

Andrew Pearcy
Prof Helman
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Immanuel Kant: A Divergent Mind

Immanuel Kant, born 1724, is arguably one of the most profound and influential philosophical minds Germany has thus far produced. His literary and philosophical contributions are spread over a diverse field of focuses including ethics, religion, law, aesthetics, astronomy, and more. Kant's work in metaphysics especially in regards to the Metaphysical Deduction as well as the Transcendental Deduction, are perhaps his greatest contribution however. Its product, most noticeably in the form of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, was first published in 1781 and the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, largely a summary of this argument followed it shortly after. The Critique took a vastly different approach to the field than philosophers had applied to the field of metaphysics before Kant such as Descartes, Locke, and Hume whose skeptic analytic approaches do not agree with the assumptions Kant makes. This was of course a directed effort as Kant felt the deductions before him were unsatisfactory in accounting for objects outside of experience. Traditional analytic evaluations were simply inadequate. Instead Kant preferred a synthetic regulative account of how judgments are made. In fact the transcendental deduction that appears within the Critique differed so greatly from traditional views that it came under intense introspection and sharp criticism.

The Critique of Pure Reason has accrued equally strong arguments in favor and against it with most of the discussion appearing to naturally center around Kant's diversions from the traditional philosophical views that preceded him. A concentrated series of arguments have been found indicating a fairly consistent approach to this criticism. The pattern this has produce

shows a strong tendency to criticize Kant's metaphysical critique in objection to the very strong assumptions Kant makes surrounding the structure which produces the 12 categories of judgment as well as his failure to make appropriate qualifications for such claims as representations are necessarily mine, self-awareness within experience, and the unity of apperception. The purpose of these claims and many others Kant makes in his deduction is to account for all the necessary conditions of human judgment in an empirical world and more extensively to account for all experience itself. The positions expressed above are perhaps Kant's strongest indication of some structure in the noumenal world and our unique and indirect knowledge of it by suggesting that the 12 categories of judgment are a result of the conditions for the possibility of these judgments that exist as part of the noumenal world. This claim seems to be ones that many philosophers are unwilling to afford Kant however. Perhaps only Berkeley would allow for such a structure given some concessions. The length of this textual analysis does not allow for such a close inspection of individual view however.

Several objections that arise from these philosophers question Kant's ability to supply reasoning for what necessitates the divisions which produces his manifold. These questions of division extend to the internal structure of the categories, and more generally to the influence Kant's separation of the empirical and noumenal world has upon the components that compose this internal structure such as how such a manifold is based upon appearances. However compelling these arguments may be, I find that a great many number of these objections do not fully take into account the spirit of Kant's argument as well as the subtle implications he supplies throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In general it would appear

that in many of these cases an over critical approach has been taken to some observation Kant perceives as largely naturally intuitive such as how he came to the conclusion of the exact set of the 12 necessary categories of judgment. In other instances I find that it is the case that proper attention was not given to more subtle but equally impactful parts of Kant's argument. It would appear that in many of these cases an overcritical approach has been taken in attempting to understand something Kant holds as naturally intuitive. Again at other time the opposite is the case and other quickly skip over or exclude arguments central to Kant's conception of metaphysics in general. More generally however, the structure of and components with which Kant constructs his manifold are so distinctly his that many philosophers refuse to accept such observations of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds To properly consider such objections, as well as the means by which I attempt to defend Kant in response to them, a more intimate understanding of Kant's metaphysical deductions and more specifically his Transcendental Deduction must be obtained than what is currently possible through the text provided.

For this reason, before such argument as have thus far been suggested can properly be examined, a precise investigation of Kant's metaphysical argument for the necessity of the 12 categories must be brought into focus. How might such a thing be done if over the more than two hundred years since its first introduction, a truly satisfactory analysis of Kant's deductions has been made concluding succinctly the validity of nullity of the Critique of Pure Reason has fail to be proffered? While I dare not assume that I should be able to add much to this debate in terms of additional content, the resources available to me have allowed one distinct advantage. In response to the previous question, the most readily supplied answer is that such an expanse

of time, especially with the intense debate that occurred during it, has actually provided a resource by which many of the more pertinent questions and objections in reference to the Critique of Pure Reason have surfaced. It is with close attention to these past models that the following argument in favor of the completeness and necessity of Kant's 12 categories is constructed. Just what is the most appropriate division then? As the Critique of Pure Reason is heavily marked with philosophical jargon, often even exclusive to Kant, It would follow that any proper critic of Kant's metaphysical deductions must in every case begin with a satisfactory reconstruction of its numerous and often abstract components. This is most often done with a focus on what line of thought brought about Kant's need for Pure Concepts of the Understanding which are the basis for the category of judgments in the first place.

The following analysis favors such an approach as it is most helpful in understanding the subsequent transcendental deduction Kant makes afterwards and more specifically the Transcendental Unity of Apperception as a necessary component along with the natural criticism that follows. Before we may proceed this far however, we must start from the beginning with the essential purpose behind Kant's metaphysical deduction and the pure concepts of understanding within. As was previously acknowledged, Kant's metaphysical deduction was mainly motivated by a need he perceived for a system based upon empirical observation in determining the bounds necessary of judgment. Kant is very interested in maintaining a certain degree of reliable logical process akin almost in accuracy to natural science in its ability to say things of the world of appearances during his inspection. In fact entire portions of his argument are purposed to qualify this claim.

As such, Kant begins to construct this manifold through sensibility and understanding.

Since the natural science Kant spoke of and what we have come to call science today are almost exclusively reliant on observations, this seems to be a fitting place to begin. He finds that all human experience is brought forth through our faculties of sensibility and that through these experiences of sensible things, the appearances of objects, understanding is thus formed. This is by no means an original observation. What is profound however is what Kant has to say of what is revealed in this process that most other philosophers have not. He claims that with this understanding an intense introspection he was able to come by not just a set of necessary judgment but the set of necessary judgments whose components could not be predicated. "He was claiming that he had a complete list of the primitive or underived pure concepts of the understanding. Only these deserved the name of categories; for their derivatives he reserved the name "predicables"" (Strawson, 79, 80). Such a position is important in producing much dissent towards Kant and as such should be kept present in thought for further consideration shortly.

How exactly Kant was able to come to such a distinct and confident conclusion is largely unknown as he himself supplies very little indication. Readers of the *Prolegomena to All Future Metaphysics* as well as the *Critique of Pure Reason* are largely left to assume the correctness of Kant's selection largely. What Kant is willing to say surfaces in the second addition of the Critique and perhaps provides some kind of satisfactory explanation for his view.

“... in the propositions and their proofs, and also in the form and completeness of the [architectonic] plan, I have found nothing to alter. This is due partly to the long examination to which I have subjected them, before offering them to the public, partly to the nature of the subject-matter with which we are dealing. For pure speculative reason has a structure wherein everything is an organ, the whole being for the sake of every part, and every part for the sake of the others, so that even the smallest imperfection, be it fault (error) or a deficiency, must inevitably betray itself in use. This system will as I hope, maintain, throughout the future, this unchangeableness (Kant, B xxxvii-xxxviii).

As is suggested towards the end of this quote, Kant hopes that such a structure is able to withstand all introspection such that none of its components can be deemed unnecessary or that the system is lacking some fundamental characteristic of thought. Even so, most philosophers are unwilling to accept that Kant could have achieved such a task within the bounds of experience. This presents a situation such that Kant’s entire manifold collapses for lack of certainty and the logical inference that extends from experience.

In an effort to maintain this system natural the question surfaces of what must be true of the world of experience such that these judgments are possible and even more specifically what make these specific set of judgments the ones that collectively dictate all experience. Besides the previously discussed level of trust in Kant’s own deductive efforts in experience we are asked just as strongly to accept the intimate relationship between the existential world, the experiences within, as well as space and time forming a complete manifold equally dependent on the components of its structure. If this manifold fails to be accepted Kant’s argument quickly suffers. Assuming the validity of this system for the time being however, our previous question leads Kant to reveal his truly unique approach to the deduction of judgment.

This indicates the introduction of the noumenal, a priori, world to his argument and Kant's truly profound diversion from the traditional path philosophers had taken before him on the matter of judgment. It is a division of the world of experience and that which not so much produces but what brings about the conditions for the possibility of all understanding. "To say that a form of intuition or a concept of an object in general is a priori is, for him, not primarily to say that it embodies a limiting condition of any experience of which we can for a coherent notion"(Strawson, 86). So what then is the final product of this relationship?



Since a priori intuitions must dictate experience and thus what appears in the categories above we are led to further question what else is necessary for Kant's manifold to operate in the manner he has thus suggested? It would appear that in each case of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Modality such primitive deductions that are involved all make reference to objects. For this reason we are led to believe that another principle of Kant's manifold is that it requires a certain awareness of objects not only in space but also in time such that its properties are able to be obtained in a regulative manner as Kant has suggested is the case for the entirety of his argument. We must be aware of the components of an object that produce

the mechanism of judgment by which categories are rightly applied in determine an object. This is the process of synthesis and follows as such:

“When I perceive the cat as sitting on the mat, I am presented in intuition with some manifold of sensibility that I situate as being outside and distinct from me, and which I conceptualize in terms of the empirical concepts of cat, mat and sitting, this I do by connecting them together in the form of a judgment that is singular, affirmative, categorical and assertoric...” (Seville, 42).

With such a distinct and rigid system we can only assume that Kant is preparing give significant discussion to the noumenal world which he attributes as the direct supplier of such a system. This is not the case however. While Kant is ready to argue for the necessity of this noumenal world he is not willing to make any claim he cannot directly attribute to experience and as such has very little to actually say

Following this conclusion we are faced with the question of what we are able to say of this noumenal world that supplies the condition for the possibility of all experience. It would follow that if products of the noumenal world in the world of experience conform to this ordered coherent notion, a similar structure must also be present in the noumenal world. Many interpretations of Kant give strong evidence in favor of this conclusion. Alas such conjectures are largely unanswerable as Kant really gives no definitive platform to place such arguments in reference to. We have arrived not at a perfect but a satisfactory summary of Kant’s metaphysical deduction’s beginning with the need for the categories of pure understanding and ending in the Transcendental Deduction. Why is such a rigid structure needed however? What pressures influenced such conclusions?

To answer these questions is to complete a description of the lens necessary to view Kant's argument through so that the strong objections that surface may efficiently be dispatched without a chance to fester. This not so easily done however as the work prior to Kant which so profoundly influenced his argument was carried out by philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. As was previously suggested, Kant's diversion from those metaphysical deductions before him is what made his contribution so unique and done out of a need to account for some of the perceived errors of his predecessors, unique in what way however? What made Kant's transcendental deduction so unique has everything to do with where it diverged from Berkeley and Hume as well as Descartes and Locke. Diverged in what manner however? Dennis A, Rohatyn expresses the heart of this matter in the preface to his analysis of causality within Kant and Hume quit eloquently expressing that,

"Kant's answer to Hume is seen to comprise the following: agreement with Hume that causal connection cannot be inferred from experience; moving beyond Hume in making causal conceptions presuppositions of experience (where "experience" has the full force of "scientific knowledge", and not merely its minimal meaning of spatio-temporal representations in appearance) ; distinguishing causality from other, more basic presuppositions of experience (where experience is tacitly defined in terms less strong than those associated with the advance to scientific knowledge)" (Rohatyn, 34)

For Hume, Kant's basic endeavor is doomed to fail because unlike Kant, he believes that human nature is such that it has strength enough to overcome logic. A system such as Kant's could not be correct as habit and expectation come to rule human nature and not logic. Once again Rohatyn makes a striking observation of the dilemma at hand. The arguments of Kant and Hume are very similar yet different:

“Hence, like Hume, Kant is an "empiricist" but Kant qualifies his empiricism with the recognition that there must be conditions (in a non-genetic sense) which function as capacities to receive and assimilate the data of sense-experience; capacities without which no intelligent, indeed no unintelligent, organization of human experience is possible; which would leave Hume with his "bundle theory of perceptions" and therefore with nothing to ground his feeling of self-unity over time, a conviction which cannot be justified so long as the manifold is allowed to remain an intrinsically confused, chaotic jumble. “ (Rothay, 34)

One of Kant’s goals was to avoid this chaotic jungle. Such a structure could not exist for Hume however as he fundamentally rejected a unity within apperception which is why in diverging from Hume, Kant chose to use the aprior transcendental unity of apperception as a regulative principle perhaps successfully rescuing Kant from criticism of failing to properly consider Hume’s critique of understanding and inductive justification as it does not rely on the causal relations such objections would likely infer and reference.

This fundamental difference in the structure and operation of Kant’s manifold and that of Hume’s understanding serves quite well in displaying how vast of a distance there is between Kant’s arguments and that of Descartes, Locke, and Hume. “ The Key to the puzzle, as Kant sees it, is that we have to persuade ourselves that we have immediate non-inferential awareness of external objects in space, and that as long as that is secured, inference to empirical material lying beyond perception will in principle be unquestionable”(Savile, 93). Hume is unable to accept this and neither are Descartes and Locke. It is their belief that immediate awareness applies only to their own mental state. To have knowledge of the world around us we must apply inferences to the objects around us. Descartes epistemological approach in his work

titled: *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, persistently skeptical, was

fundamentally unable to let go of the idea of the possible falsity of all appearances until he concludes that God, the omnipotent figure would never do such a thing as a perfect being could not be a deceiver. While Kant was unwilling to explore such a route, he is willing to say something in his metaphysical deduction on the existence of God. This is not our focus however.

Locke's account of this issue is far closer than Descartes to Kant, yet again as with Descartes, he is unwilling to make the leap. What he is willing to say is that,

"...he can know that something in the world beyond the mind is responsible for our perceptions, but that confidence wanes when we move away from that and speculate whether that something exists beyond the present moment or whether it was the same time as was responsible for similar earlier perceptual experiences" (Savile, 98).

Again in Locke's argument we are left with a position that does not support some of Kant's fundamental axioms. Without this continuity in space, time, objects and our perceptions of them, the noumenal world quickly becomes impossible to maintain. We can no longer logically infer as Kant does that a consistent system for the production of appearances. This is a violation of the Unity of Apperception, which is absolutely necessary in Kant's inference of the same unity existing in the noumenal world as the phenomenological world. Since a display of this position as well as those of Hume and Descartes call for a fundamental abandonment of Kant's

entire noumenal distinction, what does this definitively suggest for the 12 categories of judgment which rely upon this distinction and the inferences Kant draws from?

Quite simply, before we are even able to consider components such as the Unity of Apperception, the continuity of that which produces experience, or the completeness of such a system, pre-Kantian thought is already willing to reject a noumenal world and in the case of Descartes and Locke even the ability to say anything beyond one's own mental state. This is not to most concerning evidence against the completeness of the categories of judgment however. Kant's goal was to correct the assumptions made before him by such philosophers, as Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. As such it would follow that such a system as Kant's would diverge enough from these opinions to render his arguments largely exclusive from those before him. What is of the highest concern it would appear is Kant's argument for the necessity and completeness of the categories he chooses to represent all forms of judgment.

As has previously been shown, Kant constructs his manifold such that each component of the categories is for the sake of the whole system as well as the whole system being for the sake of each component. In this way Kant believes that he can successfully accounts for experiences such that a complete synthesis of the judgment is possible by attributing one or more categories to it. In this way no hypothetical situation we may come by in experience can be constructed which the manifold does not fully explain. Basically we must judge that we can judge in no other way simply by applying the lessons of experience to our inspection. This is the greatest cause for concern in defending Kant's Critique of Pure Reason for such a position can only be accepted if we accept the consistency of objects over time as well as the Unity of

Apperception. Without accepting this we are unable to make our examination expressly

through experience as Kant has suggested in necessary.

This reduces us to accepting only a inferential awareness of objects of experience as Locke, Descartes, and Hume have essentially done away with Kant's argument altogether thus exposing one of the most readily available objections to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. It would appear then with the theory of induction a definitive number and composition to experience is impossible to ascertain. I must stress that this is only the case if we do not accept the inferential awareness of experience. If we are unwilling or unable to do so then no defense of Kant is truly winnable. For this reason I find that most objections to Kant actually hold little significance when considering the categories of judgment. As Kant explicated in numerous examples, the only proper way to construct the conditions for the possibility of all experience is to view them through experience. If we abandon this fundamental difference in our inspection, our complete lens shifts disallowing many of the objections philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Hume have made.

If we are faithful to Kant's vision however, the remaining arguments compel us to be concerned with the necessity of the 12 categories, specifically why those 12. To defend Kant properly from this objection however, I may need but to ask one question. If Kant's 12 categories are not exhaustive and the bounds of our experience unknowable, then name one judgment that uses a device of reason not fully explained by one or a synthesis of judgments found in the categories. Since such a search is endless I cannot definitely say this is impossible but I strongly believe that Kant did account for this. In this way if we reject an inductive process

for a regulative one as Kant does, one in doubt may be unable to succinctly prove Kant's point

yet neither can one immediately deny it. While this is not a complete defense of Kant's Critique

of Pure Reason, I do believe it draws a strong enough conclusion to question the validity of

objections whose origin rest within a system so anterior to Kant's that an inductive process

instead of a regulative process is applied to experience.

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