Preface

Metaphysics as something beyond all possible experience: Kant's paradigm shift. (A lot of prior theology attempted to put reason and faith together; for example, Leibniz.)

The historiography:

Before Kant, there was a big dispute between the dogmatists/rationalists (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza—who thought there was no enquiry into the faculty of reason to be had) and the sceptics/empiricists (Locke, Hume, Berkeley—who thought the faculty of reason was too fallible to be relied on).

Kant wants to surpass this antinomy and establish a *tribunal* for reason.

Kant thinks that two conditions of form are indispensable: Certainty and distinctness. Certainty became non-agential (certainty for *any* agent with reason) and conflated with truth only from Descartes. (The demand for comprehensiveness, in the paragraph above, is also inspired by Cartesian positions.) Having said that, he (self-admittedly) lacks intuitive distinctness/clarity (which could, for a Cartesian, be a serious objection to his system).

Our question is not where reason comes from (which is a causal question, and appears to admit a subjective answer), but what it can do (which can only admit objective deductions).

Copernicus found the origin of motion not in the celestial objects but in the observer. Similarly, Kant finds metaphysics not in its objects but in the cognition of the reasoner.

From the lecture:

Two big debates shaping Kant's background: The epistemological debate of the British empiricists and the Continental rationalists; and the metaphysical debate of Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. For him (this is in his inaugural dissertation), the empiricist-rationalist debate is an antinomy due to their shared assumption of talking about an independent reality: The empiricists (and Newton's causal theories) were talking (only) about appearances, and the rationalists (and Leibniz's metaphysics) were talking (only) about reality.

Immediately, he was confronted with the problem of *a priori* knowledge about something independent of the mind (with Leibniz's metaphysics). He gave up his claim, and the idea of metaphysical knowledge of independent reality. This was, indeed, the dogmatic slumber.

This left him with Newton's knowledge of appearances. But in 1772, he encountered (via Beattie's essay) Hume's skeptical argument against causal inference. This ended up being a nail in the coffin for Newtonian knowledge as well.

Three important takeaways:

"Reason has insight only into that which it itself produces according to its own plan." What we can understand in the world out there is only that which we ourselves put into it.

"I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith." By denying the possibility of knowledge of the independently real (restricting it to the realm of appearances), he makes faith possible. (Moral faith will operate in the realm of the things-in-themselves.) Wolff thinks there's a deep conflict between Kant's ethics and his theory of knowledge.

"It still remains a scandal in philosophy that the existence of things outside us must be accepted on faith." This indicates that Kant does not want to suggest a subjective solipsism by the previous quote.

Introduction

From the lecture:

The epistemological turn: Descartes' Meditations reversed the order of attention from metaphysics to epistemology. Kant's philosophy is the high point of this turn.

Transcendent vs transcendental: Transcendence simply means going beyond the limits of experience (example: Leibniz's metaphysics). Kant thinks this is impossible. The opposite of transcendent is immanent (lying within experience). Kant's term: Transcendental; having to do with the grounds or nature of human knowledge.

A first way of organisation: By two sources of human knowledge. Our capacity to be affected: Transcendental aesthetic. Our capacity to formulate concepts and reason: Transcendental logic.

A second way of organisation: Concepts to propositions to syllogisms (in the book: analytic of concepts, analytic of principles, dialectical inferences of pure reason).

A third way of organisation: Truth and illusion (analytic inferences vs dialectic inferences).

A fourth way of organisation: Via the table of categories.

"Though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience." The most important component of knowledge is the mind-contributed element, applied to experience.

A priori*:* Knowledge which is logically independent of experience. (Adverbial; mode of knowing)

A posteriori*:* Knowledge which depends on experience. (Adverbial; mode of knowing)

Analytic: Explicates what is already contained in the subject term. (Adjectival; kind of knowledge)

Synthetic: Adds to the subject concept. (Adjectival; kind of knowledge)

N.B. Analytic knowledge *can* be known a posteriori. But this is not an interesting category.

The main category: Synthetic judgements known a priori.

The four questions (how is math possible, natural science possible, metaphysics as a natural disposition possible, metaphysics as a science possible) are utterly misleading. Kant is not going to show how they're possible (and in the last instance, he's going to deny its possibility); he's going to show how we actually *have* synthetic a priori knowledge (in math, in natural science, in metaphysics).

The distinction between understanding and sensibility as a premise: No matter how detailed you make a concept, it remains a concept and can never transmute into a direct experience. The *only* way we can apprehend (or be in relation to) an individual is by having it affect us. This distinction (said by a student in the lecture) is not shared by Kant's predecessors in the same way.

Transcendental Aesthetic

Intuition: That by which knowledge/cognition refers to objects directly.

Sensibility: Capacity for receiving (re)presentations through the mode in which we are affected by objects.

Appearance/phenomena: Object of (empirical) intuition.

Matter & form: The sensation & the arrangement of the appearance (respectively).

Pure presentation: Appearance *sans* empirical content.

Pure intuition: The pure form of sensibility.

The transcendental aesthetic: Remove concepts; remove sensation; see what is left.

Kant is an empirical realist (all knowledge comes from empirical knowledge) and a transcendental idealist (the forms are all in our head).

Here's the complete narrative:

Sensation + Relation = Appearance —> Presentation —> Concepts —> Knowledge

Matter + Form = Sensibility, the general form of Intuition, which mediates the Presentation of an Appearance.

1. Space is prior to all presentations because they have to take place through it, and cannot be received without its mediation. So, it's not an empirical concept.

2. Space is not a discursive concept because it's not multipliable, and because the whole of it cannot be understood in terms of its parts (so that space is *unique*).

3. Concepts can contain infinitely many presentations *under* them (an isosceles triangle falls under the concept of a triangle), but not *within* them (you need an additional concept to go from triangle to isosceles), which is what space has (all subspaces). So, it's not a concept at all.

Therefore, space must be an *a priori* (comes from 1) intuition (comes from all 3).

This exposition describes only the conditions for the possibility of receptivity for *humans*; it tells us nothing about things as they are in themselves. Furthermore, as soon as we withdraw this condition for receptivity, space ceases to belong to these things in themselves. Space is the *only* condition (and not, say, taste or colour) which belongs necessarily to their appearance, and in it belongs nothing empirical.

Locke had a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Kant cannot admit primary qualities by virtue of the noumena being inaccessible, and so replaces them with the forms (while having the secondary qualities be predicated of appearances).

The discussion on space and time is largely similar, but there is a key difference: Space is an external intuition, and time is an internal intuition. This means that the latter does not determine outer appearances, and only inner experiences. (Time is gone not only ontologically, but also, perhaps, phenomenologically.) Time is the condition for all phenomena (and not merely external phenomena), but it is not the object that is experienced in time, but rather our presentation of them which is ("the *mediate* condition of all external phenomena").

1. The Newtonian view: Space and time are real and self-subsisting. Pros: Math still works. Cons: "They must admit two self-subsisting nonentities, infinite and eternal, which exist—yet without there being anything real—for the purpose of containing in themselves everything that is real."
2. The Leibnizian view: Space and time inhere as modifications. Pros: It's not absurd. Cons: Math no longer has apodictic certainty.

There can be no 'confused' representations, because representations tell us nothing at all about the things-in-themselves. (Such questions of error are appropriate for the transcendental logic, not the transcendental aesthetic.)

With reference to Berkeley, he avoids being an empirical idealist by being a transcendental idealist.

From the lecture:

Two dimensions of intuition.

Passive intuition: Our capacity to be affected by objects.

Active intuition: In some sense, the mind also *creates* the object, and doesn't just passively perceive it.

But *we* don't have active intuition; God does. (Is this what Kant says?)

What is pure intuition?

1: The pure form of intuition.

2: A many-ness (manifold) of pure intuitions (example: there are manifold isosceles triangles). *Not* to be thought of as *a* manifold.

A question that never crossed Kant's mind: Could our forms of intuition be culturally encoded? Does this drive him into a solipsistic position?

Kant wants to deny an epistemic imbalance between knowledge of things and knowledge of the self. The former is of appearances. The Cartesian argument hinges on the idea that the latter is of it as thing-in-itself, which is what Kant now denies. I am presented to myself as in time.

Transcendental Logic: Analytic of Conceptions

Now, we move on to understanding. How do we put phenomena together to make up conceptions?

According to Kant, what any given judgement does is bring different presentations (recall that a concept is also a presentation) together under one rubric. Concepts are predicates for possible judgements; understanding is what makes judgements possible.

Universal judgements: Put two concepts together.

Particular judgement: Puts a concept into a presentation.

Singular judgement: Puts a presentation into a presentation.

Synthesis describes how we put together the knowledge behind a judgement. (Judgements could also be analytic, for e.g., those of geometry.)

First step: The diversity of intuitions.

Second step: Synthesis of this diversity of presentations.

Third step: Concepts which give unity to this diversity.

The categories describe the concepts in this third step.

From the lecture:

Concepts, no matter how elaborate, can only give us a possible or hypothetical world. It is intuition which grounds it in reality.

Kant's bad argument: Saying that the functions of unity in judgement & the categories are given by the same faculty. We can infer back to faculties from what we see the mind doing, but we can't

infer what faculties can do (there was simply never any evidence for this—for, for example, phrenology).

Rather, think of the categories as a 'to be shown'.

What is this problem of unity in judgements? In Hume's terms (wherein he means by 'identity' what Kant means by 'unity'): One object can give us the concept of 'oneness', not identity. A number of objects cannot give us the idea of identity, either—we will always see each as different from the others. Where, then, can it come from? This is the question Kant answers in the subjective deduction.

Objective reality vs objective validity: The former is used of concepts, while the latter is used of judgements.

Kant's version of Descartes' cogito: "The 'I think' must accompany all my representations." This is his argument's beginning. Very barebones: He does not even concede that the thing which the 'I' refers to, the self, exists as a thing-in-itself.

Hume's puzzle: How are all my different thoughts united in this 'I think'?

Kant's answer: Synthesis.

An example to understand the manifold of representations/unity of consciousness: Seven people with 1 word vs One person with the 7-word sentence.

"As far as its form is concerned, the [concept] is always something general, and something that serves as a rule."

Three characteristics of rule-governed activities, as per Wolff:

1. The activity is guided by the rule.
2. The rule determines what is and what is not a part of the activity.
3. Activities can be described as right or wrong with reference to their adherence to the rule.

The upshot is that when the mind employs a concept to synthesise a diversity of perceptions, it does something to that diversity in conformity with the rule that is the concept (where the anatomy of a 'rule' is as discussed above). The rules for synthesis, in turn, are the categories (at least, this is what Kant stakes).

Kant first establishes what the categories are and then discusses how they inform the activity of synthesis. But in fact, according to Wolff, this is backwards; the categories are derived from an analysis of synthesis, and are the conclusion—not the beginning—of the argument.

As an aside: For Kant's moral philosophy to make sense, it must be that the categories apply definitively only to things as they appear to us, and apply only hypothetically to things-in-themselves. But Wolff says that, given the way Kant has framed synthesis, the categories only have hypothetical applicability to a manifold—and so, at most, to creatures with a sensibility distinct from ours—but cannot have even this to things-in-themselves.

Kant's idealism—the categories as rules—seems to lead us to the conclusion that, among other things, the laws of physics can be read off from the mind. But of course, this is not true, and observation is essential.

The delicate answer is that the categories are rules for the *construction of rules* for the synthesis of a manifold. This salvages the necessity of observation. But there remains a seemingly innocuous problem: Even if we, say, knew the form of a scientific law, it would help us get no closer to what the actual law was.

Wolff's dictum: Synthesis is rule-governed reproduction in imagination of a manifold of sensibility.

In the transcendental aesthetic, space was given more importance. Now, it is time's turn to shine.

1. Synthesis of apprehension in intuition: The mind is first affected (by something). Consequently, a diversity of spatial perceptions are produced (spatial because that is the form of sensibility). When the mind brings these perceptions to consciousness, it affects itself and imposes temporal organisation on them, creating phenomena. The mind comes to know its own content not as they are in itself, but as they appear to itself. (Thus, once again, the refutation to Descartes: The mind does not know itself better than it knows other things; it knows itself the same way it knows other things.)
2. Synthesis of reproduction in imagination: The mind reproduces this temporal organisation in a rule-governed way. (The rule will turn out to be a category.) This rule-governance must be given *a priori*, for otherwise phenomena could never end up organised enough for us to form empirical laws.
3. Synthesis of recognition in the concept: In this step, we identify the rule that was applied above. In order for the rule to be successfully applied, we have bring to self-consciousness the rule being applied in the reproduction.

Now, Kant hits upon a seemingly simple but very deep problem. What are the objects of which we create representations, after all? Since we only have access to our own perceptions and can never get outside of them, these objects of perception seem to be the inaccessible things-in-themselves.

Wolff gives us an answer beforehand, which will remain opaque until later: Physical objects turn out to be structures of judgements. (By way of example: In Lewis' elaboration, who in some sense translated Kant's theory into modern philosophical terms: An apple is an endless series of future predictions—about the way it'll taste, feel, etc.)

It is because my consciousness is in unity that everything in the universe is in interaction (and has a causal unity). Analogous to how space and time are conditions of intuition, the categories are conditions of thought. However, he doesn't derive them just yet.

The climactic conclusion: Understanding is the law-giver of nature.

But actually, it's even worse: *My* understanding is the law-giver of nature. Wolff says Kant never solved this problem of intersubjectivity, and it seriously undermines his ethical theory. He adds that this is where Hegel's idea of a world-spirit came from.

Wolff explains the problem more elaborately with the aid of a very nice illustration. Suppose a class of six all write a story involving one another, told through an omniscient narrator. In each story, the intrusion of the author will be given by a different character. However, each story can—logically speaking—have only one such character who represents authorial intrusion. This represents the problem of how one transcendental self can possibly come into engagement with another in a world of its authorship. Another moral agent cannot appear in my field of perception. An unsatisfactory interpretation may be that a moral agent only has ethical obligations to themselves.

The SEP article picks out Kant as having two kinds of arguments for the establishment of synthesis.

The argument from upwards: The transcendental unity of apperception. *All* thought rests on this unity of consciousness. Synthesis is necessary because human understanding can only think, and is not intuitive.

The argument from downwards: Association alone is not enough to reproduce our judgements and the phenomenal world at the level of regularity with which we see it.

Kant first establishes that the applicability of the categories to conceptualizable objects comes from the conceptualising activity of the understanding (which involves bringing objects to the unity of apperception), and then that the applicability of the categories to intuitable objects comes from the constraints the modes of space and time (which are themselves also intuitions) impose upon them.

This is how Kant steers reason between dogmatism and skepticism: By viewing cognition as a combination of *possibility* (given by understanding) and *actuality* (given by intuition). A derivation of the categories based on the latter alone would be a Humean empirical deduction; and one based on the former alone would leave open the question of whether we aren't merely subjectively applying the categories to objects of the senses, in a manner indifferent to their constitution.

Wolff now raises another problem (seems to be closely related to that of intersubjectivity: in essence, how Kant can ends up having the individual boxed in by their perceptions). Representations have a double role: On the one hand, each one is part of my consciousness; on the other, it is a part of the causal order of the entire universe.

As the law-giver for nature, it is my understanding and transcendental ego which constructs the universe through its perceptions; but at the same time, my subjective consciousness and its particular set of perceptions are also just a particular part of that much larger universe. (That larger universe still being one of appearances, presumably.)

Transcendental Logic: Analytic of Principles

The need for a transcendental schema: Kant thinks he needs some kind of a middleman to connect concepts and categories (which are pure—devoid of sensible content—and have a heterogeneous variety of phenomena under them) with intuition, the sensuous phenomena that they do actually apply to.

Wolff thinks that is totally unnecessary—you need only to go back to the subjective deduction, and think of the categories as rules for reproducing the manifold of sensibility in imagination. Things are better placed here; and yet, one must understand what the nature of these rules is to understand how exactly they apply to the manifold.

What completes the argument is a deduction of the categories from the nature of time-consciousness. (Only then do we even have a table of categories, at the very end.)

To recap Kant's 'official' story: He puts together four triads for the functions of unity in judgement, models his table for categories on this based on the idea that unity in judgement and synthesis of a manifold are yielded by the same faculty, and finally, bridges the gap between concepts and intuition by the so-called schematism; the schematised categories, when applied to a manifold, gives us the principles of pure understanding (the axioms of intuition, the anticipations of perception, and the analogies of experience).

What was Kant's definition of a schema? "A representation of a general [universal] procedure of the imagination to present its image to a concept." Concepts are rules to synthesise a manifold; schematised categories are *temporal* rules. (I should mention that the examples Kant gives of schemata (numbers, permanence) and how they relate to time are kind of weird, and I honestly don't really get it.)

Kant's general idea with the analytic of principles is to describe what kind of synthetic a priori judgements have been made possible by the categories.

Wolff points out a glaring contradiction between the axioms of intuition and the transcendental aesthetic. In the former, he says that extensive quantities—of which space is one—are those wherein the part antecedes (and makes possible a representation of) the whole. On the other hand, in the latter, he has said that parts of space cannot antecede the one all-embracing space, as space is "essentially one".

We take the subjective manifold of perceptions and reproduce it in imagination according to the objective order of appearances. What we reproduce isn't (a judgement about) an object; it is (as had been hinted at before) a judgement about the structure of predicted perceptual experiences.

See these supplementary notes for the contents of Wolff's concluding lecture.

Kant's refutation of idealism is based on the first analogy: The principle of the permanence of the substance. The thrust of the argument is that my perceptions can only be time-ordered for myself if there is something external, unchanging reference point (for this reference point cannot be my own conscious states, nor time itself).