



# Kant and Critical Philosophy

Week 12. 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016  
Enlightenment !

# Class recap

- Kant's politics of right and freedom, and its basis in morality
- Kant's political context: Revolution
- Freedom, equality and active citizenship
- Republicanism, not democratic
- International relations premised on peace
- The social contract is only a regulative idea, but an important one for civil constitutions



# Class aims

- Discuss Kant's understanding of Enlightenment
- Round-up on our journey through Kant through evaluating key arguments from each week
- Introduction to Kant's legacy for German thought, particularly Fichte and Hegel
- Reflection on how Kant has impacted the way you view the world







‘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

# What is Enlightenment?

In groups of 2-3, please discuss from the excerpt:

- *What does Kant mean by self-incurred immaturity?*
- *What kind of freedom does Kant argue for?*
- *How convinced are you by his argument?*

# What is Enlightenment?

‘If it is asked, then, whether we live in an *enlightened* age, then the answer is: no, but we do live in an age of *enlightenment*. It is far from the case that humans, in present circumstances, and taken as a whole, are already or could be put in a position to make confident and good use of their own reason in matters of religion without the direction of another. But we have clear indications that they are now being opened up to the possibility of working toward this, and that the obstacles to universal enlightenment, or to the emancipation from one’s self-incurred immaturity, are now gradually becoming fewer. In this regard our age is an age of enlightenment, or the century of *Frederick*.’

# Kant's legacy

- Critical philosophy quickly drew international philosophical interest
- In Germany, it was popularised by K.L. Reinhold, who sought to impose a systematicity on it through an underlying first principle – a unified faculty of representation or ‘principle of consciousness’
- Ceased the influence of rationalism of a Leibniz-Wolff kind, and Kant considered to be ‘all-destroying’ (Mendelssohn) or the ‘arch-destroyer in the realm of thought’ (Heine, who also said of Kant, ‘the sword that slew deism in Germany’)
- Jacobi: transcendental idealism leads to a nihilism and scepticism, as the intellect is unable to know reality (things in themselves), the basis by which objects affect us
- In its elevation of a mysterious faculty of reason, it ignores the primacy of language, and indeed claims mistakenly to be purified of it (Hamann, Herder)





# Absolute Idealism: criticisms of Kant

- Fichte (1762-1814), Schelling (1775-1854) and Hegel (1770-1831) advance beyond Kant, arguing he had not gone far enough
- All felt that the 'thing in itself' was ill-substantiated and incoherent
- It also fails to rebut scepticism: for Hegel, transcendental idealism's reduction of the objective world to 'man's own perspective and projection' and the impossibility of theoretically validating our ideas of the soul and God were too problematic
- Kant also failed to empirically ground the faculties of sensibility and understanding. They seem arbitrary and disjointed – 'a sack full of faculties' (Hegel), with the unity of subjectivity still too contingent
- Instead the unity of our faculties must have some rational character

# Absolute Idealism: new directions

- They drop the thing-in-itself: form and content merge, and the objects of our appearances are *real*, not merely appearances
- Unconditional or absolute reality is identical with what is encompassed in thought
- Beneath sensibility/understanding is a unified faculty of representation, uniting reason and subjectivity, whose basis is ultimately self-knowledge
- The subject doesn't merely constitute the world with the aid of forms given to it, but makes the forms with which it makes the world
- Both knowledge and its object are aspects of a single, underlying mind-like reality - *geist*

# Absolute Idealism: Fichte

- Rather than rely on the noumenal, consciousness instead does not have any grounding on a 'real' world: it has no grounding on anything outside itself
- In following the 'spirit' rather than 'letter' of Kant, Fichte develops and transforms Kant's notion of transcendental apperception – the world rests on self-consciousness
- Whereas for Kant the 'I think' is merely an identical subject to which we refer our representations, for Fichte the self is an absolutely unconditioned, productive ground of all things
- This absolute self has the power to posit itself, and has complete knowledge of itself
- This self-positing self is truly free and active, and has an intellectual intuition of itself, not by the senses
- Self-activity therefore trumps representation – the self gulfs theoretical and practical reason, nature and freedom



# Absolute Idealism: Schelling

- Fichte's system fails to account for the objective, external natural world in its account of self-positing
- Schelling instead develops a philosophy of nature (*naturphilosophie*), demonstrating how free self-conscious subjectivity is grounded in nature
- Nature is a productivity, one that can never appear in itself, only through the form of products, which continually transform
- This productive nature is in parallel to the absolute self – two (somehow) interrelated subjects
- Schelling, like Fichte, ultimately seeks a solution to subject-object relations founded in something other than merely that which it is presented to us – the perspectival subject – but in its objective aspect – the absolute self.



# Absolute Idealism: Hegel

- The role of the 'I' of apperception in Kant is taken over by *geist* (Spirit), a universal, impersonal subject of thought with priority over the plurality of individual self-consciousnesses – subjectivity as such, as distinguished from the subjectivity of individual thinkers
- Spirit has a profound connection with human social existence
- He reverses the relation between thought and subjectivity, so that the concepts which constitute reality are no longer representations in the subject but rather real entities of a semi-Platonic kind
- Conceptuality replaces subjectivity as the ground of philosophical explanation and reality itself. Hegel would dismiss Kant as merely 'subjective' and 'psychological'





# Absolute Idealism: Hegel

- Being by thought is conceived of historically, as Spirit develops and gradually achieves self-consciousness
- Task of philosophy is to express the system of concepts progressively realised in natural and human history – the dynamic logic of the ‘self-moving Concept’
- This involves a review of all human consciousness in all its phases, be it art, religion and philosophy
- In doing so, it articulates the Absolute – an exhaustive, unconditioned and self-grounding system of concepts made concrete in actuality, in the world of experience
- Whereas Fichte and Schelling attempt to give a single fixed point from which thought proceeds from, Hegel rejects this. Conceptualisation is a circle, without beginning, which terminates in the Absolute
- Philosophy instead takes place on a plane of autonomous conceptuality, outside the orbit of any individual knowing subject.

# Schopenhauer

- Far more sympathetic to Kant and critical of Idealism
- Maintained a form of the noumenal/phenomenal distinction, wherein the 'world of representation' (empirical world) has an underlying, distinct reality as the 'world of will'
- Unlike the noumenal, will can be grasped as the immediate, non-representational awareness of ourselves as striving bodily agents
- This grants us awareness of ourselves as things in themselves
- Reality consists ultimately in a single undifferentiated will, of which empirical reality is the appearance
- This will is intrinsically blind, unlike the rationality and purposiveness of the Absolute as conceived by Fichte and Hegel





1. What can I know?
  2. What ought I to do?
  3. What may I hope?
- (A804-5/B832-3)

‘All principles of the pure understanding are nothing further than *a priori* principles of the possibility of experience, and all synthetic *a priori* propositions are related to the latter alone, indeed their possibility itself rests entirely on this relation.’ (B294)

# Kant in all

*What aspects of Kant have spoken most to you?*

- Kant's philosophy is one of autonomy: determining the freedom of the subject as a rational and moral agent
- Kant's great hope was to reconstruct metaphysics against scepticism, and offer a new basis for morality in reason
- It derives the objective from within the subjective, and through a number of works expounds a systematic treatment of human knowledge, feeling and morality as intelligible to universal, a priori laws: the starry skies above, the moral law within







$$\frac{\partial}{\partial a} \ln f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) = \frac{(\xi_1 - a)}{\sigma^2} f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(-\frac{(\xi_1 - a)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_n} T(x) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} f(x, \theta) dx = M\left(T(\xi) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln L(\xi, \theta)\right) \int_{\mathcal{R}_n} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} f(x, \theta) dx$$

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_n} T(x) \cdot \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln L(x, \theta)\right) \cdot f(x, \theta) dx = \int_{\mathcal{R}_n} T(x) \cdot \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \frac{f(x, \theta)}{f(x, \theta)}\right) f(x, \theta) dx$$

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# Critik der reinen Vernunft

VON  
Immanuel Kant  
Professer in Königsberg.

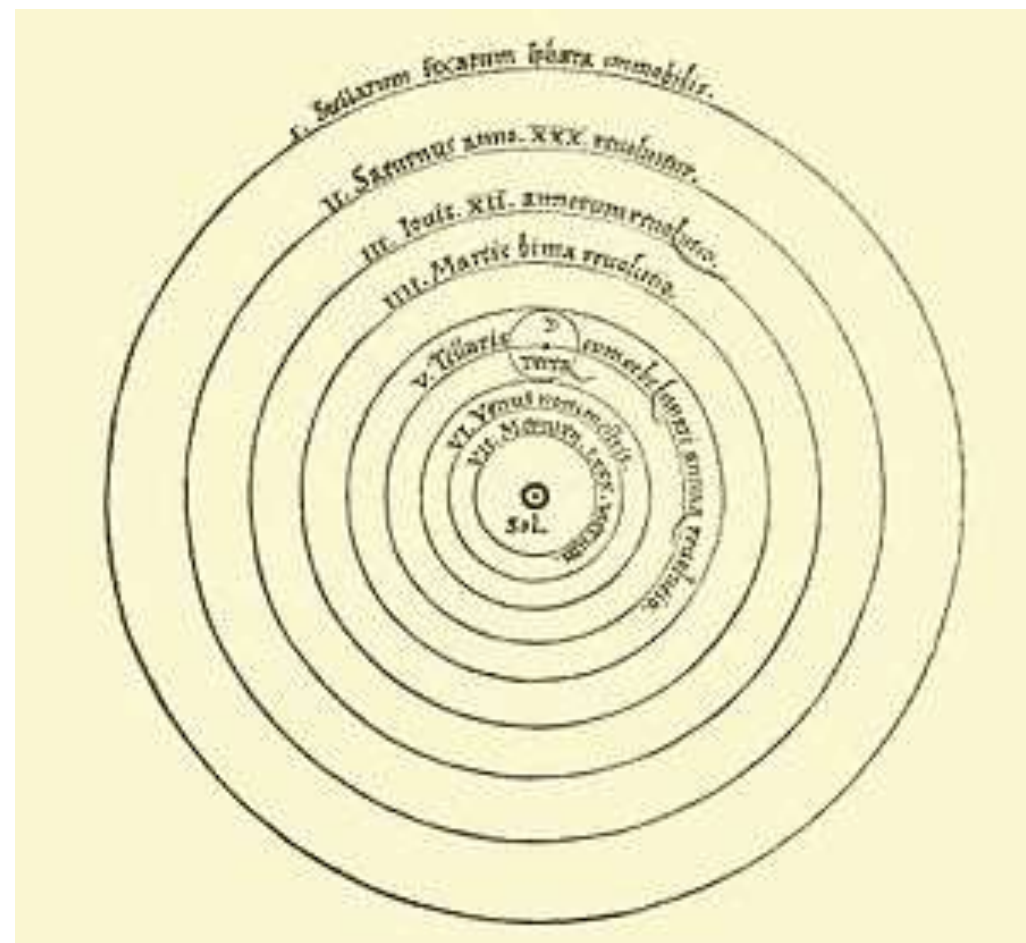


Reigis,  
verlegt Johann Friedrich Hartnoch  
1781.



# The inception of the First Critique (1781)

‘reason sees itself necessitated to take refuge in principles that overstep all possible use in experience, and yet seem so unsuspecting that even ordinary common sense agrees with them. But it thereby falls into obscurity and contradictions, from which it can indeed surmise that it must somewhere be proceeding on the ground of hidden errors; but it cannot discover them, for the principles on which it is proceeding, since they surpass the bounds of all experience, no longer recognize any touchstone of experience’ – A viii



‘Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest.’ – B xvi

‘Thus I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith’ (B xxx)

‘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.’ – B xxxiv

# *Critique of Pure Reason* - inception

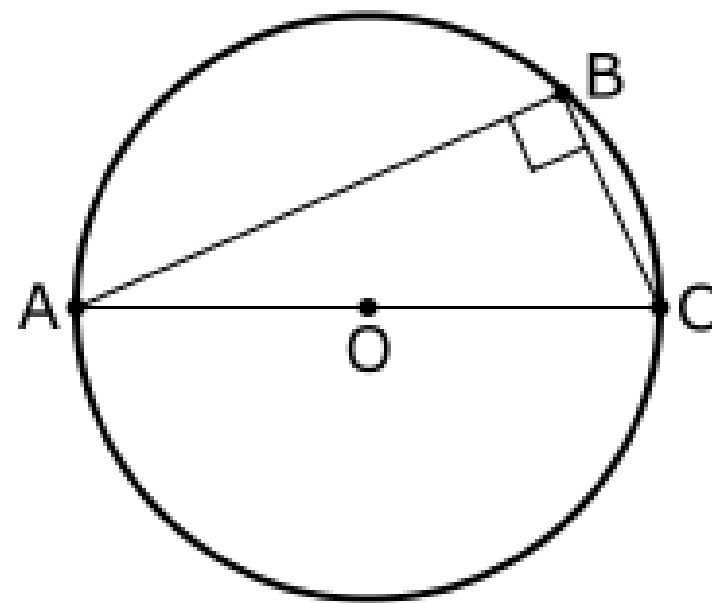
- Determine the extent and limits of human understanding, independent of experience – pure reason – in a ‘court of justice’.
- Establish the possibility of metaphysics, defined as ‘the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience’, which is a priori knowledge.
- Therefore: subject reason itself to a critique of its powers, resolving the ‘battlefield’ of worm-eaten dogmatism’
- Our subjective perspective is structured by certain a priori features which Kant will outline, through sensibility, understanding etc
- Theoretical philosophy should ultimately operate within the bounds of possible experience. What goes beyond – the noumenal, or practical philosophy, still needs to be outlined.



# *Critique of Pure Reason* - inception

- Its Copernican shift is from assuming *cognitions must conform to objects* to instead how '*objects must conform to our cognition*'
- We can have a priori knowledge of the world precisely because it is dependent on the human mind. The sensible world is *constructed* by the mind out of passive sensory matter and a priori forms of reason, which structure its experience.
- **Not** what do we know about the world from experience? **Instead** we ask "how is experience possible?"
- *Hence* Kant has questions of metaphysics tilt on epistemology
- Experience must have a certain necessary structure in order to count as being experience at all
- Thus our minds are not passive in receiving impressions, but actively *construct* and participate in forming our experience

# Transcendental Idealism



$$7 + 5 = 12$$

# Synthetic a priori

About the sum  $7 + 5 = 12$ ...

‘Without getting help from intuition we could never find the sum by means of the mere analysis of our concepts’ (B16)

‘knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects *in so far as this mode of knowledge is possible a priori*’ (B25).

‘Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind’ (A51, B75)

# Transcendental Idealism

‘It is therefore indubitably certain, and not merely possible or even probable, that space and time, as the necessary conditions of all (outer and inner) experience, are merely subjective conditions of all our intuition, in relation to which therefore all objects are mere appearances and not things given for themselves in this way; about these appearances, further, much may be said *a priori* that concerns their form, but nothing whatsoever about the things in themselves that may ground them’ (A49/B66)

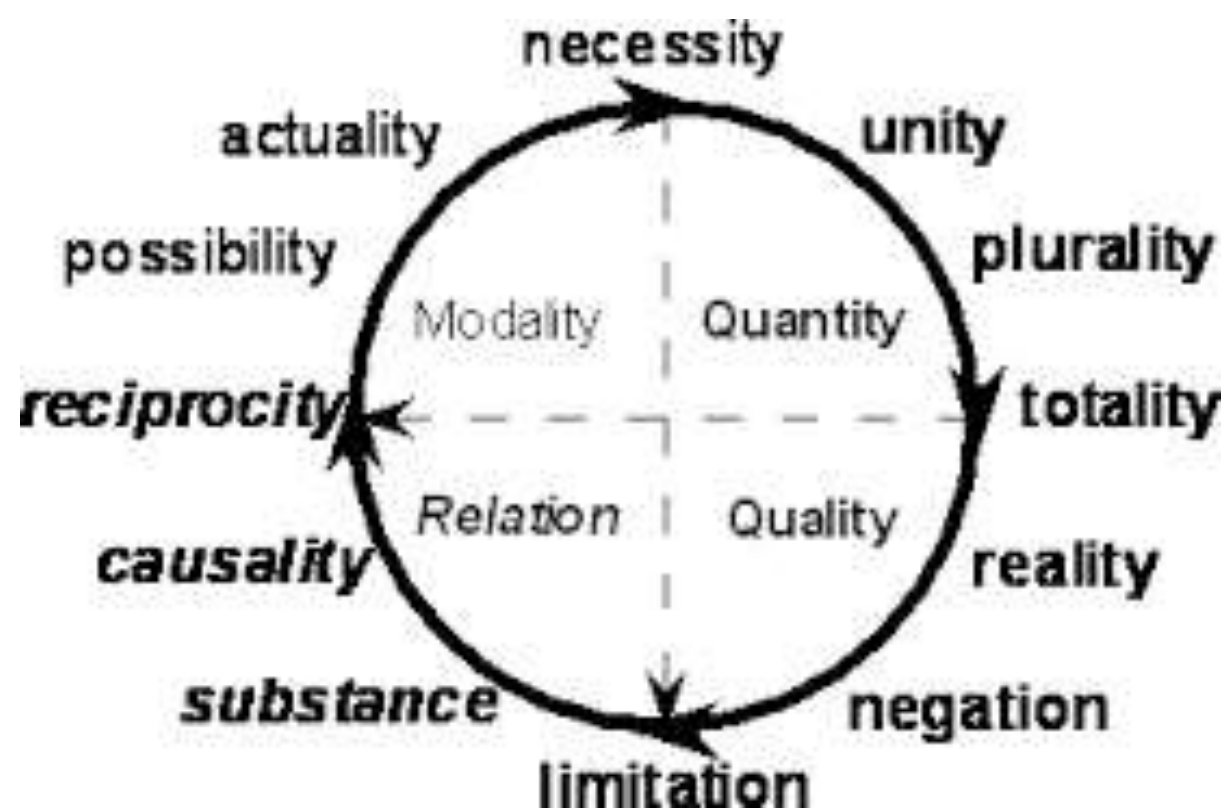
# Transcendental Idealism

- A synthesis of concepts from the understanding (form) and intuitions from sensibility (content) is necessary for synthetic a priori
- Metaphysics has a 'predisposition' to speculate towards unconditioned
- Transcendental refers to knowledge of *a priori* conditions of possible experience, through this independence of concepts/intuitions
- *Transcendental Aesthetic* outlines how sensibility is defined by time and space as inner and outer sense
- Time and space are empirically real to us, but transcendently ideal in grounding our experiences, not reflecting things in themselves
- Transcendental philosophy shows how legitimate empirical knowledge requires application of categories to intuitions, guided by regulative Ideas
- This leads to the Two Objects/Aspects criticism



# Recap on terms

- **Analytic**: subject contained within predicate  
**Synthetic**: predicate not contained in subject, requires added element
- **Synthetic a priori**: predicate not contained in subject, but whose truth is verifiable independent of experience
- **Transcendental**: knowledge of a priori conditions for possible experience
- **Intuitions**: the object's being as given to us immediately, via senses  
Concepts: its being thought about, via understanding
- **Sensibility**: cognitive faculty by which objects given to us as intuitions  
Understanding: cognitive faculty which organises concepts
- **Space**: outer sense, a pure intuition of our minds that represents intuitions externally – only appearances, not things in themselves
- **Time**: inner sense, an intuition of our minds representing intuitions internally, through which the mind is aware of itself



# Transcendental Deduction

‘all experience contains in addition to the intuition of the senses, through which something is given, a concept of an object that is given in intuition, or appears; hence concepts of objects in general lie at the ground of all experiential cognition as *a priori* conditions; consequently the objective validity of the categories, as *a priori* concepts, rests on the fact that through them alone is experience possible (as far as the form of thinking is concerned). For they then are related necessarily and *a priori* to objects of experience, since only by means of them can any object of experience be thought at all.’ (A93/B126)

# Transcendental Deduction

- Space and time are simply forms of intuition and are not real in themselves... What enables intuitions to become the content for knowledge?
- Copernican, again: Kant isn't interested in how the cognition agrees with the object as it is given by sensibility; but instead what the *a priori* rules of cognition are by which we perceive an object – the categories
- Metaphysical Deduction presents 12 pure categories of the understanding
- The Transcendental Deduction argues how these categories are applied to intuitions, the understanding thereby constructing a coherent view of the world out of the 'manifold' of a confused 'heap' of sensations
- Categories provide general rules for thinking, supplying a 'lawfulness' to nature – but they only concern appearances
- Therefore the mind is active or 'spontaneous' in producing a perception

# Transcendental Deduction and Schematism

- What gives subjective experience objective validity?
- Three sources of experience: sense, imagination and apperception
- Kant outlines how the understanding 'synthesis' or 'combines' the data of each into a singular unified viewpoint
- Three forms of synthesis: apprehension (sense), imagination and recognition (understanding)
- Between the understanding and sensibility lies the imagination, which uses a process of schematism to apply concepts to images

# Recap on terms

- **Categories**: concepts of the pure understanding, which provide rules or laws for how we think
- **Synthesis**: what the mind does in combining its representations into a judgement (AKA *combination*)
- **Transcendental apperception**: self-conscious experience. Every representation involves the 'I think' – an intellectual proof of the subject
- **Schema**: a mediating representation between the understanding and sensibility, based in the imagination. A rule for how concepts apply to appearances. Schema enables us to connect images to concepts e.g. ..... = number 5.
- **Substance**: 'persistence of the real in time', the unchanging thing through which we can observe what is unchangeable in time (Analogies 1)
- **Causality**: 'the real upon which ... something else always follows'. What enables us to perceive alteration or change in time. It also requires representing in space a chain of events (Analogies 2 and 3)



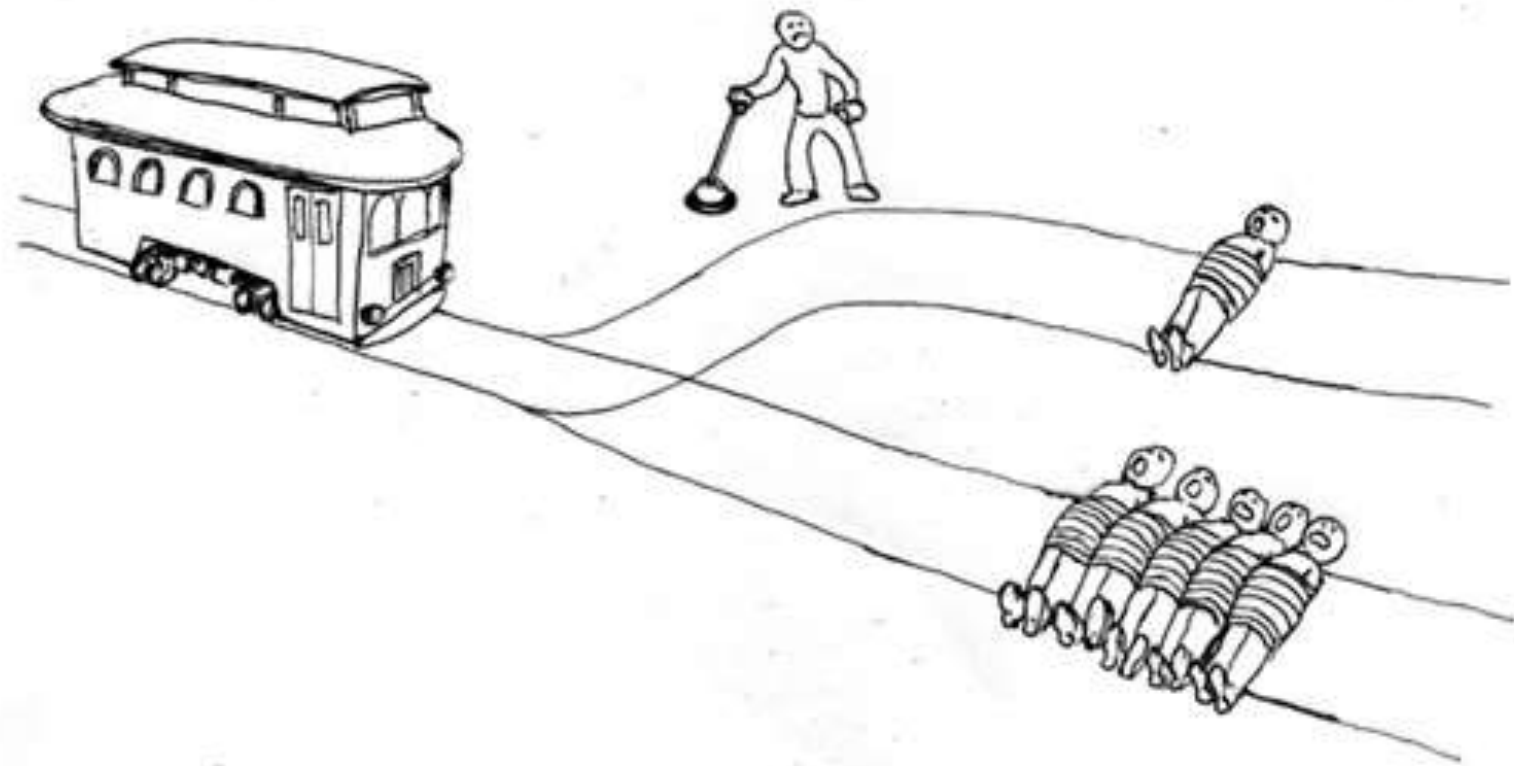
‘The I think must be able to accompany all of my representations’ (B132).

‘it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness that it is possible for me to represent the identity of the consciousness in these representations itself’ (B133)

Each representation incorporates the possibility I could recognise it as mine, ‘otherwise I would have as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious’ (B134)

# Transcendental Apperception

- Experience also necessarily involves some kind of logical self-consciousness – transcendental apperception
- For a representation to be mine, it must be attributed to a single subject – the ‘I think’. Representation necessarily involves subjectivity.
- Each representation involves and results from apperception: the process of synthesising representations into a unified picture results in consciousness
- It is the underlying unity and original consciousness itself that precedes all intuitions and representations my ‘self’ arises from my experience having an invariable structure to it
- Self is therefore not an immaterial substance, a continuity of consciousness nor a bundle. It is an intellectual and not empirical awareness, giving us the identity of something (the ‘I think’), but we cannot determine what.
- To perceive a bundle or consciousness presupposes an ‘I’ Hume overlooks.



*Ought implies can*: since the principles of practical reason 'command that these actions ought to happen, they must also be able to happen ... the principles of pure reason have objective reality in their practical use, that is, in the moral use' (A807/B836)

'Do that through which you will become worthy to be happy' (A809/B837)

'to make oneself as subject of freedom a noumenon but at the same time, with regard to nature, a phenomenon in one's own empirical consciousness' (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:6)

The moral agent 'judges, therefore, that he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it and cognizes freedom within him, which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown' (5:30)

# Kantian morality

- Reason supplies us with knowledge of the moral law, which in obeying out of duty, we act freely and autonomously
- Free will is viable through an 'intelligible causality' separate to nature, separating 'laws of freedom' from 'laws of nature'
- Reason guides us to act morally, through imagining ourselves as free
- Good moral actions stem from the will, not the consequence
- The categorical imperative demands that we universalise our moral actions and treat human beings as ends
- The sum of all moral duties is to pursue the highest good, to realise an ideal world, which involves belief in God and the soul's immortality

- *“Just as science, using reason and empirical approaches, has made enormous progress to the benefit of humankind, so in a parallel way, philosophy too can rely on reason and empirical approaches to evolve universal moral laws for the welfare of all.”*
- *“Having established that the foundation of morality is independent of the sensory world of space, time, animal desires and everyday survival, Kant raises the question: at its core, what does our moral awareness assume? His answer is that it requires the power to choose. In other words, free will.”*

- Madhu

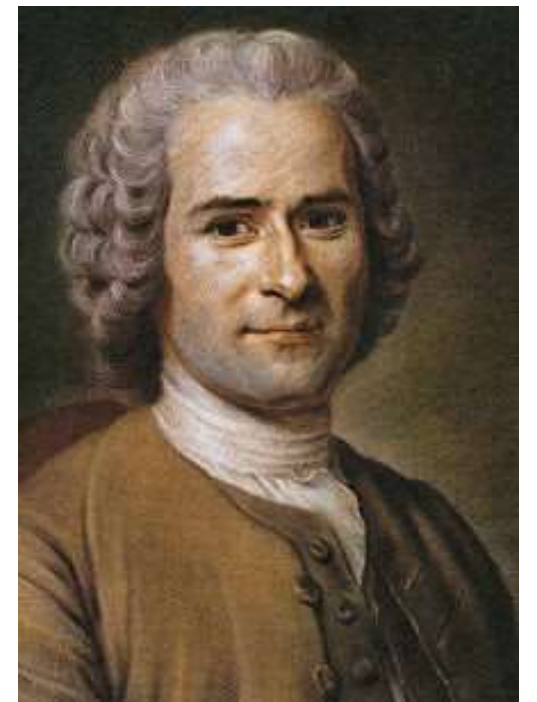




# Kantian aesthetics

- *Critique of Judgement* (1790) expands on faculty of judgement, introducing reflective judgements. Judgements bridge theoretical and practical reason, the chasm between nature and freedom
- Kant seeks out the most universal form of judgement, which leads him to those based on pleasure, and those of beauty.
- Beauty has four moments: 1. Disinterested pleasure; 2. Universal validity; 3. Form of purposiveness; 4. Necessary pleasure.
- The sublime directs us back to the power of our reason, which can direct our sensible faculties to not feel fear in such circumstances. Nature cannot control our minds.
- Any perceived harmony in an artwork belongs not to the object itself, but in what I perceive. This mirrors his critical philosophy of the understanding, transcendental idealism – the truth of a given cognition is not in its object, but what its relation with the object demonstrates about that process of cognition





# Politics of right

‘Every action which by itself or by its maxim enables the freedom of each individual’s will to coexist with the freedom of everyone else in accordance with a universal law is *right*’

‘let your external actions be such that the free application of your will can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law’.  
 (“Introduction to the Theory of Right”)

‘A constitution allowing the *greatest possible human freedom* in accordance with laws which ensure *that the freedom of each can co-exist with the freedom of all the others*’ (*Critique of Pure Reason*, “Of Ideas in General”).

‘a violation of right on one place of the earth is felt in all’ (“Toward Perpetual Peace”)

# Kant in all

- Thank you everyone for your hard work and diligence over the term. Kant is one of the most difficult and obscure philosophers and I have been so impressed by what you've managed to understand and accomplish
- Next term there will be a course on Hegel and the Idea of the Dialectic beginning 9<sup>th</sup> January, running for 12 weeks on Mondays at 15:30, which I will be teaching
- If you have any further questions or would like to discuss Kant further, or what's required for the Hegel course, please do contact me over the break: [dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk](mailto:dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk)

