

Kant's unconditioned antinomies



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Many decisions we come to are because of our sense of morality. Within our reasons, there is our conscience guiding us to make the most morally correct decision. Kant focuses on the limits of reason. To prove his arguments, Kant provides antinomies describing the thesis of the situation, and then the antithesis of the situation. Having a thesis and antithesis provides a contradiction, which is what an antinomy is. Kant proves both arguments valid, showing he has knowledge and is open to criticisms on either situation. I will be arguing that Kant has a successful critique on antinomies to bring people to an understanding that, despite what everyone believes in, the three antinomies are the only exceptions that will always remain inexplicable and arguable.

Kant shows that unchecked reason produces at least three antinomies. (Professor Byron Williston). In Kant's first antinomy the thesis is that "the world has a beginning in time and space" (Williston) and the antithesis is that "the world is infinite in time and space" (Williston). To prove the thesis, Kant focuses on causality because he is proving that everything has a cause and effect. Everything that has happened in the past has occurred for a reason. At some point, there is a beginning that caused everything else to happen. Therefore, there is an "unmoved mover" (Williston) God is the being which caused everything to start moving. In the antithesis, Kant focuses on the "principle of sufficient reason." (Williston). There has to be some sort of explanation or reason that everything has happened. The unmoved mover violates this idea because there is no real or known proof that God, in fact exists, which means there is no explanation. Since there is

no explanation, then the world must be infinite in time and space. Kant brings up this type of argument because it is unconditioned. The thesis or antithesis could be true, but one will probably never know. Most people decide to believe one or the other.

In Kant's second antinomy, his thesis states that everything must consist of basic elements (atoms). His antithesis states that everything is composite, and nothing is simple. (Williston). To prove the thesis, Kant states that everything must be held together to make a form, so therefore they must be composed of simple elements. To prove the antithesis, there could possibly be something smaller than an atom. The elements of an object always continue to get smaller and smaller as we break them down. If one tried to continue to break down the elements, they might never stop because it is impossible as the process could go on forever. Therefore, everything must be composite, and nothing is simple. Again, this antinomy is unconditioned. Kant brings up these antinomies because they are inexplicable, meaning they are a noumenon. A noumenon is unique to the observer, it depends on one's perception, meaning depending on the individual's senses, each person will believe either the thesis or antithesis but there will never be a true answer. (Bowie 28-29).

In the third antinomy, Kant's thesis states that "there are free causes" and the antithesis is that "there are no free causes." (Williston). This argument is based on one's senses of morality. To prove the thesis, Kant states that if we are not free, then we cannot be held responsible for our actions. We are able to interfere with causal sequences, meaning we can change the cause and effect of a situation depending on the decision we make. Therefore, if we

make a bad or morally wrong decision, then we must be held accountable for that action and therefore we are free. The antithesis states that there is a cause for everything which is the principle of sufficient reason. Since everything has a reason or cause, we are therefore not free because the cause or reason drove us to make that decision or action.

It seems that Kant's philosophical way of thinking is transcendental. There must be a reason and cause to all the events that occur. Although Kant argues the unconditioned (antinomies) in a very unbiased way, his way of philosophical thinking is transcendental. "Kant insists, however, that the subject is really only accessible to itself at particular moments of apperception, not in a timeless manner in which it would grasp itself as a whole." (Bowie 29). Kant believes that there is no timeless because the way the world appears to us is in a priori way of experience, meaning our experiences are structured in a way that there is a cause and effect to everything that happens to us. Kant also believes that each person has a sense of morality and reason which leads us into making decisions which make us free and are based on our individual morals. "Kant's moral philosophy is strongly committed to the human being's capacity of acting morally, viz. its ability to act from respect for the moral law." (Geert Van Eekert, 348). Kant targets this way of philosophical thinking because we must have experiences which leads to making our own decisions and then being held accountable for our decisions. (Allison Henry. E, pg. 3). Therefore, there must be a being (God) that started the initial move causing all of our human experiences.

One might argue that Kant's form of critique is unsuccessful because he himself has his own opinion. Even though he proves that both the antithesis and thesis of each antinomy can be possible, he still has a slight turn towards a particular side. One might argue that the antinomies are therefore not unconditioned because if they are in fact based on causality, then only one can be right. In the first one may think that the thesis is correct because there needs to be a start to the causes and effects. In the second, the thesis as well because due to our scientific experiences and studies, the most simple element we have discovered is the atom and therefore there is probably nothing more simple if we ourselves cannot break it down any further. In the third it would be the thesis as well because we are held accountable for our decisions, meaning there are free causes. Although one might believe that Kant's critique is unsuccessful because he seems to believe in all theses, morals of our decisions, our reason, and that there is an unmoved mover, his critique is still successful. Although Kant states that the three antinomies are unconditioned, he still has his own beliefs, but what Kant is trying to prove is that these three antinomies are the situations that will never have an explanation. Each individual may naturally believe one over the other, but they will always remain inexplicable.

In conclusion Kant's critique is successful because despite his own personal beliefs (noumenon), he still knows and argues that his antinomies are the subjects in our world which will never be conditioned. Both arguments are valid and although one may believe one over the other, each will never be right or wrong because they are unconditioned. Kant believes that both arguments could be valid so neither is wrong. Therefore, his critique is

successful because although most subjects are conditioned, the three antinomies are unconditioned. Kant believes in the reason and morality to our decisions and thoughts, but the three antinomies are the three exceptions to the conditioned.

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Works Cited

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