Lecture notes on Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

Delivered by Peter Rickman during Autumn 1995

Preface

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* introduces his *critical philosophy*. His philosophical approach is 'critical' in the sense that he is making a critical analysis of the power and limits of our mind and our ability to understand the world we find ourselves in. As such, Kant is the founder of a philosophical tradition of critical analysis that has included many other important philosophers since, such as Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein.

I found Peter Rickman's lecture series, delivered in 1995 at the City University in London UK, on the Critique of Pure Reason of immense value in trying to understand Kant's work. It is my view that Kant's work is so subtle and revolutionary that one needs the guidance of a good teacher to properly appreciate it and to avoid the common misunderstandings. Since I had these notes in electronic form, I thought they may be of benefit to others so I have published them here. I thank Peter Rickman for his permission to make the notes available and for his helpful comments and suggestions. I hope they may help others who are trying to understand Kant's great work and answer some of the riddles of philosophy.

These are my notes of the lectures, so I should make it clear that any flaws and errors in them are mine. If you spot any, I can be contacted at the email address below.

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Lecture 1: INTRODUCTION

The Text

In these lecture notes, we shall examine the ideas in Immanuel Kant's groundbreaking philosophical work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant published this work as a first edition in 1781, but followed it up in 1787 with a substantially revised second edition. Norman Kemp Smith's translation (1929) is the recommended text for English readers. It contains the full text from both editions and includes a standard indexing of the works using A and B page numbers for the first and second edition respectively.

This course will deal mostly with that part of the work called the *Transcendental Analytic*. This section is considered to be the most important part of the book. However, it should be noted that it is far from the only important part.

There is some difficulty in translating from the original old eighteenth century German that Kant used. Additionally, Kant's particular writing style can be awkward and difficult to understand. He tends to be very exact and to carefully qualify his statements. This can lead to problems when reading the Critique.

Kant uses some words in a very specialized and technical sense. For example, the words 'form', 'intuition' and 'synthesis' all have a special meaning. The reader should bear this in mind when reading the Critique.

Kant worked on the contents of the Critique of Pure Reason over a period of ten years, gathering dispersed notes and papers across that time. After these ten years Kant seemed to be concerned that he was getting old and that he may not complete his philosophical work before he died. Thus he spent just a single year putting all his notes and thoughts together in the Critique of Pure Reason. Some have considered the overall work to be a little divergent. Also, the quality of Kant's writing seems to have suffered because he felt rushed.

Even though Kant's writing style may be difficult, it is generally accepted that the concepts and ideas behind his words are full of clarity. Goethe is quoted as having said of Kant's work that reading it was like "walking into a lighted

room". Many critics have found flaws with the Critique of Pure Reason, yet it remains a watershed in the history of philosophy.

Historical Background

It should be remembered that the work of a philosopher is both personal and a product of and response to the age within which he or she lives.

Kant was born in 1724 in East Prussia during a time of war, the son of a poor saddler. His family were of protestant Scottish descent. Because of his low background, Kant struggled his way into his position at the University of Königsberg. He first joined the university in 1740 as a student, from 1746 he was a private tutor, became an assistant lecturer in 1755 and in 1770 a professor. He died in 1804. He spent his whole life in Königsberg.

He lived most of his life whilst
Frederick the Great reigned as
King of Prussia. Frederick the Great was considered an enlightened autocrat, encouraging free-thought and philosophical speculation.

Kant was described by others as a happy and witty man throughout his life. His lectures were entertaining and very popular. On the other hand, Kant was a bachelor who lived a mechanical life and required punctuality in all his engagements. He was also very health-conscious.

Kant wrote many essays on natural philosophy prior to the Critique, but it was the Critique that made his reputation as a great philosopher. The first edition of the Critique of
Pure Reason was published in 1781. After this date, Kant wrote several other important books including the Critique of Practical Reason.

When Kant was writing the Critique of Pure Reason he was very much aware of the works of philosophers before him. Much of the book is addressed to the works of Hume, Berkeley and Locke, delivering a refutation of their empirical philosophies. In particular, the second edition offers a refutation of idealism. Kant's main goal in this work was to demonstrate that empiricism and rationalism - i.e. the sense and the reason - both necessarily complement each other.

Key Concepts

1. The Aesthetics and Intuition

The first part of the Critique contains an analysis of the *Aesthetics*. This word, as commonly used, has only an approximate meaning to that intended by Kant. Although we usually use it to mean an appreciation of beauty and love of the arts, Kant never intended this particular meaning. In the Critique of Pure Reason, *aesthetics* simply refers to the study of the senses as directly given through perception.

Kant divides the aesthetic into two parts: an intuitive aspect and a conceptual aspect. That is, any sense perception is given as raw sense data, but organised and understood through conceptualization.

The word '*intuition'* does not have the meaning we usually attach to it as instinctive knowledge. In Kant's technical sense, 'intuition' means the reception of raw sense data of an experience, prior to the application of any concept. 'Intuition' is the accepted English translation of the German 'Anschauung' which gives a much better sense of Kant's usage as a 'view' or a 'looking at'.

Intuition is intended to refer to that which is just given: the state of just observing something, without any conceptualization of the data. There is no other intended meaning behind the use of this word.

2. Kant's Copernican Revolution

One of the key consequences of
Kant's philosophy is his Copernican Revolution. This is mentioned in the preface to the second edition (although nowhere else).

Copernicus was a sixteenth century astronomer who suggested replacing the old Ptolemaic astronomic model, where the Sun and all the heavenly bodies are viewed as orbiting about the Earth, with the new model where the planets, including Earth, are viewed as orbiting the Sun. This new model turns out to be the far simpler and more accurate model and eventually overturned the Ptolemaic model in science. Although, in its day, it was a revolutionary theory and Copernicus was much condemned by the Church in Rome.

Kant's parallel theory was to view the human mind not as a passive vessel that experiences events, but rather as active in cognition. So, instead of viewing the mind as the passive centre of observation, Kant viewed the mind as an active participator in observation. More radically, the consequence of this theory was that the mind creates and shapes its experiences. The world that we know is very much a product of the organizing effort of the mind. How Kant arrived at these conclusions will be explored in this series of lectures.

3. The Nature of Knowledge

Another word which is given only an approximate English translation is *Understanding* from the German 'Verstand'. Kant intended this word to refer simply to the use of reason and concepts in knowledge.

Kant's approach to the analysis of knowledge is based very much on common sense. He did not believe there was any value in doubting our observations. If we see a tree, then we see a tree. There is no doubting it. Thus Kant believed that to postulate sceptical theories, such as there is really no external world, was a bottomless pit that discredits philosophy.

Kant argued that we cannot seriously doubt our knowledge. The real task is to explore what is involved in having knowledge. Kant looked to discover the conditions that must be fulfilled for us to have knowledge. He saw this as an analytic problem that could be solved by reason.

Kant asks if any of our knowledge has a privileged position. For example, our notion of causality between events in the universe seems to be presupposed. That is, it is a notion about the universe, yet it does not need to be shown to be true by empirical evidence. According to Kant, it seems to be necessarily true that every event must have a cause.

Kant categorized our knowledge as follows:

- A statement is *analytic* if the predicate of the subject is contained in the subject. For example, tautologies are analytic statements. For example, 'every bachelor is unmarried' is true since the predicate 'unmarried' is contained in the subject 'bachelor'.

- If a statement is not analytic, then the predicate of the statement says something new about the subject, thus we call such statements *synthetic*.

- A statement is true *a priori* if its truth is determined before experience, or without reference to experience.

- A statement is true *a posteriori* if its truth follows after experience. That is, its truth can only be determined with reference to empirical evidence.

All analytic statements are a priori on the grounds that they are logical truths that are true regardless of our experience. They do not require empirical evidence to be proved.

All a posteriori statements are synthetic, as they provide added information from experience, which was not there prior to the experience. So, for example, if I observe a particular chair is red then this is synthetic as the predicate 'is red' is not in the notion of the subject 'chair'.

The question remains, however, whether there are any synthetic statements that are a priori. Kant argued that there are and gives the idea of causality as an example of this.

4. Synthetic A Priori Statements

Kant argued that philosophy was at its most interesting when dealing with synthetic a priori statements.

In fact, philosophy must be synthetic a priori.

This was counter to the views of many empiricists of the time. Hume denied that synthetic a priori statements were possible. However, Kant challenged this by arguing that ironically Hume's denial is itself synthetic a priori (this argument anticipated the similar argument used against the logical positivist Verification Principle later this century: how do you verify the Verification Principle?).

Kant argued that the synthetic a priori was essential because it was a part of our cognitive equipment. Synthetic a priori truths are those essential truths that are necessary conditions for knowledge to be possible at all.

This is where Kant's Copernican Revolution comes in. The mind is active in knowledge, and the synthetic a priori is how we have that active role.

5. Phenomena and Noumena

The *phenomenal* world refers to the world as it appears to each of us from our own personal perspective. For Kant, the real world is just this phenomenal world that we perceive and conceptualize.

We can broaden our perspective to the general human point of view, and it is from this position that we have an appreciation for the notion of objectivity. The objective world is constructed from our human and cultural consensus and shared knowledge. Yet ultimately, we cannot break out of our own individual perspective. We always perceive our world from our own individual point of view.

The phenomenal world is in contrast to what Kant calls the *noumenal* world consisting of *things-in-themselves* that exist for themselves independently of our perceiving them. The thing-in-itself is the thing beyond our experience, yet it is what our phenomenal knowledge is about.

Kant argues that we can never know this noumenal world. It is forever out of our reach because we cannot step out of our perspective on the world.

A consequence of Kant's theory of phenomena and noumena is that the world we know and live in is the phenomenal world that our own minds organize and synthesize from the multiplicity of data. If I see a tree, then that tree exists because it can be seen (and touched, etc.). It is essentially phenomenal, not noumenal. Kant supposes a thing-in-itself, beyond our experience, which gives rise to the phenomenon of the tree, but we cannot call this a tree-in-itself since the application of concepts such as ‘tree’ is limited to phenomena. Beyond our own experience, their application makes no sense. There can be no tree-in-itself.

Thus the limits of the world are only as limited as my ability to actively conceptualize and understand the world. This is reminiscent of the line "I never had the blues until I knew the words".

We have only touched the surface of this topic. More will be said about the noumenal world in later lectures.

Lecture 2: TRANSCENDENTAL KNOWLEDGE

The Transcendental Deduction

The transcendental deduction is a method which is characteristic of Kant's arguments in the Critique of Pure Reason.

By the word *transcendent*, Kant means that which is beyond experience. By *transcendental* he intends knowledge about our having knowledge, or "our mode of cognition". Thus the two words have slightly different meanings for Kant.

The *transcendental deduction* is a logical deduction from the two premises

(1) Only if A then B,
(2) B from which we can infer

(3) A.

Kant uses this syllogism to deduce the necessary conditions of experience. Thus premise (2) denotes our having an experience and premise (1) is the necessary condition for having that experience. Since both are true, the transcendental element A in step (3) must follow.

Kant uses this method to discover the nature of knowledge or that which is pre-supposed in our having knowledge.

It is important to understand that Kant's method is deductive. It does not involve psychological analysis, which is empirical, at least in the modern sense. Since part of Kant's task is to discover the faculties of human understanding, it is tempting to refer to Kant's philosophy as a 'transcendental psychology', but this would be misleading. Philosophy cannot make use of empirical methods as this would lead to a vicious circle. That is, since we are trying to discover and justify how we come to have empirical knowledge, it is no use trying to use empirical knowledge to do this.

An example of transcendental deduction, given by Kant, is the necessity of the unity of the self across experience. That is, only if there is a single unified observer across the whole of an experience, can it be experienced. So, take

the example of the temporal experience of a piece of music. The syllogism would be:

(1) Only if there is a unity of the self across time, can I experience music,
(2) I can experience a piece of music therefore

(3) There is a unity of the self across time.

Pure and Empirical Knowledge

Concepts are referred to as “pure” if they are abstracted from experience and are not directly empirical in nature. This is the case for transcendental knowledge.

Kant states that "though all our knowledge begins in experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience". In this Kant is alluding to transcendental knowledge. Transcendental knowledge is not of experience itself, but it cannot be true without experience.

So in the transcendental deduction, described in the previous section, unless premise (2), experience, is true, we cannot conclude the transcendental premise (3). But Kant also argues that without the mind’s ability to organize and conceptualize experience, we cannot have any experience.

Thus on the one hand Kant is conceding to the arguments of empiricist thinkers, such as Hume, who claim that all knowledge begins in experience, but on the other hand he also concedes to rationalists, such as Leibniz, that ideas and thought are essential to knowledge. Kant's theory is a synthesis of these two philosophical camps.

Kant provides some terms to encompass this theory.

- *Sensibility* is the means by which we have intuitions. Sensibility is receptive, in

  that intuitions are immediately given to mind.

- *Understanding* is our mental faculty to *conceptualize* the manifold of intuitions given by sensibility. Understanding is an active and imaginative process of mind.

Both sensibility and understanding are needed to make sense of and experience the world.

- All phenomena of experience are given in terms of *matter* and *form*. The matter is the raw sensation and form is the way we grasp that matter. For example, space is the form of a visual experience and colour and brightness are the matter.

Kant distinguishes form from concept. Form is the structure by which we perceive phenomena, whilst concepts are the means by which we understand and categorize phenomena to gain knowledge. Form is part of the intuition, whilst concepts may be learnt and are applied to intuition to make sense of them.

The Forms of Space and Time

Space and time are the forms by which we perceive the world. Space and time are neither empirical data, nor concepts. They are the way we experience the world.

We can imagine space and time independently of experience thus they stand beyond experience.

Kant argues that they are not learnt, therefore they are not concepts. That is, the way we use concepts is driven by experience, so one culture may conceptualize the world differently to another. Yet space and time are necessary forms in any culture.

Furthermore, spaces and moments of time are part of the notion of space and time. This is not the case for concepts (e.g. the concept of horses does not contain particular examples of horses themselves).

Space and time are necessary conditions for our having experience. As such they do not need to be proved, beyond the simple fact that we have experiences.

Kant argues that space and time are empirically real, but by using our method of transcendental examination - characterized by Kant's Copernican Revolution - we also understand that space and time do not represent properties of things-in-themselves. Rather, they are part of the way that we perceive the world. This is an example of the distinction that Kant draws between *empirical objectivity* and *transcendental subjectivity*. It also demonstrates the unity of these two notions.

- Space and time have
  empirical objectivity since they are a necessary precondition for experiencing (empirically) the world objectively.
- Space and time have transcendental subjectivity since they are forms through which the mind understands the world.

Time is the continuity and ordering of experience. Space is the form of appearance. Space is not discursive: there is only one space. It is an infinitely given magnitude.

Geometry is the science for studying space and relations in space. As such geometry is synthetic a priori. This view is in contrast to the analytic school of mathematics that attempts to found all mathematics in logic.

It may be argued, against Kant, that space is *not* a necessarily given form. It may be argued that the development of non-Euclidean geometries shows how we can learn to conceptualize space in a different way and how Kant's own Euclidean view of space was itself limited. However, in Kant's defence, this claim can be countered by arguing that, nevertheless, there is a fundamental way we, as humans, perceive the world in space, and that this is not affected by modern developments. Thus, nonEuclidean geometries are cultural devices that we use to refine our understanding of the world at an objective level, not at the experiential level. The form of experience is still the basic spatial form that Kant was familiar with and we are all familiar with. This does not make non-Euclidean geometries less real, as such concepts are part of the way the world is, in the context of Kant's philosophy.

Lecture 3: LOGIC

Logical Methods

The understanding is our faculty to think about intuitions and so to form concepts. Kant states that understanding is essential since knowledge must always involve the two components: intuition and concept. "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (A51/B75).

Kant presents Logic as the science of the laws of understanding. He divides it into three categories: General Logic, Particular Logic, and Transcendental Logic.

- *General Logic* is the study of the understanding in general. That is, understanding of empirical intuitions in forming concepts.

(1) *Particular Logic* is the logic that pertains to a particular area of knowledge. For example, there would be a logic of scientific discovery. Such logics are *organons* for these fields of knowledge; that is, they are the rules and methods used in these fields. Kant says that Particular Logic is descriptive and analytic. It does not precede its subject; it is a reflection of the methodology of a mature subject area.

- *Transcendental Logic* is the study of pure understanding, without reference to experience. Thus Transcendental Logic is the science of the pure concepts of understanding. A consequence of this is that Transcendental Logic is the study of the origin, the extent, and the objective validity of pure understanding.

The philosopher is mainly interested in the Transcendental Logic.

Kant makes reference to the *Dialectic* method of logic. He describes it as an attempt to infer empirical truth using pure logic. He dismisses the Dialectic as a logic of illusion and sophistry. Thus, in the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant makes reference to the Dialectic only as a critique of the method.

Instead, Kant proposes the *Analytic* as the proper method of logic. The Analytic is the method of dissecting our faculty of understanding and reason into their elements. Kant is not interested in the analysis of concepts in

general. This is not the proper study of philosophy. Kant means to analyse only those concepts that are necessarily in the nature of reason and knowledge. Thus philosophical analysis should only be about the pure concepts of the understanding, free from the empirical conditions attached to them.

In answer to the question "What is truth?", Kant asserts that some questions are just absurd since any answer to them would be nonsensical. This is one of them. It is part of the art of philosophy to distinguish the proper questions from the meaningless questions. Kant gives a simple definition of truth as the "accordance of the cognition with its object", and suggests that the question "What is truth?" is absurd (if it is not simply that definition) because its answer would require a universal criterion of truth that would contradict this definition which tells us that the truth of a cognition can only be ascertained with respect to its particular object, not by universal criteria. Note however that Kant does state that such a universal criterion is possible for the case of pure cognitions.

The Synthesis of Concepts

As intuitions rest on the function of affection upon the mind by sensibility, so concepts rest on the function of unifying and generalizing upon the manifold representations that are given to the mind.

This act of conceptualizing (i.e. the act of unification of disparate representations) is performed through the understanding mind, and is referred to as the *synthesis* of representations. *Imagination* is the faculty of mind which is able to generate syntheses and is essential for us to have knowledge at all. The imagination is able to hold concepts, compare representations, and perform such functions necessary for synthesis.

Kant introduces the notion of *judgement*. He does not intend the word to have any moral connotations. It is simply meant to refer to that knowledge about objects which is derived from concepts. For example, the statement "this is a table" is a judgement based on the concept "table" and the series of sensory intuition of which the "this" refers to.

Because the learning and application of concepts rest on a function of the mind, it follows that judgements are mediated knowledge. That is, they do not

have a direct connection to their subject. The function of understanding mediates between subject and judgement.

Notice that the range of concepts that are entertained in our minds is only limited by the power of imagination. However, the application of a concept is restricted by the representations given in the manifold intuitions. So, for example, it may be easy to imagine a unicorn, but this does not mean they can be found in the real world. However, it is because of this restriction, that it is wrong to characterize Kant as claiming that the world is in some way *constructed* by mind. It is more correct to say the world is *interpreted* by mind. Hence, Kant's philosophy is only a form of *idealism* in this weak sense.

The Categories

Kant presents the *categories* as the pure concepts of the understanding. He derives twelve such categories. They are "pure" in the sense that they do not refer directly to experience, but are concepts superimposed on empirical content.

The categories form the rules by which synthesis of concepts can be achieved. They are necessary conditions of acts of synthesis.

Kant derives the categories by using transcendental deduction. Thus the categories are necessary conditions for us to have knowledge.

It should be noted that the categories are not about the world of things-in-themselves (i.e. the noumenal world), but are only true of our understanding of the world. Thus the category of causality only holds true of the world as it is represented and within our understanding.

An apt metaphor is as follows. When fishing, the size of fish one catches is dependent on the size of hole in the net used to catch them. Thus big holes will mean only big fish are caught. However, just because we only catch big fish, it does not mean that there are no little fish in the ocean. Thus, Kant is saying that the categories are necessary conditions which are also restrictions on our knowledge of the world. We are necessarily bound, or trapped, within the categorical framework with which we come to know the world. Yet, there may be more to the world than what we are capable of perceiving.

Lecture 4: DEDUCTION OF THE CATEGORIES

Stages of Understanding

Kant describes the understanding as an intellectual faculty that is spontaneous, active and creative in forming concepts. Understanding is always mediate. Understanding can be contrasted with sensibility which is sensuous, passive and receptive. Yet the intuitions given by sensibility provide us with our immediate impressions of the external world.

The understanding is two-fold:

a) it is the faculty of conceptualization,
b) it is the faculty of judgement, being the application of concepts to objects.

Kant derives three stages to the process of understanding.

1.	Synopsis	Experiencing a manifold of intuitions together.
2.	Imagination	Bringing together, holding and comparing impressions across the range of our experience.
3.	Recognition	The representation of objects of experience by concepts.

These three stages are ordered so imagination is dependent on the synopsis, and recognition is dependent on the imagination, but they are simultaneous in time. The stages represent a logical dependency, not a temporal one.

These stages of understanding are true of the most complex scientific theories, and also of very simple statements, such as "This is a tree" formed when perceiving a tree.

The Method For Deducing The Categories

The rationalist philosophers thought of categories such as substance and causality as innate knowledge, the building blocks of all knowledge. The empiricists thought of them as rules or theorems that could be arrived at by empirical analysis. So, for example, Hume thought that causality was an empirical concept that we arrive at by habit. Kant disagreed with both of

these views. He says that the categories are a means by which we know things about the world. He used the transcendental deduction to establish them.

Kant was critical of the empiricists
Locke and Hume. He writes that Locke is "extravagant" in his attempt to show that pure concepts (ie categories) could be derived empirically. He writes of Hume that, though he realized correctly that they could not be derived so, he remained "sceptical" since he was unable to see that pure concepts could be deduced.

The transcendental deduction of categories is a subjective task, yet the deduction provides for the categories an objective validity.

Transcendental Synthesis of Apperception

Kant uses the term *apperception* to denote experience coming together in the *transcendental unity* of self-consciousness. He argues that this transcendental unity of experience must hold, since without it we would not be able to have any synthesis of intuitions. That is, for a manifold of separate intuitions to come together to form a single concept, there must be a unified cognitive self to perceive and bring together the disparate intuitions.

For example, when seeing an elephant, one may see four legs, a trunk, two ears, a body, a tail, and so on; that is, a disparate set of components. To see them all as a whole elephant requires that there be a single unified observer: the transcendental self. If the self were not unified it would be several distinct consciousnesses, each perceiving just one part of the presented phenomena and the concept of the whole elephant would never arise.

Note that this argument for the transcendental unity is achieved through the transcendental deduction. That is:

(1) Only if there is transcendental unity can synthesis of concepts be achieved,

(2) I experience the synthesis of concepts (e.g. the concept of the elephant) in the world, therefore,

(3) There is transcendental unity.

Kant's notion of the transcendental unity is the same as the 'I' we refer to that perceives and understands the world around it. Many have found this transcendental 'I' difficult to comprehend because it does not seem to relate to the bodily self that we are familiar with. It seems a ghostly, disembodied representation of the self. Indeed Kant considered the transcendental 'I' to be distinct from the bodily or the psychological person. We shall look at this more closely in the next lecture.

Substance and causality are two of the twelve categories derived by Kant. In these lectures we will focus on these two in particular, as these two concepts were of importance to the rationalist philosophers. It will be useful to compare Kant's approach to theirs.

Substance and causality are ways that we organize the data we receive through intuitions. They are only necessary for understanding. We can imagine the world of intuitions without them. However, Kant says that if we did not have and use these categories the world would appear to us as a rhapsody of experience, "something less than a dream".

Categories are rules which provide a relation between predicate and subject in a statement. For example, in the statement "All bodies are divisible" it is difficult to determine which is the predicate and which is the subject, for the statement could equally be written as "There exists a divisible thing which is a body, for all bodies." Which is the subject: "divisible thing" or "body"? By merely using logic we cannot tell. Only by using the categories can we decide, for the categories provide the proper relations between representations. So, with this example, based on the category of substance, we determine that "body" must be the subject, since it is substance, and "divisible" is thus the predicate.

Lecture 5: CONCEPTS AND OBJECTS

The Cognitive and Empirical 'I'

The transcendental synthesis of apperception is the *cognitive 'I'*, whereby all our intuitions are understood together meaningfully. The cognitive 'I' should not be confused with the person. A person is a psychological, thus empirical, self formed of memories, body image, personality and so on. This may be referred to as the *empirical 'I'*. In Descartes' sceptical philosophy, the assumption was made that the cognitive 'I' and empirical 'I' were one and the same thing. From Kant's point of view, this was the error which was the source of his scepticism.

A consequence of Kant's view is that the empirical 'I' is phenomenal, just like any other empirical object. Thus the empirical 'I' is only ourselves as we appear to ourselves. Ultimately, our real self remains an unknown noumenal self. For example, if I experience anger, it is only the impression of anger that I have. This outcome of Kant's view seems to be nonintuitive, in the sense that we believe that we have direct awareness of our own characteristics. However, it turns out that modern psychology, following Freud, has revealed that much of our self is not directly known to us, remaining below the directly conscious level. Quite often we cannot be sure what motivates us. This new insight vindicates Kant's analysis of the empirical self.

Many philosophers have been unhappy with Kant's, almost ghostly, concept of the cognitive 'I'. They have attempted to embody the concept. Marx formulated it in materialist terms: man's consciousness stands in relation to his economic and social conditions. Nietzsche stressed the animal side of the self and that our animal instincts always influence the way we think and understand the world. But for Kant, the cognitive 'I' is a pure notion which is independent of psychological state. For example, the cognitive 'I' does not get headaches or experience elation: these are properties of the empirical 'I'. The cognitive 'I' only stands in relation to our understanding. It is a necessary pre-supposition of knowledge.

The Limits of The Categories

The categories are the rules by which we understand the world given through intuitions. As such, they cannot be applied beyond experience to formulate knowledge. For example, Kant said that statements about God, not being

based on experience, could never be derived from the categories, and as such were not knowledge proper. He suggests that such statements are simply *beliefs*. This was in opposition to the rationalist philosophers who attempted to derive a proof of God's existence using dialectic logic. At the time, the Roman Church were unhappy with Kant's conclusion. However, later, other philosophers, like Kierkegaard, saw that Kant's conclusion was satisfactory since it would not be correct for there to be a proof of God. God must remain elusive and belief should be based on faith.

The Critique of Pure Reason was written by Kant in order to draw the boundaries of the range and limitations of reason. The second half of the Critique is more concerned with these limits and explores those aspects of reason whereby it is drawn into the logic of illusion. Kant stresses that there are perfectly meaningful statements and questions which have a nature that is fundamentally paradoxical, in that both their affirmation and their negation are false. He calls such statements *antinomies*. An example is 'Does time have a beginning?' which Kant shows is false for both the answer 'yes' and 'no'.

Objects

Objects are conceived through the faculty of understanding using the categories. It is by holding our experience in terms of objects that prevents our knowledge being haphazard and arbitrary. We receive intuitions and we synthesize these intuitions, through the categories, into concepts of objects. The categories are necessary a priori rules that impose the way that the intuitions must come together as objects in space. This act of synthesis is spontaneous.

As intuitions are compelled to be viewed in particular relations as objects by the categories, it follows that the categories are the intellectual form of all such knowledge about objects.

Events can be conceived in a similar way, except in relation to time, rather than space. We are compelled to conceptualize events in a certain way because of the rules of the categories in our faculty of understanding.

Thus objects are just a question of experience. Their sensuality is presented in the manifold of intuitions, yet their relational conception is given by the understanding.

Laws of nature about our world of objects and events are also formulated as the aggregate of experience, and this aggregation is achieved in the understanding. Thus, the laws of nature are not out there in the things-in-themselves, but only within the context of our understanding of the world. The categories provide the possibility of synthesis of the laws of nature. Thus, we derive the laws of nature from the manifold of intuitions in understanding. Thus, if laws of nature have any objectivity then it is only by consensus to agree to the truth of laws. Again, this is an example of objectivity through intersubjectivity (being the interaction by communication of disparate individuals).

This analysis of object shows that the unity of apperception arising from the concept of objects is an objective unity.

Lecture 6: APPLICATION OF THE CATEGORIES

The Limits of the Possibilities of Experience

The categories only have meaning and significance in relation to intuitions to which they apply. But, equally, the categories present conditions of the possibility of experience. This is because they are the rules, and the only rules, by which we can understand the world. Therefore it is only according to the categories that we can experience the world.

For example, if I propose the concept of intangible spirits that fly around in space around me, such a concept is unintelligible since it does not conform to the rules of categories. That is, there is no way for us to make sense of such a concept in empirical application.

This limitation is due only to the peculiarity of the categories that we have as humans. It is possible to imagine a race of other intelligent beings – somewhere else in the Universe – that might have a different set of categories.

Ultimately, then, the categories provide laws a priori, under which all our natural laws of the physical world must sit. Thus the categories are limits to our knowledge, and therefore also limits of our world.

The Faculties of Cognition

There are three faculties of cognition: the understanding, judgement and reason.

Understanding gives rise to concepts, the faculty of judgement gives rise to judgements and reason gives rise to conclusions. These three faculties are the proper area of study of general logic.

Kant terms the application of a concept to an object of intuition, the *subsumption* of the object under the concept. This subsumption is thus a *judgement*.

Kant says there is a distinction between knowing concepts and applying them in judgements. That is, the concept, in abstract, is distinct from the concept as applied in any concrete example.

Therefore it is possible to be learned, i.e. in possession of a great number of useful concepts, yet be stupid, in the sense that one finds it difficult or impossible to apply these concepts properly. Kant sets the greatest virtue in the ability to apply, as he suggests that it is always possible to learn more concepts, but never possible to learn how to apply them effectively. This is because the faculty of judgement is a purely innate quality.

Although empirical judgements require a level of innate ability to be constructed, Kant says that this is not true for *transcendental judgements*, which are judgements about the way we understand the world. Transcendental judgements can specify a priori the situations to which their concepts, ie the categories, can apply.

The Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding

This section (A137/B176) of the Critique of Pure Reason can be considered the inner sanctum of the work. It is the heart of the enterprise, within which Kant presents the necessary conditions by which we can transcendentally deduce the categories from experience.

There is a general philosophical problem about how we can represent concepts to ourselves, in the abstract, and further how we can come to recognise those abstract concepts in objects.

For example, there is no single image which will fit the general concept of a dog. I may imagine a dog, but this will always be a particular kind of dog, say an Alsatian or a Greyhound, and so on. Thus the general concept of a dog cannot be imagined. Nor is the concept a simple composite of these images because each of the images is only a particular example, and together are not sufficient to represent the concept of dog, in general, since there is bound to be many dogs we will not have seen.

Kant answers this question by saying that concepts exist through *schemas*, which are rules of how they may be applied. These schemas, then, are agents for the application of concepts to object. The schemas, themselves, must be pure; that is, they should not be empirical. But they must also bridge the gap between the intellectual concepts, in abstract, and sensuous objects. Thus the only candidates for this task are the pure forms of intuition, which are at once pure and also the structure of experience. In particular, Kant

argues that the pure form of time is the schema that mediates the subsumption of objects under concepts.

A consequence of this result is that it is only through time that we can understand and perceive the world, and so all our experience must by necessity be temporal.

This then is the first transcendental deduction, in two steps:

(1a) Only if we have the form of time, can we subsume objects under concepts;
(1b) Only if we can subsume objects under concepts, can we experience the world;

(2) We experience the world; therefore

(3) We must have the form of time.

Kant goes on to define the categories of substance and causality as further schemas in relation to time as follows.

- *Substance* is the permanence of objects within time.
- *Causality* is the following, or succession, of changing events in time.

It is only with respect to permanence that change can occur, for we know that changes must always occur in relation to a something which remains permanent. For example, if someone, say Fred, has a haircut, it is usual to say that Fred is something that is permanent, and the haircut is a change that has occurred to him. It makes no sense to say that since the haircut he is a different something from the Fred before the haircut. Nor does it make sense to refer to the haircut in the abstract without relation to Fred. That is, the haircut is essentially a process happening to Fred. Consequently substance, as defined as permanence of object, is a necessary condition of the experience of change.

Causality is this succession of changes in time. Without succession, it would be impossible to perceive time, for time is simply the form by which successive events are presented. This gives us the second transcendental deduction:

(1) Only if we have the categories of substance (as permanence) and causality (as succession of events), can we experience time;

(2) We have the form of time (from the first deduction); therefore

(3) We have the categories of substance and causality.

The schemata of the pure concepts (i.e. categories) are the only grounds for understanding. They are the necessary organising principles and it is only through schemata that we represent experience with concepts, in general, and not just as a collection of impressions.

Lectures 7 & 8: THE ANALOGIES

The Analogies

The three Analogies of the Critique of Pure Reason are proofs of the necessary conditions of the categories of substance, causality and community. Substance and causality formed the battlefield between rationalism and empiricism. The former taking them for granted as innate properties, and the latter denying their innate nature beyond experience. Kant shows that they are necessary conditions of the understanding, and so are a priori, but only meaningful in relation to experience, and so are synthetic.

The arguments used in the Analogies follow from an application of the pure forms of intuition. That is, the categories are derived as conditions of our experiencing space and time.

The first analogy is the Principle of the Permanence of Substance and explores the problem of envisaging time. How are we to present the notion of time in general? Kant shows that experience is always apprehended in succession. It follows from the act of knowing this succession follows from the rules provided by the categories of substance and causality. We just could not understand temporal events without these categories.

Kant points out that sometimes these sequences are not simply temporal, but are logical. For example, consider a heavy metal ball indenting a cushion. It is obvious that the causality is directed from the heavy ball to the cushion, and that this causality is immediate. According to Kant, the reason that we see the necessity of the heavy ball causing the indentation in the cushion, and not vice versa, is because of the categories we use.

The categories are only meaningful in relation to temporal experience. Thus, as the categories are our only forms of thought, it follows that we can only have experiences in time. Of the categories, substance is that which persists in time, and causality is the necessary ordering of changes in time.

The Analogies of experience show how the categories make experience possible. Therefore they are a central argument within Kant's system.

The Refutation of Idealism

Kant considered it important to give a refutation of material idealism. This is the idealism which follows from a materialist or empiricist account of the world. He identifies idealism in two ways:

1. the problematic idealism of Descartes;

2. the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley.

The first espouses a philosophy that is doubtful of the existence of external objects, and that such existence is indemonstrable. The second makes a stronger claim that the notion of external objects is wholly false and impossible.

Kant rejected both these sceptical conclusions.

Firstly, Kant rejected the empiricist foundations that lead to them. Empiricists claim that space and time is a structure external to perception. Within such a framework, it is easy to argue for dogmatic idealism. However, Kant shows that space and time are forms of sensibility and so the usual sceptical arguments do not follow.

Secondly, to counter Descartes' scepticism, Kant argues that without an objective world, there is no way to determine a subject experiencing and living in the world. That is, without a means to experience distinct objects, I cannot find myself in this world. Since it is clear that I do exist – and Descartes takes this as indubitable – it follows that an external objective world must exist too. That is, Kant shows that there must be an external world that brings forth the appearances in consciousness. Kant insists that there must be *something* that appears. We must be modest, knowing that we can see it only in a certain way, depending on our particular perspective, but it must be there as an objective reality nonetheless.

Kant's argument is straightforwardly dialectical. His reply to the Cartesian who says 'I know I exist but I am not sure about the table', is: 'If it were not possible to have empirical knowledge of the table, it would be impossible to have empirical knowledge of yourself as a subject of experience.

In other words you could not know the truth of, “I seem to see a table in front of me where previously there was no table” and other similar propositions.’

The ‘I’ need not be ‘self-conscious’ in the full sense that it involves recognizing others, as Strawson suggests. Arguably it needn’t even have a body, although Kant never considers this possibility. It is not even necessary for the ‘I’ to trace a single path in space and time. All that is necessary is the idea of limitation implied by a subjective view. The limitation implies a wider world within which we are limited.

Whatever the form of limitation, there will be a story to tell about how things seem to the subject at different times which coheres with an empirical theory about the places actually visited by the subject at those times. That theory in turn presupposes a theory about how things are both in the vicinity of the subject *and elsewhere*: a theory of the world as objects distributed in space.

(I am grateful to Dr. Geoffrey Klempner for these additional notes).

The Refutation of Idealism is one of the more important passages in the Critique. The proof is only half a page long (B275) but this brevity hides its underlying difficulty. It would seem that Kant himself was not totally satisfied with his account, since he added two pages of additional notes on the proof along with a long footnote in the
Preface (Bxl) about the refutation.

Lecture 9: NOUMENA

Noumena

Our knowledge is ultimately limited by our faculty of understanding through the categories. This culmination of Kant's philosophy distinguished it from the previous schools of empiricism and rationalism which conceived of no such limits. This limited knowledge is the everyday knowledge of our phenomenal world.

The phenomenal world is the limit of our knowledge. We cannot go beyond it to have knowledge of that which gives rise to phenomena: that is, the things-in-themselves. In the Critique of Pure Reason, there is an inconsistency in the use of the term 'noumena', but usually the term 'thing-in-itself' is meant to denote an object whilst 'noumena' is the thought of the thing-in-itself.

Thus the noumena stands as an intellectual marker of that which we cannot know, but stands beyond phenomena.

Many thinkers were unhappy with Kant's notion of the unknowable things-in-themselves. If we do not know anything about them, how do we know they are there at all? And, how do noumena relate to the phenomena? Since causality is a category applicable only in the world of experience, it means that causality cannot be proposed as the relation between the two. Unable to find satisfactory answers to these questions, some followers of Kant revised his notion of noumena.

The German idealist Hegel removed noumena altogether and took phenomena as the only reality within an Absolute spirit.

Others have taken noumena to be the objects of modern physics. However, this is not convincing, as ultimately evidence of the objects of physics, e.g. atoms, can still be given phenomenally, and we conceive concepts within the atomic realm. These properties were necessarily excluded from what Kant termed noumena. Kant's notion of the noumena was a negative one: noumena is the thinking about that ultimate reality that we can never know. It is the thought of the limitation of understanding.

Our phenomenal knowledge is transcendentally valid, but also objectively real. Yet, beyond the phenomena there must be a noumenal world of unknowable things-in-themselves.

Bibliography

This is a brief list of books I have found useful in understanding the Critique of Pure Reason.

- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (1929)

  The recommended English translation of both editions.

- Roger Scruton, *Kant* (OUP 1982)

  This very short book clearly introduces the main points of Kant's philosophy.

- P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (1966)

  A thorough commentary on the Critique of Pure Reason, providing insight into many areas of Kant's thought. However, Strawson's commentary is skewed by his unsympathetic analysis of the doctrine of transcendental idealism. Therefore, Strawson is at pains to understand Kant without reliance on that framework. However, arguably, without the context of transcendental idealism, the impact of Kant's work diminishes considerably.

- Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (1983)

  A thorough and highly technical account of Kant's transcendental idealism, providing both an interpretation and a defence.

- Matthew C. Altman, *A Companion to Kants Critique of Pure Reason* (2008)