ἰδίως καλούμενοι δογματικοί, οἷον οἱ περὶ Ἀριστοτέλην καὶ Ἐπίκουρον καὶ τοὺς Στωικοὺς καὶ ἄλλοι τινές, ὡς δὲ περὶ ἀκαταλήπτων ἀπεφήναντο οἱ περὶ Κλειτόμαχον καὶ Καρνεάδην καὶ ἄλλοι Ἀκαδημαῖκοί, ζητοῦσι δὲ οἱ σκεπτικοί. ὅθεν εὐλόγως δοκοῦσιν αἱ ἀνωτάτω φιλοσοφίαι τρεῖς εἶναι, δογματικὴ Ἀκαδημαϊκὴ σκεπτικὴ". Sext. Emp., *Pyr.*, I, 1–4.

¹⁰ See Renata Ziemińska, *The History of Skepticism: In Search of Consistency* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017), 21–25; Robert J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics. (The Arguments of the Philosophers)* (London–New York: Routledge, 1995), 13–14.

tism and global negative dogmatism. Using the above terminology, the three phases of philosophy in Kant's approach would be presented as follows: global positive dogmatism (GPD), global negative dogmatism (GND), criticism.

Since criticism is an antidogmatic attitude in both aspects referred to above, the question arises of what criticism's transcendence beyond dogmatism and scepticism (beyond GPD and GND) really means. The simplest answer would be to say that it is the abolition of the universality ("globalness") of both of these dogmatic ways of thinking. This may indicate the existence of some middle way. In this context, it is worth mentioning Baumgartner's view, according to which, due to the impossibility of taking an intermediate position, Kant came to criticism.¹¹ In fact, no mediation (*Vermittlung*) between dogmatism and scepticism is possible; one of the reasons being, in Kant's eyes, each's mistaken claim to universality ("globalness").

In *Prolegomena*, Kant notes that dogmatism does not teach anyone anything, while scepticism does not promise anything,¹² so criticism is the proper goal of reflection, as it strives on the one hand for some certainty (of course, not in the form of GPD), and on the other, it is sceptical about the results of our cognition (obviously not in the form of GND). The critical procedure thus understood is an invigorating, hopeful, antidogmatic inquiry, which corresponds to the Greek understanding of scepticism as a zetetic attitude.

Kant often mentions a sweet dogmatic dream,¹³ from which scepticism or the sceptical use of pure reason can wake a person. In other passages, we find phrases like "dogmatic delusion"¹⁴ and "landing on scepticism, there to let it lie and rot".¹⁵ Generally speaking, Kant asserts that "Dogmatism is [...] the dogmatic procedure of pure reason, *without previous criticism of its own powers*".¹⁶ From this perspective, scepticism is

¹¹ See Hans Michael Baumgartner, *Kants "Kritik der reinen Vernunft": Anleitung zur Lektüre* (Freiburg–München: Karl Alber, 1996), 21.

¹² See AA, IV: 274 [Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. in English by Paul Carus (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1912), 24].

¹³ See AA, III: 495 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A 757]. See also Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 7 and 104 ("dogmatic slumber").

¹⁴ See AA, IV: 247 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 395].

¹⁵ See AA, IV: 262 [Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 9].

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B XXXV ("Dogmatism ist also das dogmatische Verfahren der reinen Vernunft ohne vorangehende Kritik ihres eigenen Vermögens". AA, III: 21).

an invigorating, cathartic procedure, meant to arouse legitimate doubts concerning such behavior on the part of reason. However, one must realize that scepticism cannot be an end in itself, one cannot stop at it, that is, one cannot dogmatize scepticism – which issue is discussed in greater detail in further sections of this essay. Furthermore, in the spirit of the ancient sceptics, Kant claims that the sceptical attitude should only be used as a remedy for dogmatic conceit, and not as a means to ensure a *beharrlichen philosophischen Ruhe*.¹⁷ In its positive dimension, scepticism is a weapon directed at the pride of dogmatic reason, while its erroneous application would be reduced to its absolutization, through the dogmatic establishment of its own finality. One form of such an absolutization of the sceptical attitude may be a permanent undermining of all claims, based on the dogmatic conviction that it is impossible to achieve any certainty. Scepticism is necessary and useful only as a path leading to criticism. Both positive dogmatism (essentially GPD) and negative dogmatism (essentially GND) are polar forms of dogmatism as such, because they recognize their claims as final and impossible to undermine or revisit.¹⁸ At the same time, both may play a positive role. For now, only the positive role of scepticism will be addressed (the question of the positivity of dogmatism will be discussed later).

First of all, in contrast to the dogmatic, *autotelic* understanding of scepticism (or GND), its positive aspect is *functional*, oriented towards the criticism of the mind itself. Scepticism understood in this way is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The positive quality of thus understood scepticism is related only to the purpose it serves, and thus to criticism, while in its content layer it is negative, as it is a polemic with positive dogmatism, or more precisely with GPD. The positive role of scepticism as propaedeutic to criticism is manifested only in the form of the censorship of reason. Scepticism itself, due to its assumptions, does not play any role, because it does not give the thinker any hope for any positive conclusions. In this sense, its only useful role is that of an intellectual tool allowing one to question the validity of dogmatic theses that have not undergone any critical procedure.¹⁹ The dogmatist does not have any doubts about his/her assertions; the sceptic has nothing but doubts. Yet, in fact, it seems the doubts are the basis for building legitimate views beyond the two extremes. Scepticism understood

¹⁷ AA, III, 495.

¹⁸ See AA, III, 494 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 756] and AA, III, 41 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 22–23].

¹⁹ See AA, III, 498–499 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 763–764].

positively, in contrast to GND, has the great advantage of getting rid of the unnecessary dogmatic ballast. This ballast is to be supplanted by sober criticism that is – as Kant puts it in the Greek spirit – a real *kathartikon*.²⁰ Thus, for Kant, scepticism as negative dogmatism, with its claim to universality and finality (GND), is both blatantly wrong and fruitless. However, scepticism can also be viewed positively as paving the way towards criticism. The form of its implementation consists in the formulation of doubts in order to dilapidate GPD. Analyzed in this light, Kant's position can be seen as referring to originally Greek positions (Sext., *Pyr.*, I, 1–4) and terminological proposals:

- Kantian GPD corresponds to dogmatic philosophy, metaphorically expressed as a dream state,
- Kantian GND (the impossibility of achieving certainty) corresponds to negative dogmatism, that is, to academic philosophy as it was distinguished by Sextus.
- Kant's account of scepticism is ambiguous. While he emphasizes the positive role of scepticism as the propaedeutics of criticism or critical philosophy, in terms of its content, he only emphasizes its negatory role: a kind of snatching out of sleep, therapy, medicine, cleansing. Scepticism understood in this way seems, at first glance, closer to the epechistic-aporetic attitude developed by Sextus, i.e.: it is tantamount to the awareness of irremovable difficulties that leads to the suspension of judgment. This suspension, in turn, serves the thinker to achieve the practical goal of tranquility. Greek thinkers, however, also stressed the positive role of the sceptical procedure adopting the form of the zetetic attitude, as a continuous search for truth accompanied by the rejection of both positive and negative dogmatism. According to this interpretation, scepticism would be a form of critical procedure or a proper introduction to it.

The ambivalent nature of scepticism in Kant is the result of an ambivalent understanding of scepticism in general in modern philosophy. Moreover, tracking sceptical elements in Kant's philosophy depends on the definition of scepticism adopted by those who would attempt it. Here, due to the fact that we are searching for Greek antecedents to Kant's views, the key is realizing that scepticism in Greek thought is not an unambiguous position. To demonstrate this, in the paragraph below

²⁰ See AA, III, 335; III, 76; IV, 49.

I attempt to better define the scepticism as it manifests itself in the writings of Sextus Empiricus and Diogenes Laertius.

3. Two forms of scepticism: zetetic scepticism and ephetic scepticism

Sextus specifies that the sceptical school of philosophy (σκεπτική ἀγωγή) is zetetic (ζητητική), “from its activity in investigating and inquiring (τὸ ζητεῖν καὶ σκέπτεσθαι); Suspensive (ἐφεκτική), from the feeling that comes about in the inquirer after the investigation; Aporetic (ἀπορητική), either (as some say) from the fact that it puzzles over and investigates everything (ἀπὸ τοῦ περὶ παντὸς ἀπορεῖν καὶ ζητεῖν), or else from its being at a loss whether to assent or deny (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀμηχανεῖν πρὸς συγκατάθεσιν ἢ ἄρνησιν); and Pyrrhonian (Πυρρώνειος), from the fact that Pyrrho appears to us to have attached himself to Scepticism more systematically and conspicuously than anyone before him”.²¹ Diogenes Laertius, in turn, writes that, apart from being referred to as Sceptics (σκεπτικοί), the followers of the sceptical doctrine were also called Aporetics (ἀπορητικοί), Ephetics (ἐφεκτικοί), or Zetetics (ζητητικοί). “Zetetics or seekers because they were ever seeking truth (ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντοτε ζητεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν), Sceptics or inquirers because they were always looking for a solution and never finding one (ἀπὸ τοῦ σκέπτεσθαι ἀεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε εὐρίσκειν), Ephetics or doubters because of the state of mind which followed their inquiry, [that is] suspense of judgement, (ἀπὸ τοῦ μετὰ τὴν ζήτησιν πάθους· λέγω δὲ τὴν ἐποχήν); Aporetics or those in perplexity, for not only they but even the dogmatic philosophers themselves in their turn were often perplexed (ἀπὸ τοῦ τοὺς δογματικοὺς ἀπορεῖν καὶ αὐτούς). Pyrrhoneans, of course, they were called from Pyrrho (Πυρρώνειοι δὲ ἀπὸ Πύρρωνος)”.²² Sextus himself, at the beginning of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, defined scepticism only as an attitude of searching, and thus as a zetetic attitude. It should therefore be concluded that (1) there is a clear discrepancy or even a conflict²³

²¹ The translated passage comes from the following edition: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. Julia Annas, Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), I, 7.

²² Diog. Laert., IX, 69–70 [Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, transl. M.A. Hicks (London–New York: Harvard University Press, 1925), IX, 69–70].

²³ Barnes writes about the conflict: “For whereas the name ‘investigative’ recalls the observation that the sceptic’s researches are never over, the name ‘sus-

between the interpretations of scepticism from *Pyr.*, I, 1–4 and *Pyr.*, I, 7; (2) one can actually speak of two interpretations of scepticism²⁴ visible in Sextus' texts: scepticism in the zetetic dimension and scepticism in the ephectic dimension. These two versions of scepticism can be interpreted as the opposition: stopping the search – continuing the search. Ephectic attitude emphasizes the cessation (suspension) of investigations (judgments), while zetetic attitude boils down to avoiding definitive conclusions and constant searching.

There is no room here for a long discussion about attempts to reconcile zetetic and ephectic forms of scepticism, but Sextus himself suggests that it can be said that he was a zetetic epechist. The zetetic element serves the predetermined goal of achieving ephectic suspension of judgment and the equipollence (ἰσοσθένεια) that guarantees tranquility (ἀταραξία). More precisely, the essential goal of the Pyrrhonians' search was ἀταραξία, which can be gained without having achieved the theoretical goal of truth, but thanks to ἐποχή and ἰσοσθένεια. Admittedly, prior to Sextus, the tradition favoring the ephectic understanding of scepticism was strong (it can be seen in Cicero's work). Also Pyrrhonism, including the mature Pyrrhonism of Sextus, monopolized the understanding of scepticism by adopting an ephectic and epechistic interpretation. In this way, the zetetic interpretation, presented literally only by Sextus (*Pyr.*, I, 1–4), did not reveal itself with full force and is displaced by an interpretation whose essence is ἐποχή and ἰσοσθένεια.

pensive' implies that his investigations are finished: the suspension of judgement which explains the name 'suspensive' comes about 'after the investigation,' and 'after the investigation' does not mean 'after a certain amount of investigating has been done' but 'after the investigation is over'. So there is a conflict between *Pyr.* I 7 and I 3 – and a conflict within I 7 in so far as the name 'investigative' harks back to I 3". Jonathan Barnes, "Sextan Scepticism", in: *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat*, ed. Dominic Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 327.

²⁴ F. Grgić writes: "Thus, the Pyrrhonian sceptics are portrayed by Sextus in two radically different ways – as persistent inquirers and as suspenders of judgement – and the natural, and widely discussed, question is if it is possible to give a unified account of Sextan scepticism". Filip Grgić, "Investigative and Suspensive Scepticism", *European Journal of Philosophy* 22 (2012): 654.

4. Kant's zetetic scepticism

It is not surprising, then, that when attempting to recognize Greek antecedents of Kant's views on the sceptical attitude, most scholars are in favor of the ephectic understanding of scepticism, and this is the version they find in the writings of Kant. A good example of this is Michael N. Forster's interpretation, which recognizes the Kantian antinomies of pure reason as the most important manifestation of references to Pyrrhonism. Forster distinguishes three types of scepticism in the context of sources of Kant's critical philosophy. In his nomenclature, these are: 1) "'veil of perception' scepticism", 2) "Humean scepticism", and 3) "Pyrrhonian scepticism".²⁵ According to Forster, the latter constitutes the original motivation for Kant's criticism, or in any case, an earlier motivation than the awakening brought about by Hume. In this interpretation, the Greek model of ἰσοσθένεια is embodied in the belief that antinomies of pure reason exist; Greek ἰσοσθένεια is expressed as Kant's antithetics (*Antithetik*).²⁶ Kant's critical philosophy treats contradictory metaphysical judgments as isostenic and does not attempt to settle in favor of one side, but rather strives to penetrate into the essence of the dispute itself. Reason as a judge presiding over the parties to the conflict comes to ἐποχή and suspends its decision. However, in refraining from a particular decision for or against, reason is reconciled with itself.

In my opinion, the second model of scepticism outlined above, namely zetetic scepticism, was not only present in Greek thought: its presence is also noticeable in Kant's thought. To demonstrate it, in the paragraphs below I outline the references of Kant's philosophy to scepticism in its zetetic, rather than ephectic, version. According to Kant, the sceptical use of pure reason cannot lead to legitimizing the neutrality principle in disputes of reason. Scepticism should not be incited to constantly fight against itself, but rather should constitute a transitory phase leading to a positive and fruitful critical procedure.²⁷

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes about three steps in matters of pure reason: The first step (the infancy of reason) is dogmatic, the second is sceptical (characterized by caution in the power of judgment), and the third, belonging to mature judgment, is the critique of pure reason. Its scope does not include assessment of the facts of reason, but an

²⁵ Michael N. Forster, *Kant and Skepticism* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4–5.

²⁶ See AA, III: 282. See also AA: III, 290; III: 485–486.

²⁷ See AA, III: 494.

assessment of reason itself regarding its ability to learn *a priori*.²⁸ Next, Kant clearly states: “This is not the censorship but the *criticism* of reason [...]”.²⁹ This statement is significant because it shows the fundamental difference between scepticism in its positive function (censorship) and the proper critical procedure. Scepticism, even positively understood, is not part of the proper critique of reason.

Kant views his project of critical philosophy referring to forensic terminology. In this way, he refers to the original Greek understanding of criticism as the ability to judge, which was the basic meaning the notion in early Greek thought. The verb κρίνω means to separate, distinguish, judge, explain, elucidate, and study, among others. The adjective κριτικός, on the other hand, can be translated as “critical”, “able to distinguish”, and “decisive”. Originally, the verb form referred to ability to distinguish or discern and the ability to make judgments.³⁰ Kant states that the most important challenge of reason is its self-knowledge in the form of the establishment of a tribunal, which is the critique of pure reason.³¹ This criticism provides us with a peaceful legal state in which we should not conduct our disputes differently than by way of legal proceedings.³² Reason thus becomes the judge in disputes of reason.

Kantian criticism also refers to the original Greek understanding of critique as the ability to set boundaries.³³ The most fundamental form of criticism is separative criticism, expressed through the ability to discern, distinguish, or separate.³⁴ In defining a form of metaphysics purified by criticism, two objectives are achieved: a negative objective, in the realization that one should not use speculative reason to go beyond the limits of experience, and a positive objective, in the realization that the principles of going beyond this limit (practical reason) cause a strength-

²⁸ See AA, III, 497 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 761].

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 761.

³⁰ See Dariusz Kubok, “Comments on the Sources of Greek Philosophical Criticism”, *Folia Philosophica* 34 (2015), Special issue: *Forms of Criticism in Philosophy and Science*, ed. Dariusz Kubok (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego), 9–31.

³¹ See AA, IV: 9 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A XI–XII]. See also AA, III: 491 (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 751/B 779).

³² See AA, III: 491 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 751/B 779].

³³ See Anne-Barb Hertkorn, *Kritik und System. Vergleichende Untersuchung zu Programm und Durchführung von Kants Konzeption der Philosophie als Wissenschaft*, München: phronesis, 2009), 29.

³⁴ See Dariusz Kubok, “Comments on the Sources of Greek Philosophical Criticism”, 14–15.

ening of our use of reason.³⁵ The critique of reason is therefore to establish reason's limits on the basis of principles.³⁶ Kantian criticism, then, consists in recognizing the well-balanced boundaries of cognition, not bound to the dogmatic assumption that cognition is unlimited, nor to the "truth" that no boundary can be determined.

As has already been mentioned, Kant meant his criticism to go beyond both dogmatism and scepticism. The question arises, however, whether "going beyond" means abandoning both of these positions. It seems that such an interpretation would be an exaggeration, for two reasons:

1. For Kant, only scepticism in the GND version is a dogmatic delusion; scepticism also plays the beneficial, positive role of doing away with the dogmatic ballast in favor of sober critique.³⁷ The sceptical method, in contrast to scepticism as such (or more precisely negative dogmatism in the GND version), is useful as a cleansing agent (*kathartikon*) serving the proper critique of reason.
2. Kant asserts that "Thus the critique of reason, in the end, necessarily leads to scientific knowledge".³⁸ Science, however, is always necessarily dogmatic: "This critique is not opposed to the *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure knowledge, as science, for that must always be dogmatic, that is, yield strict proof from sure principles *a priori*. It is opposed only to *dogmatism*, that is, to the presumption that it is possible to make progress with pure knowledge, according to principles, from concepts alone (those that are philosophical), as reason has long been in the habit of doing; and that it is possible to do this without having first investigated in what way and by what right reason has come into possession of these concepts".³⁹ From this it follows that "such criticism is the

³⁵ See AA, III: 16 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B XXIV].

³⁶ See AA: IV: 360–361 [Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 133–134].

³⁷ See AA: III: 335 [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 486]. However, in *Logic* Kant clearly writes: "So schädlich nun aber auch dieser Skepticism ist: so nützlich und zweckmäßig ist doch die skeptische Methode, wofern man darunter nichts weiter als nur die Art versteht, etwas als ungewiß zu behandeln und auf die höchste Ungewißheit zu bringen, in der Hoffnung, der Wahrheit auf diesem Wege auf die Spur zu kommen". AA, IX: 84.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 22. Further, Kant adds that the dogmatic use of reason without this critique leads to groundless assertions, which are just as shameful as the claims of scepticism (in our terminology: GND).

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B XXXV.

necessary preparation for a thoroughly grounded metaphysics, which, as science, must necessarily be developed dogmatically, according to the strictest demands of system [...]”⁴⁰

Thus, Kant both points to the positive role of scepticism, and realizes the need to adopt certain positive dogmatic assertions, but only those that are the result of a prior critique of reason regarding its own power.

As Giorgio Tonelli notes, in the eighteenth century, the terms “dogmatic” and “dogma” were used in a unequivocally positive sense in philosophical schools, without reference to scepticism. Dogmatic knowledge was contrasted with historical knowledge.⁴¹ Kant does not reject this meaning, but supplements it with a new one, according to which criticism is in opposition to dogmatism. In connection with this, Tonelli states that two meanings of the term “dogmatic” can be found in Kant: (1) a positive meaning, which contrasts dogmatic knowledge with historical knowledge, and (2) a negative meaning, which views the dogmatic in opposition to the sceptical, critical, problematical, and dialectical.⁴² According to Tonelli, we can also find two different meanings of the term “sceptic”: (1) a procedure whereby nothing is claimed before the arguments for and against it are considered, and certainty cannot be achieved without ruling out the possibility that truth cannot be achieved; and (2) the acceptance of doubts as the ultimate goal, which leads to dogmatism.⁴³ Summarizing his reflections on the topic, Tonelli writes: “Critique was dogmatic, without leading to dogmatism; and it was also sceptical, without leading to scepticism”.⁴⁴ This opinion, however, may be somewhat misleading, especially in light of Kant’s comments cited above. In my opinion, the unambiguous formulation would be as follows: Kant’s critique of reason was dogmatic, but only in the positive sense distinguished by Tonelli; however, it was anti-dogmatic in the negative sense he proposed. At the same time, being a negation of GPD, his critique was supposed to lead to the dogmatism which must necessarily underlie science. In addition, although Kant’s critique relied on the sceptical method, it did not lead to the GND version of scepticism.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, B XXXVI.

⁴¹ See Giorgio Tonelli, “Kant and the Ancient Sceptics”, in: *Scepticism in the Enlightenment*, eds. Richard H. Popkin, Ezequiel De Olaso, Giorgio Tonelli (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 71.

⁴² See ibidem, 71.

⁴³ See ibidem, 72.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 72.

Thus, Kantian antidogmatic scepticism, distinguished from the fruitless and essentially dogmatic GND, is based on the positively understood sceptical method mentioned by Kant in his *Logic*. This method is aimed at seeking and testing the essence, sources, and limits of pure reason. Criticism thus understood is a propaedeutic to transcendental philosophy, because to be a complete system, it would have to include a full analysis of human *a priori* knowledge.⁴⁵ This critical procedure, the core of which lies in the ability to properly search for answers, and not in dogmatic satisfaction with final solutions (GPD and GND), Kant calls, once again in the Greek spirit, for the zetetic method. Already in his *Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbjahre von 1765–1766*, Kant argues that in the didactics of philosophy one should not stress the assimilation of recognized views, but rather the formation of intellectual abilities, or the skill of philosophizing. He adds:

Die eigenthümliche Methode des Unterrichts in der Weltweisheit ist zetetisch, wie sie einige Alte nannten (von ζητεῖν) d. i. forschend, und wird nur bei schon geübter Vernunft in verschiedenen Stücken dogmatisch, d. i. entschieden. Auch soll der philosophische Verfasser, den man etwa bei der Unterweisung zum Grunde legt, nicht wie das Urbild des Urtheils, sondern nur als eine Veranlassung selbst über ihn, ja sogar wider ihn zu urtheilen angesehen werden, und die Methode selbst nachzudenken und zu schließen ist es, deren Fertigkeit der Lehrling eigentlich sucht, die ihm auch nur allein nützlich sein kann, und wovon die etwa zugleich erworbene entschiedene Einsichten als zufällige Folgen angesehen werden müssen, zu deren reichem Überflusse er nur die fruchtbare Wurzel in sich zu pflanzen hat.⁴⁶

This zetetic method (*zetetische Methode*) is none other than an investigative procedure, which – though it is not able to avoid certain dogmatic conclusions along the way – is essentially intended to be antidogmatic, going beyond recognized dogma. This method also serves to critique the method itself and weigh the arguments for and against it.

In my opinion, it is difficult to agree with the interpretation offered by Michael N. Forster,⁴⁷ who writes that “[...] by a ‘zetetic’ method Kant

⁴⁵ See AA, III, 44 (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 13).

⁴⁶ AA, II: 307.

⁴⁷ A. Chignell and Colin Mclear also have a lot of doubts: “The verb *zêtein* means ‘to investigate’ and can be found throughout Greek philosophy: Socrates famously claims to be engaged in ‘zetesis’ in the *Meno*, for instance, and Aristotle refers to earlier Socratic philosophy as ‘zetetic’ (Pol. 1265a12). But neither Socrates nor Plato clearly uses equipollence arguments in particular to ground suspension of judgment. Moreover, according to one recent monograph on the period, Pyrrhonism was typically associated with the ‘aporetic’ method, while

can here mean only one thing: *the Pyrrhonists' equipollence method, or procedure of balancing opposed arguments in order to produce a suspension of judgment*".⁴⁸ The definition Forster provides refers more to the ephectic position than to the zetetic position, which is clear in light of what Sextus writes in his *Outline of Pyrrhonism* (I, 7). It would be an obvious abuse to assert that Kant himself confuses the zetetic posture with the ephectic posture. It is more likely that Forster tries to match Kantian understanding of the zetetic attitude to his own interpretation, according to which Pyrrhonism was a source of inspiration for Kant. According to Forster, "the Notice from 1765 did not yet represent Kant's metaphysical *crise pyrrhoniennne* in full bloom, though. That came shortly afterwards in his 1766 essay *Dreams of a Spirit Seer, Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*. [...] In sum, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of 1766 represents a *crise pyrrhoniennne* in full bloom, and is indeed to all intents and purposes a self-consciously Pyrrhonian work".⁴⁹ While the essay *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* does seem to support Forster's interpretation, *Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbjahre von 1765–1766* does not. Moreover, in this last work, which contains a description of the zetetic method, nothing is said about the fact that this method is to lead to the balance of opposing theses, nor that it is meant to lead to a suspension of judgment (ἐποχή). In light of the cited passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason* (especially A 388), it is clear that such an understanding of scepticism leads to dogmatism and must be overcome by way of critical inquiry. On the other hand, it should be noted that in his *Logic*, Kant states that the sceptical method effectively leads to the suspension of judgment; this remark would, therefore, justify Forster's argument to some degree. In fact, the sceptical method is only a form of preparation (hence its usefulness) for strict critical proceedings, which should be understood as a method of reasoning that concerns sources and gives one hope to achieve certainty.

The zetetic method in *Nachricht...* may be interpreted as a precursor (from the pre-critical period in the development of Kant's thought) to the

the more general zetetic mode of inquiry involved simply 'seeking without bias the most probable answers to a wide range of philosophical problems'. It is thus not at all obvious that Kant's reference to the 'zetetic' method in the *Notice* can simply be equated with equipollence argumentation in particular, rather than with Socratic or skeptical 'investigative' method more generally". Andrew Chignell, Colin Mclear, "Three Sceptics and the Critique: Review of Michael Forster's *Kant and Skepticism*", *Philosophical Books* 51 (2010): 230.

⁴⁸ Forster, *Kant and Skepticism*, 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 18–19.

critical method, which (as Kant explains during the critical period) is to be preceded by a positively understood sceptical method.⁵⁰ It is not surprising, then, that Kant links the terms “zetetic” and “critical” together: “idee der metaphysik: Ist sie eine Critick oder doctrin: ist ihr verfahren zetetisch oder dogmatisch?”⁵¹ – especially in the light of the definition he offers:

Die Scepticer aber heißen auch Zetetici, Sucher, und Forscher, und zwar darum, weil sie suchten, und nachforschten. Sie werden also bey allen Sätzen weder jederzeit entscheidend an ihnen zweifeln, noch auch entscheidend etwas vor wahr halten, und annehmen. Der Zeteticus ist also nicht derjenige, welcher die Mexime hat, alles, und jedes zu verwerfen, und an allem und jedem ohne Unterschied positive zu entscheiden, oder Blindlings zu behaupten, sondern welcher denen Erkenntnißen nachdencket, und sie prüfet.⁵²

It can therefore be assumed that Kantian zetetic attitude stands, above all, in opposition to dogmatism, and, what follows, also in opposition to GPD and GND. Kant’s zetetic attitude expresses the critical element manifested in the search for certainty through persistent reflection on the arguments backing up accepted claims. Critical zetetic attitude negates GPD through its use of the sceptical method, while simultane-

⁵⁰ G. Tonelli asserts that “for Kant ‘zetetic’ meant the same as ‘sceptical’ (in the good sense)”. Tonelli, „Kant and the Ancient Sceptics”, 71. This statement should be supplemented with a comment that positively understood scepticism in the form of using the sceptic method is essentially only a prelude to proper criticism, which may manifest itself as zetetic attitude. I think that the link between criticism and zetetic method should be stressed more strongly than that between scepticism (cathartic in its positive dimension) and criticism.

⁵¹ AA XVII, 558 (*Reflexionen zur Metaphysik*). G. Tonelli rightly notes that “the ‘critical’ attitude appeared to him after 1769 as the true form of the earlier ‘zetetic’ procedure, and can thus also in a revised sense be called ‘zetetic’”. Tonelli, “Kant and the Ancient Sceptics”, 70. Tonelli also cites texts from an earlier period (before 1765), which contain philosophically interesting derivatives of the verb ζητεῖν that are related to zetetic attitude. They can be found in the works of, among others, the following authors: Hoeker (1613), Goclenius (1615), Hornius (1655), Stanley (1655–1660), Sorbière (1660), Vossius (1658), Gassendi (1658), Micraelius 1662), Bayle (1734), Paschius (1707), Lange (1708), Gentzkenius (1724), Buddeus (1731), Crousaz (1733), Walch (1736), Jac. Brucker (1742), Heineccius (1743), Themiseul de St. Hyacinthe (1743), Zedler (1733–1750), Ploucquet (1758). See *ibidem*, 87–89, fn. 2, 4 and 8.

⁵² Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Bd. 24 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 213 (*Logik Blomberg*).

ously avoiding the absolutization of the results of this negation, which in turn manifests itself as a negation of GND. The aim of the zetetic procedure thus described is to seek certainty in the form of a critique of reason itself; this critique is, therefore, self-critique, and reason itself is the supreme tribunal judging itself and the reasons for its conclusions. The result of reason's recognition of its limits is self-limitation.

Its originality notwithstanding, as has been demonstrated, in Kant's thought one can find the original Greek positions of criticism, scepticism, and zeteticism. Although it is safe to claim that their essence in Kant differs from that of their Greek counterparts, one cannot help but notice that his enormous debt to ancient thinkers manifests itself not only in the terminology he employs, but also, to a certain degree in terms of the philosophical content of his reflection. Furthermore, bearing in mind the analysis above, it would – in my opinion – be misguided to impose the ephectic interpretation on both Greek scepticism and Kantian scepticism while omitting the zetetic interpretation of both. The monopolization of views and the appropriation of ossified truths are the most basic expressions of an anticritical attitude.

Bibliography

- Barnes Jonathan. 2007. "Sextan Scepticism". In: *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat*, ed. Dominic Scott, 322–334. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baumgartner Hans Michael. 1996. *Kants "Kritik der reinen Vernunft": Anleitung zur Lektüre*. Freiburg–München: Karl Alber.
- Chignell Andrew, Colin Mclear. 2010. "Three Sceptics and the Critique: Review of Michael Forster's Kant and Scepticism". *Philosophical Books* 51: 228–244.
- Diogenes Laertius. 1925. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, transl. M.A. Hicks. London–New York: Harvard University Press.
- Forster Michael N. 2010. *Kant and Scepticism*. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Garewicz Jan. 1984. "Inaczej o rewolucji kopernikańskiej w filozofii". *Studia Filozoficzne* 2: 122–123.
- Grgić Filip. 2012. "Investigative and Suspensive Scepticism". *European Journal of Philosophy* 22: 653–673.
- Hankinson Robert J. 1995. *The Sceptics. (The Arguments of the Philosophers)*. London–New York: Routledge.
- Hertkorn Anne-Barb. 2009. *Kritik und System. Vergleichende Untersuchung zu Programm und Durchführung von Kants Konzeption der Philosophie als Wissenschaft*. München: phronesis.

- Kant Immanuel. 1912. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. in English by Paul Carus. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing.
- Kant Immanuel. 1929. *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Norman Kemp Smith. London: Macmillan.
- Kant Immanuel. 1966. *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Bd. 2. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Kant Immanuel. *Akademieausgabe von Immanuel Kants Gesammelten Werken*, <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/Kant/verzeichnisse-gesamt.html> (AA).
- Krause W. P. 1959. "Das historische Spektrum der philosophischen Kritik". *Studium Generale* 12, fasc. 9: 539–571.
- Krause W. P. 1959. "Philosophische Kritik". *Studium Generale* 12, fasc. 8: 523–538.
- Kubok Dariusz. 2015. "Comments on the Sources of Greek Philosophical Criticism". *Folia Philosophica* 34: 9–31, Special issue: *Forms of Criticism in Philosophy and Science*, ed. Dariusz Kubok. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.
- Kubok Dariusz. 2018. "Critical Thinking and Philosophical Criticism – An Outline of the Problem". In: *Thinking Critically: What Does It Mean? The Tradition of Philosophical Criticism and Its Forms in the European History of Ideas*, ed. Dariusz Kubok, 1–10. Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter.
- Makkreel Rudolf A. 1998. "Kant's Responses to Skepticism". In: *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800. Skepticism in Philosophy, Science and Society*, hrsg. von Johan van der Zande, Richard H. Popkin, 101–109. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Sexti Empirici Opera. 1958. Vol. 1: *Pyrrhoneion hypotyposeon libros tres continens*. Recensuit H. Mutschmann (cur. J. Mau). Leipzig: Teubner (cited as *Pyr*).
- Sextus Empiricus. 2000. *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. Julia Annas, Jonathan Barnes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tonelli Giorgio. 1997. "Kant and the Ancient Sceptics". In: *Scepticism in the Enlightenment*, eds. Richard H. Popkin, Ezequiel De Olaso, Giorgio Tonelli. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Ziemińska Renata. 2017. *The History of Skepticism: In Search of Consistency*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Summary

This article examines Immanuel Kant's criticism from the perspective of the preceding tradition of critical thought, with particular emphasis on Greek philosophy. Kant himself views criticism as a way to go beyond dogmatism and scepticism. On the other hand – as many researchers point out – Kant's philosophy develops certain themes present in ancient scepticism. In the literature, there are numerous studies demonstrating Kant's debt to the Pyrrhonian scepticism characteristic of Sextus Empiricus (ephecticism and epechism). In this article, I try to show that two different interpretations of scepticism can be formed on the basis of Sextus' writings: zetetic scepticism and ephectic scepticism. The

interpretation considers *ἐποχή* and *ἰσοσθένεια* as key ideas for scepticism and it is this latter option that is recognized in Kant's thought by scholars, especially by Michael Forster. In my opinion, however, it is the first interpretation, not yet sufficiently recognized, that constitutes at least an equally strong complement to the first and may even be regarded as the proper source of Kant's critical philosophy.

Keywords: criticism, scepticism, zetetic attitude, epistemology, Kant, ancient philosophy