

Immanuel kant's idea of knowledge



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Immanuel Kant is responsible for introducing the term “transcendental” to the philosophical discussion. By doing this it was his goal to reject everything that Hume had to say. His argument proved that subjects like mathematics and philosophy truly existed. One of his main arguments was the idea that gaining knowledge was possible. Without this idea of knowledge there would be no reason for a discussion.

Since we know that knowledge is possible we must ask how it got this way. According to Kant, one of the conditions of knowledge is the Transcendental Aesthetic, which is the mind placing sense experience into a space and time sequence. From this we understand that the transcendental argument is an abundance of substances situated in space and time, with a relationship to one another. We cannot gain this knowledge from sense-experience (Hume) or from rational deduction alone (Leibniz), but showing how knowledge exist and how it is possible.

Kant makes the claim in the Transcendental Aesthetics that space and time are ‘pure a priori intuitions.’ To fully understand what this means we must define what an intuition is. According to Kant an intuition is raw data of sensory experience. So basically intuitions are produced in the mind. Kant is saying that space and time are things that are produced in the mind and given before experience.

Space is a necessary a priori representation, which underlies all outer intuitions. It does not represent something in itself or any other relationship. Space is only a form of appearance represented outside of the mind. Time, on the other hand, is a necessary representation that underlies all intuitions

and therefore is a priori. Since time is only one dimensional there is no way that we could access it quickly. We know that space and time are both a priori because of all of our experiences.

Kant also claims that space and time are 'empirically real but transcendentally ideal'. When Kant says that space is 'empirically' real he is not presupposing external objects. There is no way for space to be an empirical concept. We cannot just come up with the idea of space; a representation of space must be presupposed. When we experience things outside ourselves it is only possible through representation. For space and time to be 'transcendentally' ideal Kant is basically saying that "they are not to be identified with anything beyond - or anything that transcends - the bounds of possible experience or the a priori subjective conditions that make such experience possible in the first place."

Before Kant begins to explain the transcendental aesthetic he claims in the introduction that mathematical knowledge is synthetic a priori. This statement is based on Kant's Copernican Revolution. According to Kant, time and space taken together are the pure forms of all sensible intuitions. This is our way of creating a priori synthetic propositions. These propositions are limited in how they appear to us but not present within themselves. We have a priori knowledge of synthetic judgements.

According to Kant our judgements/statements can either be analytic or synthetic. An analytic judgement would be where the concept of the predicate is part of the concept of the subject. If it is denied then there would be a contradiction. A synthetic judgement, on the other hand, is where the

concept of the predicate is not contained in the concept of the subject. So, if we denied it then there would be no contradiction involved.

An analytical judgement would be "all bachelors are unmarried". The concept of bachelor is defined as being unmarried. In analyzing this word we would say that it is an unmarried male adult. When we analyze concepts the parts come out. Therefore, when broken down our predicate concept of "unmarried" is shown. The mind is capable of finding this concept without going outside and experiencing it.

If we tried to deny this statement there would have to be a contradiction, therefore making it false. An example of a synthetic judgement would be "the sun will rise tomorrow". When we say this it is our way of taking two separate and distinct ideas and putting them together. There could be no contradiction in this statement because we can imagine that something like this could occur.

In Section I of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant gives four arguments for the conclusion that space is empirically real but transcendently ideal. As we know space is not an empirical concept. We cannot physically derive the idea of space. The only way that we can receive these outer experiences is through our representation. When it comes to space we cannot represent the absence of space but we can imagine space as being empty.

In order to be given any content in our experience we must presuppose space. Knowing that space is not a general concept we can only discuss one space at a time and if we speak of diverse spaces we only mean parts of the same space. The parts cannot decipher the bigger space but only what is

contained in it. Since space is seen as only one, the concept of spaces depends on a limit. Concepts containing an unlimited amount of representations cannot be contained within itself. All parts of space are given to us at once. Therefore it is an a priori intuition not a concept.

All of the previous information is Kant's way of showing that the synthetic a priori knowledge of mathematics is possible. As we know mathematics is a product of reason but is still synthetic. But how can this knowledge be a priori? The concepts of math are seen a priori in pure intuitions. This just means that the intuition is not empirical. If you do not have intuitions then mathematics would not even be a concept.

Philosophy, on the other hand, progresses only through concepts. Philosophy uses intuitions to show necessary truths but those truths cannot be a consequence of intuitions. The possibility of math only occurs because it is based on pure intuitions which only occur when concepts are constructed. Like pure intuition, empirical intuition, allows us to broaden our concept of an object by providing us with new predicates. With pure intuitions we get necessary a priori truths.

Synthetic a priori knowledge in mathematics is possible only if it refers to objects of the senses. The form of appearances comes from time and space which is assumed by pure intuitions. Doubting that space and time do not belong to the object in themselves would cause us to not have an explanation about a priori intuitions of objects. We have to come to the conclusion that in space and time objects are only appearances entailing

that it is the form of appearances that we can represent a priori. Concluding that a synthetic a priori knowledge of mathematics would be possible.

What is the Transcendental Deduction?

This is the way concepts can relate a priori to objects. Kant says, "If each representation were completely foreign to every other, standing apart in isolation, no such thing as knowledge would ever arise. For knowledge is [essentially] a whole in which representations stand compared and connected." Kant lays out a threefold synthesis about experience: a synthesis of apprehension in intuition, a synthesis of reproduction in imagination, and a synthesis of recognition in a concept. We should not divide these steps into one but they should all be intertwined as one. So what we see must occur consecutively.

Therefore our idea of the Synthetic Unity of Apperception comes into play. This is where every possible content of experience must be accompanied by "I think". Everything in your mental state should be able to be accompanied by "I think" if not then it will not matter at all. "I think" is not something that consists in sensibility. It is an act of spontaneity. It precedes all possible experience. The unity of this particular manifold is not given in experience but prior to it. Thinking substances can only perceive what is going on inside as perception goes on at all times. This is where our awareness of a manifold comes into play. We are aware of one thing after another. Each impression is different from one other. We must say that these impressions are mine. Basically accompanying them with the phrase "I think".

As for the Transcendental Unity of Apperception we are never aware of ourselves as the thinker but just the intuitions. All of our experiences must be subjective to this combination of things. I must actively pull them all together as them being a part of my experience. The only way that I can be aware of this "I" is if I am able to pull together all of these representations. In this we can see the idea of objective unification. There is a connection between transcendental unity of apperception and objective unification. When we speak of objective unification we believe that there is a right way to put things together. This concept basically comes from our categorical synthesis which involves a priori concepts.

With the categorical synthesis it is our way of putting together intuitions in a category. We must be able to make a judgement. For example we must be able to say this is how things seem to me because of past experiences. By saying this it would be a mere judgement. Whereas a judgement would be us just saying this is how things are. To make a judgement is to say this is how things are out there; how they objectively are rather than how they appear subjectively.

For a manifold to be complete the sensible intuitions have to be subject to the category. This is how we can have a categorical synthesis. We cannot have sense impression unless I can bring them together under a unified manifold by knowing they are objective rather than subjective. Any intuition that we have must be subject to the category. We could not have an awareness of one event coming before the other unless there is a manifold of "my".

Appearances are not objects in themselves. They are not just representations; they are separate intuitions therefore having no connection between them. Imagination is what connects the manifold of sensible intuitions. Nature is just appearance. Anything that appears to us must conform to law. We have to complete this synthesis in order to have experiences. It is presupposed that there is an objective to all of my experiences. Without it there would be no way to put them together and I would not be aware of them as experiences. Both the threefold synthesis and a transcendental unity of apperception are necessary to have ordered experience for any sort of theory of experience.

3. Kant defines Idealism as “ the theory which declares the existence of objects in space outside us either to be merely doubtful and indemonstrable or to be false and impossible.” Since I am conscious of my own existence, objects in space must also exist. Having knowledge, the only thing that we are aware of is our representations.

These representations are only achievable through an object outside of me not by the representation of that object. Therefore I exist in time because I am capable of perceiving actual things outside of me. I am conscious of my existence in the same frame of time as I am conscious of those objects existing outside of me.

When referring to idealism it is believed that our immediate experience is inner experience and from this particular experience we only receive outer objects. It is quite possible that these representations come from within.

When considering the representation “ I am” a subject is included. We do not

know what that subject is though. So according to circumstances we do not have any experience of that subject.

To fully understand the knowledge of the subject we must have intuition. But the only way to receive this inner experience is through our outer experience. To have the existence of outer objects we must be conscious of ourselves. This does not mean that our representation of them involve true existence because they could also be produced by our imagination. The representations of our outer objects come from our perceptions.

According to Kant " all that we have here sought to prove is that inner experience in general is possible only through outer experience in general. Whether this is or that supposed experience be not purely imaginary, must be ascertained from its special determinations, and through its congruence with the criteria of all real experience."

According to Descartes, we really know only what is in our own consciousness. We are instantly and honestly aware of only our own states of mind. What we believe of the whole external world is merely an idea or picture in our minds. Therefore, it is possible to doubt the actuality of the external world as being composed of real objects. " I think, therefore I am" is the only idea that cannot be doubted. This is because self-consciousness and thinking are the only objects that can be experienced in the real sense.

Descartes presented the main problem of philosophical idealism which was an awareness of the difference between the world as a mental picture and that of a system of external objects. Locke's theory, on the other hand, encompasses the mind as the origin for modern conceptions of identity and "

the self". Locke was the first philosopher to define the self through a continuation of "consciousness." He also speculated that the mind was a "blank slate" or "tabula rasa". These two strategies are very different from the above strategies of Kant.

At the beginning of early modern philosophy, in Descartes, we seem to see our familiar world slipping away. At the culmination of early modern philosophy, in Kant, however, we get our familiar world back through at a price. In the following essay I will discuss this process, beginning with Descartes, ending with Kant, and discussing two of the four philosophers we have examined this semester.

In Meditation One Descartes gives three separate arguments. From these particular arguments one can conclude that we cannot claim to know with certainty anything about the world around us. Everything might seem probable but in reality that does not mean that it lacks doubt. If we can never be certain how can we know anything. This is the main reason for Descartes bring this issue up.

Basically his entire argument is based on Scepticism. Scepticism is very important and is seen as an attempt for our knowledge and understanding of the world. It is really hard to doubt that someone really exists but there is no way that one could get rid of the idea of scepticism The one thing that we know is that Descartes does not just randomly doubt everything. He provides very concrete reasons for the things that he doubts. As he sets up this doubt he has to be very rational about it. If he does not then his argument is not going to work.

The KK thesis that Descartes uses is to show how these arguments work. The KK thesis follows: if a knows that p, then a knows that a knows that p.

Basically this means that if I know that there is snow outside then I know that I know that there is snow outside. The problem with this argument is that if we are not sure about our senses then there is no way that we can be sure about the knowledge that we possess. In making this thesis work one must have a strong understanding of what "knowing" really means. But there is no way that one can actually have this understanding. One must have self-knowledge or basically one must really know himself/herself. Therefore if you do not have that notion of self then you do not possess any knowledge.

As we can see the KK thesis works in favour with what Descartes is saying in all of his arguments. The only problem is that he does not believe that his argument about God is that strong. He feels that if there is an Omnipotent God then there is no way that he could ever deceive us.

There is no way that he could be all knowing and make us doubt the things that we do. On the other hand there is no way that there could be no God because our senses had to be created by someone. Therefore there must have been an evil demon that has deceived us. But since he doubts everything then he is not misled into the false believing of a demon. So, in a later meditation he proves that there is a God and that he is not a deceiver.

We turn to Leibniz and we continue to see the world slipping away as he discusses the monad. In looking at the things that Leibniz said it is believed that monads (Entelechy) are not physical or mental but biological. Therefore,

the ultimate cogs of the world are biological elements or Entelechies. In doing this there is no distinction made between inanimate and animate objects, which would make everything, animate. If these monads are really just biological there is no way that they can make changes in each other. The only way for this to happen is if God caused these changes to happen.

The reason that monads cannot bring changes in bodies is because that is not what they were programmed to do. They were created so that compound substances could be made. The biological nature of Monads makes their essential qualities to be apperception and appetition and even motion itself. Their relation is more of a final cause than an efficient cause. This is why he considers final causes as the principle of efficient causes and gives priority to final causes. Therefore, this made it hard for a monad to bring change in a body.

As we can see, God is the unifier of the monads but he also brings harmony. Leibniz came to the conclusion, by using metaphysics and the nature of monads, that God was the ultimate monad and the Creator of this world. We are now at a point where nothing is the same. We believed in one thing but now it is completely different.

The first problem that Berkeley would have with this objection is the fact that ideas cannot exist if they are not perceived. If we cannot perceive of the idea then there is no way that we can truly conceive of the thing. For example if I do not have the idea of the sky being blue then there is no way that I am going to walk outside, look up, and say the sky is blue. I do not have the concept of blue in the first place.

He says that we cannot say what reality is like without using language. You cannot use a word well if you do not know the meaning of that word. When we are describing an idea it is based on what we feel. There is no way that I can say what I mean if I have no conception of the word. According to Berkeley, ideas do not do anything so it cannot cause anything to happen. The mind is active; it is able to perceive of new ideas by imaging.

The one thing that the mind cannot do is actually form ideas. It can perceive the ideas but cannot come up with ideas that will resemble the mind when it does this. So, therefore there is no way that we can perceive of any sensible things without knowing what the words mean in the first place. If you do not know what the words mean then you cannot come up with ideas and without the ideas you cannot perceive anything. As we continue we start to see some changes. Berkeley is bring us closer to what Kant has to say.

We finally come to Kant and we get our world back through pieces. The way that we do this is through the Kantian price. The Kantian price is how we get our world back through space and time. We have to realize that we would not exist without a world of space and time. Space is not empirical; the idea of space cannot be conceived of. Space is of only one thing. It cannot be talked about in parts because parts are only contained in the overall bigger picture.

All space is, is a form of all appearances of the outer sense. As for time it is a little different. Time is not something, which exist of itself. An intuition taking place within is what time is. Time cannot be removed from appearance even though it does not have to actually possess appearances. These

appearances can come and go but time cannot be taken away. It is only suitable in conjunction to appearance not for objects preoccupied or taken in general.

Time and space are the pure forms of all sensible intuition and so are what make a priori synthetic propositions possible. Therefore, bring back our world through a price. We get a chance to see how Kant breaks down what everyone is saying and shows us how the world is not really slipping away but it is just seen in a different way.