



Kant and Critical Philosophy

Week 4. 10th October 2016

Class recap

- Explain why Kant proposes a 'Copernican' revolution in philosophy
- Understand the difference between *synthetic* and *analytic* judgements
- Discuss Kant's synthetic a priori judgements in relation to Hume and Leibniz
- Determine what Kant means by pure reason, transcendental idealism, and why his is a transcendental philosophy
- Work through B Preface and the Introduction

Class aims

- Explain the synthetic a priori
- Understand Kant's definitions of time and space as inner and outer sense
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argument from geometry
- Discuss with each other to what extent space and the world around us is really 'real'...!
- Grasp what Kant means by transcendental idealism

Synthetic a priori: recap

- Analytic: predicate in subject; explicates, no new knowledge
(all bachelors are unmarried men)
- Synthetic: predicate not in subject; amplifies, creates new knowledge
(some bachelors are old)
- Synthetic a priori: universal and necessary, prior to experience, but creates new knowledge
e.g. all events have causes
(there is no predicate of causes in the subject 'event' says Kant)

Demonstrating synthetic a priori

$$7+5 = 12$$

- All that 7+5 contains is the unification of two numbers (7 and 5)
- It therefore requires synthesising another concept, that of the number 12, and that of addition, to reach the answer
- ‘Without getting help from intuition we could never find the sum by means of the mere analysis of our concepts’ (B16)
- Thus mathematics (and natural science) rest on synthetic a priori

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**: beyond 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

Placing reason within limits



- 'Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind' (A51, B75)
- A synthesis of concepts (form) and intuitions/sense-experience (concepts) is necessary for synthetic a priori
- The 'togetherness principle': intuitions and concepts are interdependent for constituting objectively valid judgements.
- Metaphysics has a 'predisposition' to speculate about what is beyond possible experience (intuition), pulling it towards pure reason or concepts alone

Placing reason within limits

- Thus metaphysics can become a science through determining the concepts comprising our cognition, and their basis in intuitions
- *What is the significance of Kant's project?*
 - Provides an a priori foundations for a modern scientific view, through examining the ability of human cognition to acquire such knowledge
 - Makes human thought autonomous, active in constructing its own knowledge, a capacity to reflect on and answer to our own cognitions
 - *What else?*

Transcendental: beyond experience

- A transcendental argument goes beyond empirical enquiry, through establishing a priori conditions of experience.
- It leads to '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).
- Kant will argue for 'transcendental idealism': that whilst space and time are not real in themselves, they are features of subjective experience and in this sense are empirically real. But they are still 'ideal', as they are not things in themselves.

	Empirical	Pure
Sensibility	Sense data or 'intuitions' Black and white fluffy thing	Space and time 'a priori forms of intuition'
Understanding	Concepts used in judgements This is a panda bear	Categories: substance, causality 'a priori concepts of understanding'
Reason	Scientific investigations 'All pandas are animals'	Ideas: God, world, soul Limited to regulative use in knowledge

CPR aim: Transcendental philosophy

- *Transcendental* refers not to knowledge not of objects themselves, via experience, but *knowledge of how objects can appear to us*
- *Transcendental* = knowledge of a priori conditions of possible experience
- Kant distinguishes between intuitions (sense-data) that belong to the faculty of sensibility
- ... and concepts which belong to the faculty of understanding
- *Transcendental philosophy* therefore demonstrates that legitimate empirical knowledge requires application of categories to intuitions, guided by regulative Ideas
- This week we'll learn about intuitions, next week categories...

Transcendental Aesthetic: overview

- To know how objects appear to us, Kant turns to the capacity of sensibility
- Confusingly, 'aesthetic' refers to the Greek for sensibility.
- *Transcendental aesthetic* is therefore an account of the sensible conditions of objects to us, independent of the understanding
- All objects are given to us through time and space
- They provide the form of sensible experience.

Transcendental Aesthetic: overview

It makes two key arguments:

1. Time and space are inner and outer sense
 2. Time and space are forms of a priori intuition or appearance.
- This means they cannot give knowledge of absolute reality, or things in themselves. All they offer are appearances.
 - This will present a confusing and difficult implication for Kant's metaphysics: *the two-objects/aspects problem*

Sensibility: definitions

- **Intuition**: an object's being *given* to us; the way a cognition relates to an object
- **Sensibility**: the capacity through which an object is given to us. Allows us to acquire representations, via how we are affected by an object
- Note: for thought to occur, there must first be intuitions, and this requires sensibility.
- Yet intuitions are *thought* in the understanding, which produces concepts.
- *Think back to Kant's Copernicanism*: why would sensibility be necessary for thought?
- 'But all thought ... must ... ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is no other way in which objects can be given to us.' (A19/B33)

Definitions

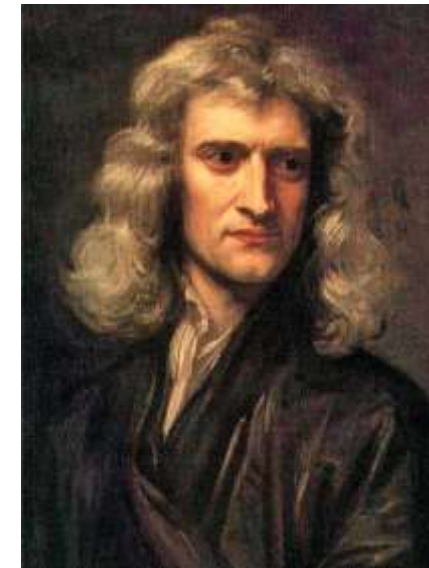
- **Sensation**: the effect of an object on our capacity for representation
- **Empirical**: an intuition whose object comes through sensation. Its undetermined object is an...
- **Appearance**: that which gives it order is its *form*; and what corresponds to how we sense it is its *matter*.
- *Form* is given a priori, and indicates a capacity to order sensation, independent of it; *matter* is given a posteriori.
- **Pure** representations and intuitions involve nothing belong to experience. Doesn't need an actual object of sensation to determine general principles of the mind. Kant will explore this later.

Summary of argument in TA

- There are two pure forms of sensible intuition as principles of a priori cognition, space and time (A22/B36)
- They are both empirically real but also transcendently ideal...
- But time and space are not absolutely real in themselves (vs Newton)
- The subject is necessarily limited to time and space, and cannot perceive anything beyond these, such as things in themselves
- Time and space are inner and outer sense
- Reliance on argument from geometry

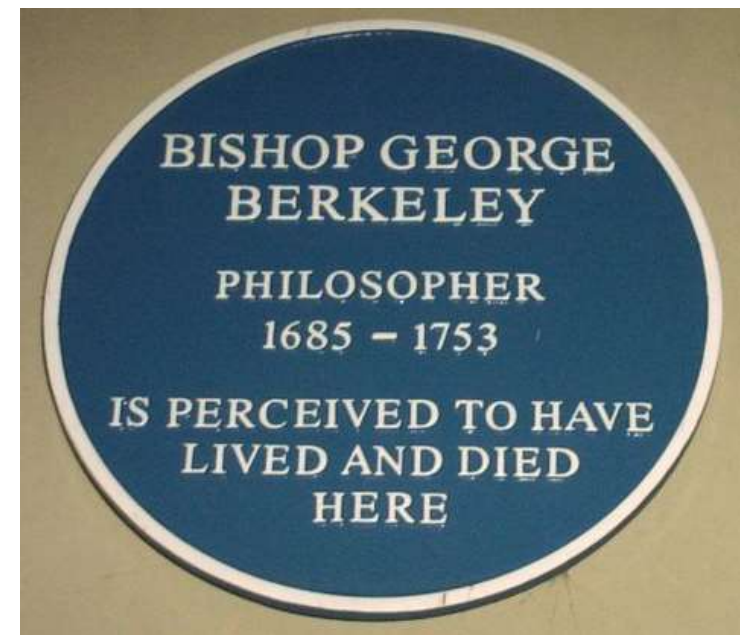
Problem: how do we perceive space?

- Is space a real thing that exists independently of our minds? Or is it instead entirely dependent on how we think?
- In Kant's context, this divide was between Newton and Leibniz.
- Newton argued that time and space were absolutely real, whereas Leibniz claimed that they are innate to the mind, indicating only relations between things
- Yet if they are real, this contradicts experience, as they are eternal and infinite without anything in them being real. Yet of course they are necessary to comprehend what is real... (A40/B57)
- If they are merely mental, this contradicts mathematics, which relies on spatial representations which must occur first through empirical experience, not the imagination



Berkeley's idealism: problem

- If a tree falls in the forest and no-one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?
- Bishop Berkeley rejected Locke's empiricism. He asked how the mind could truly perceive reality when it was limited by a 'veil of perception' – the mind's senses and ideas, without sufficient proof of an actually existing external world
- *Esse is percipi*: to be is to be perceived. All we have is our perceptions
- It is impossible to conceive of objects without the mind. It is impossible to conceive of an unperceived thing. Hence...



What maintains existence?



Does the desk disappear when you leave the room? What exists beyond immediate perception? (PHK §3)

“I refute Berkeley thus”, said Dr. Samuel Johnson as he kicked a rock. What was his point?

Everything exists as ideas that are perceived, but human minds are passive. It requires God, a supreme power, who produces ideas and continually affects us with them.

'[A]ll those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that **their being is to be perceived or known**; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created **spirit**, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit'.

– Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* §6.

Inner and outer sense

How can Kant prove that space exists?

- His argument is called *transcendental idealism*: we have a capacity to sense things, which imposes an order on our representations
- Space is *outer sense*, a pure intuition of our minds through which we can represent objects externally, through form, relations, etc.
- Time is *inner sense*, the intuition by which the mind 'intuits itself' and represents objects internally, through succession (A23/B37)
- Thus space and time are not actual nor simply illusions; they are the a priori grounding which makes sense-experience possible.

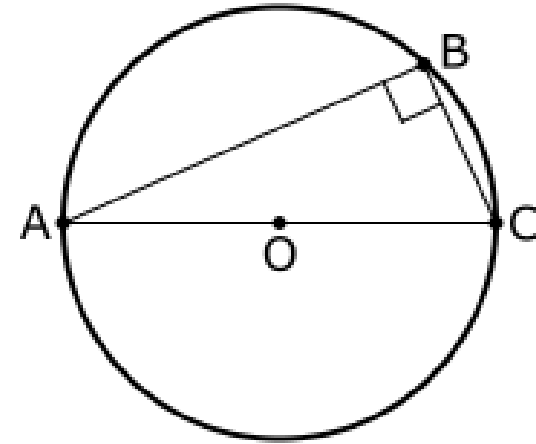
What does Kant mean by space?

He gives five arguments, four which interlink (metaphysical).

1. Space is merely a form of intuition, which is the necessary ground for sensations (A24/B39)
2. It is the condition of possibility for the mind to represent appearances: we cannot imagine an object without space
3. It is single and all-encompassing: there are not multiple spaces
4. It is infinite

Argument for geometry - breakdown

- *Take a look at the excerpt... what is Kant trying to argue?*
- Geometric knowledge is synthetic a priori.
- Yet if geometrical truths were acquired *a posteriori*, as Hume claims, then they wouldn't be universal and necessary, but only perceptions, dependent on particular sense-experience for verification.
- Geometry is also a knowledge of space, a priori, but one that accounts only for the structure our minds impose on experience
- Thus... Space is not a property of things as they exist independently, but of our minds (A26/B42)
- It is the form and subjective condition or possibility of external sense-perception.



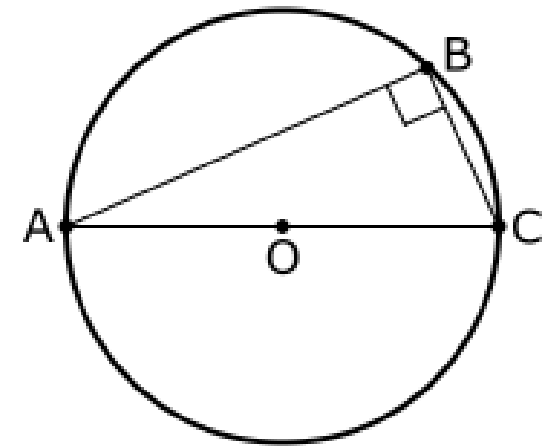
Transcendental ideality of space

- Space does not structurally represent things as they are, only as they appear to us
- This leads to a distinction between how things appear to us (human knowledge) and how things really are in themselves (impossible)
- Space is empirically real, as it accounts for what is given to us externally as objects, from the human standpoint, and is valid for this.
- It is transcendently ideal in grounding the possibility of experience, but not things in themselves.
- Thus space is objectively real from the human standpoint, but subjectively ideal from a transcendental standpoint – they interrelate.

- 'We therefore assert the empirical reality of space (with respect to all possible outer experience), though to be sure at the same time its transcendental ideality, i.e., that it is nothing as soon as we leave out the condition of the possibility of all experience, and take it as something that grounds the things in themselves' (A28/B44)
- 'if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general, then all the constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us' (A42/B59).
- 'What objects may be in themselves, and apart from all this receptivity of our sensibility, remains completely unknown to us. We know nothing but our mode of perceiving them - a mode which is peculiar to us. ... Even if we could bring our intuition to the highest degree of clearness, we should not thereby come any nearer to the constitution of objects in themselves.' (A42-3/B59-60)

Criticisms of the argument from geometry

- *Geometry is empirical*: Theory of relativity and 20th century physics argues, convincingly, that geometry is based on empirical physics, not a priori
- *Neglected alternative*: Why can't space be a property of our own minds *and* an actually existing, mind-independent thing in the world?
- *What else comes to mind?*



Two Objects critique

- It supposes two classes or worlds of objects: appearances vs things in themselves.
- If all we experience are the former, then we are cut off from reality and lost in scepticism, or *solipsism*.
- It is contradictory to claim things in themselves are absolutely real and the basis for everything else, yet also that we cannot know them – how does Kant then know that they are *not* spatial and temporal?
- How can things in themselves be a source of sensory data if they exist outside of space and time, and hence causality?
- A limited defence comes in the Two Aspects view, that they are two attributes of the same objects in one world...
- *What do you find more convincing?*

Arguments for time

These are very similar to space...

1. Time *grounds* the possibility of succession and simultaneity, allowing them to be represented prior to experience (A31/B46)
2. It is their universal condition of possibility – we cannot think intuitions without time
3. It is strictly universal, which couldn't be granted a posteriori
4. In the 'transcendental exposition' (A32/B48), only time can explain succession e.g. motion

It is the a priori formal condition of appearances in general, both internal and external (A34/B51). It is again transcendently ideal, empirically real

Round-up

‘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)

Implications for transcendental idealism

- ‘the general problem of transcendental philosophy – how are synthetic *a priori* propositions possible?’
- Space and time are simply forms of intuition and are not real in themselves...
- But what enables intuitions to become the content for knowledge?
- Kant needs to outline how the ‘categories’ of the understanding, guided by regulative Ideas, lead to knowledge
- Thus the CPR will move on to explain judgements, categories, self-consciousness, and the conditions for knowledge

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Reading for next week

Please read the second chapter of the “Transcendental Analytic”, titled “On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding”, and also known as the Transcendental Deduction.

If using the Cambridge edition, please read the B version (pp. 219-226, 246-266)

The excerpt we’ll be discussing is pp. 222-5 (A90-95/B122-127)