

## Outline of Lecture on Immanuel Kant

The questions concerning causality and uniformity are summed up in the one grand question whose answer Kant said amounted to a “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy: “How are *a priori* synthetic propositions possible? All knowledge begins with experience but not all knowledge arises from experience. *A priori* is that of experience, which doesn’t arise from experience; e.g., what is necessary and universal.

*a posteriori* propositions: their truth is arrived at by empirical observation. (E.g., “Victor lives in Mississauga.”)

analytic propositions: the predicate is contained in the subject. (E.g., “All bachelors are unmarried.”) The meaning of the statement discloses its truth.

synthetic proposition: the predicate isn’t contained in the subject. (E.g., “The sun consists of flaming hydrogen gas denser than lead.”) A synthetic proposition, unlike an analytic proposition, adds to our knowledge.

We have *a priori* analytic knowledge in the form of tautologies. But what about *a priori* synthetic knowledge? Kant maintains that mathematics and physics (i.e., Newtonian mechanics) are necessary and universal. In both these disciplines the meaning of the proposition doesn’t yield knowledge of the truth of the proposition.

Kant’s first Critique (*Critique of Pure Reason*) attempts to show how *a priori* synthetic propositions are possible.

Space, time and causality are categories that the mind supplies as part of the structure of knowing.

Things in themselves are unknowable.

Things as they appear are knowable inasmuch as we supply the condition of the knowability.

In order to know things in themselves we’d have to know them without our structure of knowing -- and this is impossible.

### Kant’s Transcendental Method

(Don’t confuse “transcendental”(=that which pertains to the conditions of knowledge) with

“transcendent” (=that which pertains to God’s non-creatureliness.)

Kant’s “Transcendental Unity of Apperception” is the condition of the inter-subjectivity of knowing: *everyone* sees the same tree.

Space is one such transcendental category.

We seek the ground of our phenomenal selves (the experiencing subject); i.e., we seek the ultimate ground of all experience.

### Concerning Metaphysics

What underlies the consciousness we have of ourselves as subjects-experiencing-objects? Who or what is the self that underlies the self of which I am conscious? If I am conscious of myself, what is the “I” that is the subject of self-consciousness as opposed to the “I” that is the object of self-consciousness? This self which is the condition of the unity of the self’s myriad experiences is the “transcendental unity of apperception.” Since it is the condition of the self’s experiencing, it can’t be experienced. It is therefore posited. Then is there a noumenal self underling the phenomenal self?

There may be, but we can't know it -- and therefore can't know that it is. The ultimate "I" available to us is a condition of the self's experiencing, which condition we posit.

### Concerning Cosmology

Can reason penetrate to the ultimate nature of the universe?

Kant's "antinomies" indicate that reason raises questions that reason can't answer. Reason organizes sense-data; reason never grasps what lies behind sense-data.

### Concerning God

Can reason prove the existence of God?

No. Pure reason can neither prove nor disprove God or freedom or immortality (of the self).

Why can't reason prove God?

[1] Hume has trashed the teleological argument: an argument for a designer doesn't yield a creator, since no one observes teleology.

[2] the cosmological argument deals with the ultimate cause of the universe; causality is a category arising from the structure of our knowing sense-appearances.

[3] the ontological argument is invalid, since it treats existence as a predicate. (Instantiation isn't a predicate.)

Then is there a noumenal God? There may be, but we can't prove it.

[a] Herein Kant thinks he's determined the limits of pure reason.

[b] Kant's philosophical project: to restrict theoretical knowledge in such a way as to make it possible for *practical* (=moral) knowledge to disclose how "rational faith" has an absolute claim on us

[c] Practical reason is concerned not with knowing but with doing, specifically with moral obligation.

Since we are all aware of moral obligation ("Two things fill me with awe: the starry heavens above and the moral law within"), therefore the conditions for fulfilling that obligation must exist.

These conditions are:

[1] freedom -- essential to a moral agent.

[2] immortality -- essential if the happiness to which agents are entitled is to be theirs.

[3] God -- essential to the ensuring of the above.

All of these can't be proven, and are therefore postulates of our awareness of moral obligation.

NB Kant's "categorical imperative": the maxim implied by a proposed action must be such that one can will that it become a *universal law of nature*. (The categorical imperative is to be contrasted with all hypothetical imperatives.)

## Kant and Ethics

- 1] He has no doctrine of original sin.
- 2] The will never loses its capacity to obey the moral law. His "radical evil" is "more evil than expected" or "more evil than explicable" but not *sheer* evil, evil for the sake of evil.
- 3] Moral law isn't based on the divine will (which we can't know in any case) but on autonomous reason.
- 4] Jesus Christ is a moral exemplar, and therefore an encourager, but not the Son of God incarnate.