



Kant and Critical Philosophy

Week 1. 19th September 2016



What do you know about Kant? Talk to neighbour, introduce them and find out what they know.

‘a direct inversion of previous modes of philosophical explanation.’
– F.W. Schelling

‘The very fact that the totality of our sense experiences is such that by means of thinking ... it can be put in order, this fact is one which leaves us in awe, but which we shall never understand. One may say “the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.” It is one of the great realizations of Immanuel Kant that the setting up of a real external world would be senseless without this comprehensibility.’
– Albert Einstein

Course aims

- Understand the context, features and core concepts of Kant's critical philosophy
- Explain transcendental idealism, and evaluate its arguments
- Work through Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of the most important and difficult works in the history of philosophy
- Familiarity with Kant's second and third critiques, debating his arguments about beauty, God, politics, and human morality
- Determine for yourself the extent to which freedom, morality and religious belief can be combined into a single philosophy!

What you'll need....

- Moodle login
- Copy of the *Critique of Pure Reason* – Guyer & Wood translation recommended (Cambridge University Press, 1998) but others e.g. Kemp Smith or Pluhar good
- Study guides recommended:
 - Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction* (beginners)
 - Sebastian Gardner, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant and the CPR* (intermediate)
 - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.plato.stanford.edu

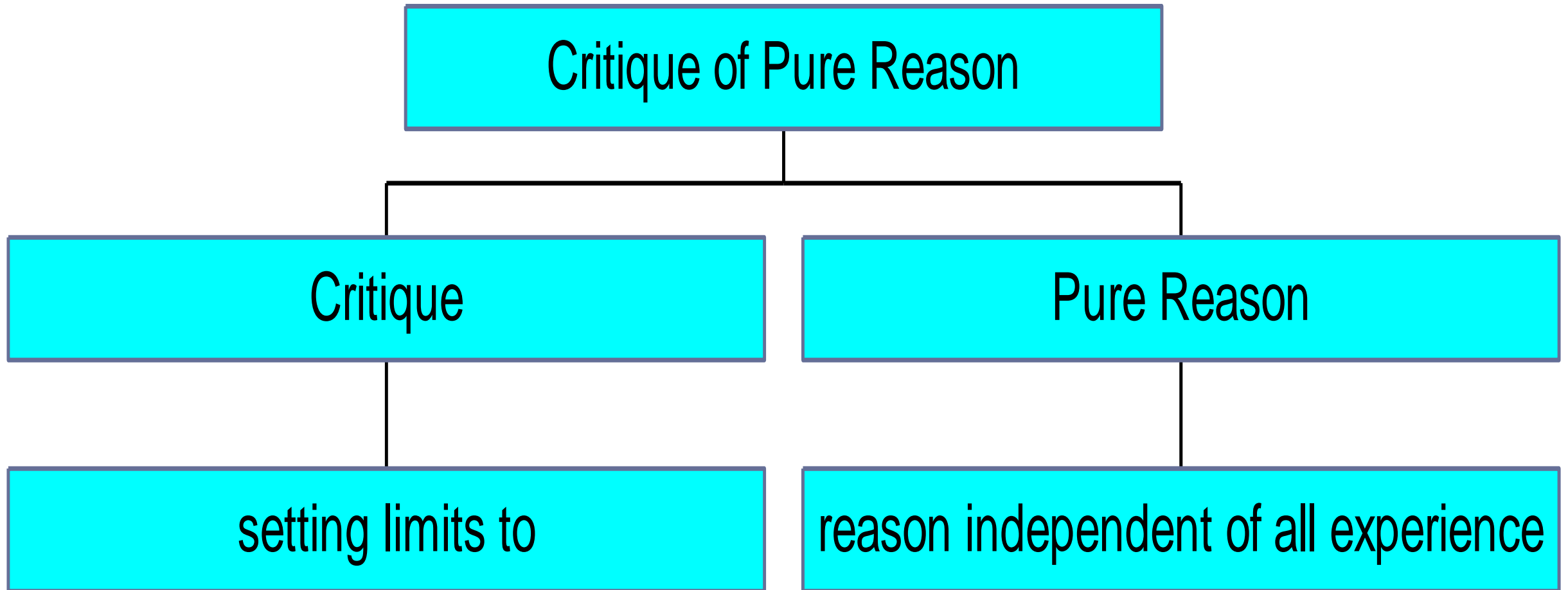
Class aims

- Introduce critical philosophy, its method and scope
- Grasp Kant's philosophical context
- Discuss the core problems facing the CPR
- Understand the claims of the Preface (A)



$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial a} \ln f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) &= \frac{(\xi_1 - a)}{\sigma^2} f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(-\frac{(\xi_1 - a)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right) \\ \int T(x) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} f(x, \theta) dx &= M\left(T(\xi) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln L(\xi, \theta)\right) \\ \int T(x) \cdot \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln L(x, \theta)\right) \cdot f(x, \theta) dx &= \int T(x) \cdot \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln f(x, \theta)\right) \cdot f(x, \theta) dx \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln L(\xi, \theta) &= \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln f(\xi, \theta) \end{aligned}$$

What is critical philosophy?



What is critical philosophy?

- Determine the extent and limits of human understanding, independent of experience – pure reason.
- Establish the possibility of metaphysics, defined as ‘the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience’, which is a priori knowledge.
- Therefore: subject reason itself to a critique of its powers
- Key argument: Human understanding structures a subjective experience of reality through its use of reason, aided by objective a priori laws

Rationalism



Knowledge comes
from reason

Empiricism



Knowledge comes
from experience

a priori
knowledge



knowledge
prior to
experience

a posteriori
knowledge



knowledge
arising from
experience

Key terms

Metaphysics:

What is the fundamental nature of being and reality?

Epistemology:

What are the origins, nature and limits of human knowledge?

Ontology:

What is the nature of being, existence and reality?

- Think back to Schelling's quote. Does Kant convert all questions of ontology to epistemology?

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

First part of what is known as Kant's 'Critical Philosophy', consisting of three books:

1) *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781,1787)

deals with **metaphysics**

2) *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788)

deals with **morality**

3) *Critique of Judgement* (1790)

deals with **aesthetics**

Groups: Problems for religion

- How does a scientific reliance on causality, implying determinism, square with free will?
- How can natural science provide a secure grounding and consistency with orthodox Christian belief?
- Can the Enlightenment critique of superstition and argument for toleration avoid clashing with religious authorities?
- What might the discovery of different peoples and forms of knowledge imply for a Eurocentric, Christian worldview?



‘Through criticism alone can we sever the very root of materialism, fatalism, atheism, of freethinking unbelief, of enthusiasm and superstition, which can become generally injurious, and finally also of idealism and skepticism, which are more dangerous to the schools and can hardly be transmitted to the public.’

– Kant, CPR, B xxxiv

Moodle login

Username: firstnamelastname

Password: FirstNameInitial (capitals)

E.g. Theresa May

Username: theresamay

Password: THERESAM

Recap

- Introduce critical philosophy, its method and scope
- Grasp Kant's philosophical context
- Discuss the core problems facing the CPR
- Understand the claims of the Preface (A)
- Email any questions to: dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk



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Context: the scientific revolution

- Developments in the natural sciences: Copernicus, Vesalius, Newton
- Shifts in epistemology and political thought that shifted the focus onto the subject, in a state of nature, rather than the soul
- Enlightenment belief in an identical reason existing immanently within all human beings, that can be cultivated.
- Hume called the 'science of man' that which would submit all to reason's judgement; Kant calls for *sapere aude*.