

Kant philosophy of self

Philosophy



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For Kant, the self can be conscious of its own existence, but it cannot know itself as an object. To understand it, you have to understand the distinction between the phenomenal, noumenal, and Kant's understanding of sensuous intuition, and you have to apply these understandings to introspection. In order to have knowledge of the self, intuition is required in addition to thought because it highlights one of the parts of the critique of pure reason.

For Kant, knowledge of the self is knowledge of the self as appearance as all human knowledge is knowledge of appearances. So there is a distinction between self-consciousness and self-knowledge therefore Kant requires both understanding and sensibility for knowledge because when inner intuition is concerned, we know our own subject only as appearance, not as it is in itself.

It is Kant's ultimate theory that appearances are not the appearances of things in themselves, but appearances are just appearances. It's good to start with the senses because that's where Kant gets his phenomenal and noumenal distinction. So "Sensuous intuition," allow us to have an indirect, though not direct, access to things in themselves because we do not know things as they are in themselves, we know things as they appear to us.

For Kant, the ultimate material of all thought, all cognition: there is nothing you can think, see, hear, experience, understand, or do without some kind of sensuous intuition, for example Plato's famous cave story which is not compatible with Kant's view on appearance and reality. Sensuous intuition is than the impact that things have on us. We do not know the objects that cause our sensations, only how they affect us.

To justify his phenomenal self –noumenal self-relation Kant give the basic idea: we have internal representations, and those representations are what we really know. However, Strawson regards things in themselves as causes of the appearances while Paton, who is not as analytical as Strawson, regards things in themselves as grounds, though not causes, of the appearances. This is like assuming that we're all locked inside of our minds and staring at some screen, and that the whole external world is projected onto that screen, as if a camera were relaying the external world to us. Though Paton's moderate view seems, more reasonable than Strawson's view.

That's not quite how it works for Kant, and it's easy to be misled into that picture because of the visual metaphor. Possibly why Paton cannot quite back up his interpretation, for his distinction between cause/ effect, on the one hand, and ground/consequent, on the other hand, being obscure and unclear. A better way to put it might be to use an analogy to feeling: suppose you're floating in a dark void, and something brushes by you. You don't know what the object was, only the tactile sensations where it touched you. To be precise, the self in itself is not a being but an activity by its very activity, it synthesizes the given manifold, but it cannot itself be given in sensibility.

This, again, is a metaphor, and it's more abstract than that, but it gives you the basic idea. When Kant says that the self is affected by its own activity, it means that the activity of the self holds together the manifold intuited outwardly.

Everything you experience is merely the impact that something else had on you, the manner in which you were affected. It all comes down to the idea that you have perception, and you can think of your perception as a passive thing that is affected by something outside of it, and it cannot provide any material for inner sense since the self in itself is a pure formal unity without matter and the manner in which the perception is affected is what you really know, not anything outside of that. That would mean Kant thinks our sensuous intuitions have to be structured by certain things that are inherent in our minds (Kant's term is a priori) such as space and time, but you cannot even reflect on space and time unless you're a creature that has experiences.

For Kant the noumenal self cannot be known at all but the phenomenal self can be known meaning there is a distinction between self-consciousness and self-knowledge. Though we cannot have self-knowledge noumenally, we can have self-knowledge phenomenally; in other words, we can have knowledge of the phenomenal self but not of the noumenal self. You need some material to reflect on before you can discover your priori categories so all knowledge begins with experience but does not arise from experience. So noumenal objects cannot be intuited outwardly and the noumenal subject cannot be intuited inwardly.

Since Kant requires both intuition and concept for knowledge therefore what cannot be intuited cannot be known. Take space, for example. Space has to be a priori, that is, prior to experience, for the simple reason that you cannot sense objects in space unless you already have a "built in" faculty for perceiving space. Likewise we cannot have knowledge of the phenomenal

<https://assignbuster.com/kant-philosophy-of-self/>

self. However knowledge of the self as phenomenon is possible, but it is possible only with knowledge of every other phenomenon in the phenomenal world for example the space issue. Space has to be a priori, and not derived from experience, because I need to understand space on some basic level to have any experiences to begin with.

It's true that I have to have some innate sense of space to even begin having experiences, but I cannot reflect on my a priori concept of space until I have experiences hence all knowledge does not arise from experience, but it does begin with experience. According to Kant what we have is 'the phenomenal knowledge of self' rather than 'knowledge of the phenomenal self'. For instance I needed the a priori concept of space in order to have spatial experiences, but I could not become aware of my concept of space until I had those experiences so, self-knowledge inevitably contains knowledge of phenomena in general. The phenomenal knowledge of self is a result of the noumenal self-synthesizing a (phenomenal) manifold received by sensibility.

For example you start off with a built-in concept of space, and then use that to have experiences; then, if you reflect on your experiences, you realize that you must have a concept of space is a good way to explain Kant's idea of a transcendental argument. The consciousness Kant is talking about is not the transcendental consciousness but the empirical consciousness. Kant is saying that this knowledge of self includes the knowledge of outer objects. ."

Kant's argument for the a priori nature of space is based on this kind of argument, and much of the CPR uses this kind of reasoning. A transcendental argument takes things as they are, and then deduces

what must be the case for things to be as they are. For Kant, the mind is not any better known than the bodies. Kant says that man can be (empirically) aware of himself only in time, and the determination of time is possible only with the change among the things in space (bodies).

This Inner experience does not tell us how the noumenal self is intuited by inner sense, but it tells us how the noumenal self synthesizes outer objects intuited by outer sense within the realm of time, the form of inner sense. Like spontaneity. Spontaneity is basically the structuring of the data of our sensuous intuition by our inborn a priori faculties. Our a priori concepts of space and time structure and situate things in our awareness by giving them a spatiotemporal location, and we have to have those concepts to even have experiences.

Thus, the (phenomenal) knowledge of self is at the same time the knowledge of outer things although an inner object is not intuited sensibly, an outer object is intuited sensibly. Our minds make a big contribution to constructing the world we perceive, even though we don't get the data from ourselves, because we "choose" how to structure the world we see. Inner sense is not affected by the empirically real since the empirically real (object) can be substituted for a thing outside me', and the empirically ideal (perception) can be substituted for 'the mere representation of a thing outside me'. So inner sense synthesizes what affects outer sense meaning inner sense is also not intuition therefore we can only know how we are affected.

That which affects us is the noumenon, the something-out-there that gives us the impressions however we cannot know the noumena, only the

impressions that the noumena make on us and whenever Kant talks about the noumena, he does so in a strictly negative way; he never says what the noumenon is, only what it is not. It's completely okay to say that the noumena are not the same thing as our impressions, and it's perfectly okay to characterize them as somehow being the source of our impressions, but you can't go any further than that. It's a bit like a sign at the edge of a hallway that says "this far and no further." Kant treats the noumena as a limit; if you try to go beyond that limit, you fall into illusions.

The relation between inner sense and the self in itself is that Kant thinks that we cannot sense ourselves, but only the manner in which we are affected by ourselves. It's a very tangled issue as a lot of philosophers don't really have the stomach for it. The inner sense belongs to the phenomenal self which comes to exist. The idea is the mind is substituted for the phenomenal self, and the soul is substituted for the noumenal self and we must be represented somehow, and this requires time.

Time is a form of inner sense and inner sense belongs to the phenomenal self which comes to exist and perish. This fact proves that time can exist independently of Kant's phenomenal self. What are represented are not the noumenal selves, but the phenomenal selves. Noumenal selves are what represent, and not what are represented. By making the selves represented in the realm of time, we are making them objects instead of subjects otherwise time has no validity without the phenomenal self that is a source of the sensible world. The difficulty here lies wholly in how a subject can have an internal intuition of itself because if we follow Kant's treatment of

time, we have to conclude that it cannot be without the phenomenal self of which it is a form, and it always has to be with the phenomenal self.

This would mean for Kant it is the noumenal self, and not the phenomenal self, which acts. The phenomenal self is the necessary result of an activity of the noumenal self. So as long as we are represented, we must be represented somehow, and this requires time. What are represented are not the noumenal selves, but the phenomenal selves. Therefore, the consciousness of self (apperception) is the simple representation of the ego, and if by it alone all the manifold (representations) in the subject were given spontaneously, the inner intuition would be intellectual and if the sensible world is the sole world of its validity, and no objective use can be made out of it beyond that world; time has no validity without the phenomenal self that is a source of the sensible world.

In man this consciousness requires internal perception of the manifold, which is previously given in the subject, and the manner in which this is given in the mind without spontaneity, must, on account of this difference, be called sensibility however Kant cannot answer the questions about the pre-existence and immortality of the soul. For example, Kant's theory suggests that the time sequence begins when man is born, or when the phenomenal self-starts appearing, and it ends when man dies, or when the phenomenal self disappears.

He cannot even talk about life before the birth and life after the death but if the faculty of self-consciousness is to apprehend what lies in the mind, it must affect the mind and can thus only produce an intuition of itself but the

possibility of time without one's own sensibility undoubtedly contradicts the rest of the critique because the form of this, which lay antecedently in the mind, determines the manner in which the manifold exists together in the mind, namely, in the representation of time.

The intuition of self, therefore, is not, as if it could represent itself immediately and as spontaneously and independently active, but according to the manner in which it is internally affected, consequently as it appears to itself, not as it is, including the problem of many minds is what Kant never pondered since Kant cannot make it clear whether there are as many noumenal selves as there are phenomenal selves or only one and the same noumenal self.

A person has to have a noumenal self to which his phenomenal self corresponds. Moreover, it is not only that but he has to have his private noumenal self which is distinct from other peoples noumenal selves to structure the data of sensuous intuition. For Kant, the noumenal self is necessary for the phenomenal self and as mentioned earlier it is the noumenal self, and not the phenomenal self, which acts however, the phenomenal self is the necessary result of an activity of the noumenal self.

For instance, my spontaneity could give its own data, that would allow me to do stuff like spontaneously conjuring a cigarette out of nothing, because my spontaneity could just provide the data and then structure it however it wants and if the activity is an essence of the noumenal self and never ends, the phenomenal self should neither start or stop appearing in the phenomenal world so the data which my faculties structure into a

representation of, say, a cigarette, are given by sensuous intuition, which come from the impact on me of a something-or-another outside of me, which is the noumenon.

The activity always affects inner sense and makes its result, phenomenal self, necessary so synthetic activity of my mind is what makes nature, the sum of all phenomena, possible, and my own body is one of several phenomena synthesized by my mind. The mind cannot synthesize the phenomenal world without synthesizing the phenomenal self.