

Kant IV

The Analogies

The Schematism

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Reading: 78-88, 100-111

In General

The question at this point is this: Do the Categories (“pure”, metaphysical concepts) apply to the empirical order?

- Recall Descartes’s problem: how to show that metaphysical concepts in the mind have anything to do with the “external” world?
- And recall Hume’s claim: there is nothing in sense *per se* by means of which such concepts might be apprehended.
- At risk: If the Categories cannot be shown to apply to the empirical order, then Kant fails to “vindicate” metaphysics. We remain stuck on the representation-reality divide.

Subjective and Objective successions

- Walking around a house in one direction, I experience a certain series of subjective states – visual images of a house. If I walk around the house in the opposite direction, then I experience a *different* series of subjective states, but the “objective succession” – i.e., the house itself – is unchanged: it’s the same house experienced in two different ways.
- Observing a ship floating down a river, I experience a certain series of subjective states – images of the ship at higher and then gradually lower elevations. If I were to experience this series of subjective states in the *reverse* order, then I would experience a *different* “objective succession” – namely, the ship’s floating upstream.

Here is an account of Kant’s argument in the First and Second Analogies (see A192/B237ff):

1. There is a difference between my experience of a house and my experience of a ship’s floating downstream: in the case of the house, reversing the order of subjective succession does not yield experience of a different object; in the case of the ship’s motion, reversing the order of subjective succession yields experience of a different event.
2. Nothing in experience prohibits reversal of the subjective succession in either case. (I.e., I can experience going around the house in either direction, and I can experience the ship’s moving from lower to higher, rather from higher to lower.)
3. Hence, the difference in “reversibility” must lie in the objective successions depicted in the two cases.
4. There is nothing in sense *per se* to distinguish the two objective successions (nor could there be, since this difference concerns the metaphysical qualities *possibility* and *causality*) – as per Hume.
5. Hence, it must be a pure concept by means of which I experience the ship’s motion as “irreversible” and the succession of house images as “reversible”.
 - I.e., the pure concepts of substance (on the one hand) and causation (on the other) do, in fact, apply to and characterize empirical appearances.

(However, Kant is not out of the woods, yet: see the Schematism for a problem.)

More Specifically

Goals

- To demonstrate the *a priori* contribution of Reason to experience.
- Kant wishes here to show how it is possible for us to experience time as *objective* rather than *subjective*.
- In broader terms, this enables us to distinguish the *objective* per se from the *subjective*.
- This is made possible by the concept of causality, which is a pure concept, not given *in* intuition, but rather characteristic of the objective order represented by the form of intuition (time, in this case).

Terminology

- *Objective*: ‘objective’ for Kant simply means of or pertaining to the realm of empirical objects – i.e., those mind-external things such as cats and flowers; things, that is, that we experience as external to us. (Note that there is also an internal “object” of experience, the self; this is the thing that appears to us in the form of time. It, too, is part of empirical reality.)
- *Subjective*: “subjective” is contrasted with “objective” and refers to the states of the mind as represented in the mind. Feeling sleepy is a subjective state, as is my visual impression of a sleeping dog or of a flower.
- We can distinguish, then, the subjectivity of my visual impression of a sleeping dog from the objectivity of that sleeping dog as a mind-external being. The former is a state in me; the latter is a state outside of me.
- Empirical reality is objective, and empirical ideality is subjective; these pairs of expressions are roughly synonymous.
- *Succession of perceptions*: in experience, various images and sounds (etc.) follow one another in time. Now I hear a dog snoring; then I hear a car go by; I see my fingers move on the keyboard; etc. At the subjective level, I am having a succession of perceptions (we can call them): various images and sounds succeed one another in my mind.
- *Ir/reversibility*: a succession of perceptions is reversible if, in doing so, the thing represented in those perceptions is unaltered. If reversing the succession of perceptions results in representation of a different reality, then the succession is called “irreversible”.

The General Question

- The general question here is how we succeed in distinguishing a succession of perceptions as *objective* rather than *subjective*. Kant refers to this as *objective validity*: a representation is objectively valid if it does, in fact, represent a mind-distinct state of affairs.
- That is, what goes on in the mind such that my subjective images and sounds *are experienced by me as* representing *external, objective* objects and events. How does the mind produce objectively valid experiences?
 - o Note that the *objectivity* that I understand my experiences thus to have is not “automatic”. My experiences are the product of an entirely mind-contained system. Somehow this system constructs something that I experience as other than me, objective.
 - o Note, too, that the objectivity of dogs and cars is not either *given* in sensation. All I get in sensation is subjective images and sounds. As Descartes noted,

representation of these subjective images as being images of *mind-external objects* is a product of the rational mind. Otherwise, we're stuck with a Humean "theater" in which no subjective/objective distinction can be made.

- The question is, how exactly does the rational mind do this?

Strategy

- As above, the main question is how the mind succeeds in distinguishing between the subjective and objective aspects of our experience.
- Kant's strategy is to show that the *a priori* concepts of substance and event are objectively valid. I.e., he will attempt to show that it is by means of these concepts that we represent the mind-externality of the objects of experience.
 - In doing so, he will have shown how subject and object are distinguished, since as *concepts* substance and event are obviously subjective, while if they succeed in representing something mind-external, they will at the same time be significant of objectivity.
- A key question concerns time.
 - Our inner world is a temporal one.
 - But we also experience the outer world as temporally ordered. That is, not only do we experience our own thoughts as passing in a temporal sequence, but we also experience events and processes as being outside of us.
 - How, then, does this happen? I.e., how is the objective time order distinguished from the subjective one.
- Constraints on an answer
 - Originally, time is given to us as the form of inner sense.
 - That is, it does not appear as an *object* or content of inner sense. We have no experience *of* time, per se. It does not appear like a ruler, alongside our thoughts, ordering their succession, something that we notice in addition to our thoughts. Rather, we simply experience the succession *in* time. Time is the apparatus in us within which thoughts are located.
 - Nor is time given to us in outer sense. It's not a color or shape or any particular content of external sense. Again, we have no direct experience of it; it is merely *how* our inner thoughts are organized by the mind.
 - Consequently, the mind must have some *device* to make it *thinkable at all* that objects outside of us are themselves organized in time, one distinct from the intuitive form of time. What is this device?
 - Furthermore, remember that the mind is after all a subjective faculty. It must employ thoughts to represent both itself and the external world. So, again, one way or another, it must employ what is at bottom a subjective device for the representation of objectivity.
 - In the case of time, what is to be represented externally is a necessary, irreversible sequence.
 - That is, time is necessary insofar as any given moment is necessarily followed by another. Time cannot stop, in our experience; otherwise, experience itself would cease. (Think about it: if time stopped, how would you notice, unless there was further time in which to notice – which means it wouldn't have stopped after all.)
 - And time is irreversible. A "reversal" of time simply entails a different reality, not the original reality viewed differently.
 - What is it to think of a reversal of time?

- Suppose you think of a glass of milk spilling, and then “unspilling”. I.e., as is possible to represent in video: the spilled milk swoops back into the glass, and the glass rights itself on the table.
 - This is not, however, to think of a reversal of time. It is only to think of two events, where these two events are symmetrical with each other about a particular point of time.
 - That is, to imagine the milk spilling and then unspilling is to imagine a *single, forward-moving* time in which the milk spills and then unspills. That’s not the reversal of *time*, it’s the reversal *in time* of a certain event.
 - So, time is irreversible. It is not possible to experience it “backwards”.
- So, in order to distinguish the self from the other, the inner from the outer, subject from object, we must first succeed in representing an objective temporal order. And in order to represent time as objective, the mind must employ some thought that represents an objective (mind-external) sequence as necessary and irreversible.

A Key Illustration

- Kant makes good use of two examples. In both, we have a subjective succession of perceptions.
 - If I walk around a house, I am subject to a succession of images: the front of the house, the side, the back, the other side, the front again. That is one succession of perceptions.
 - If I see a ship float down a river, I am subject to another succession of images: the ship at point *a*, the ship at point *b*, the ship at point *c*, etc. That is another succession of perceptions, images in my mind.
- What is significant about these two examples is that only in one is a change in the outer world represented.
 - As I walk around a house, my subjective state changes (giving me a particular succession of perceptions).
 - As I watch a ship float down river, not only does my subjective state change (another succession of perceptions), but so, too, does an outer object of my experience: the ship is *moving*.
- The relation of succession is “determinate”.
 - In the case of the ship, my mind organizes the succession of images in what Kant calls a “determinate” fashion.
 - This means that the order of states represented is *necessary* and *irreversible*.
 - The difference in “reversibility” is particularly evident.
 - If I reverse the order of subjective succession in the case of the house, the object that I represent does not change. It’s the same house, viewed from a different series of locations.
 - If I reverse the order of subjective succession in the case of the ship, however, the process that I represent *does* change: the ship’s going down the river is not the same thing as the ship’s going up it.
 - A difference in necessity, as well
 - The manner in which one state of the ship follows another is *necessary*. That is, we experience each particular state of the ship’s motion as

necessitating the next. Given that it is in motion at point *a*, it *must* then move on to a point *b* (i.e., unless some other force intervenes).

- In the case of the house, there is no particular necessity with which one feature of the house is related to another. Seeing one side of the house, there is nothing determining which side I will see next. I can move about it in any number of ways.
- Back to the question
 - The question is, how does the mind succeed in representing an external order as temporal? That is, how does the mind represent an external reality as determinate, as necessary and irreversible?
 - What we see in the above examples is the fact of the mind's doing just that. We see, that is, a representation of a "temporal being" – i.e., an event, the ship's moving down stream – as something external to the subject. I.e., we have a representation of an objective temporal order. How does the mind do this? That is, what "thought-tool" or organizational "rule" (as Kant calls it) is used by the mind to represent *objective temporal being*?

The Concept of Causality

- The concept of causality is a pure concept. That is, it is one of the *categories*, one of the basic intellectual media for the representation of reality. It is the basic concept of causality that the mind employs to represent the mind-external temporal order.
- Recall the constraints on how the mind must work, here.
 - As a subjective being, the mind must employ thoughts to represent anything other than itself.
 - The objective order to be represented must, as above, be necessary and irreversible.
 - The concept of causality is precisely that concept the mind employs in satisfying these constraints.
- That is, the concept of cause is an *a priori* rule for organizing subjective mental states so as to represent an objective temporal order.
 - In using this rule to organize a subjective succession, the succession of objective states represented are thought by us as making up a necessary and irreversible sequence.
 - That is, to think, "The ship's moving at *a* causes it to be moving at *b*," is to think a subjective succession as representing an objective, necessary, irreversible sequence.
 - Or, again, to think that thought is to represent the ship as being involved in *an event*, i.e., as existing in an *objective temporal order*. I.e., to experience an event is to employ the pure concept of causation.

The overall argument

- Recall that the point to being able to represent an objective temporal order is to be able to represent anything at all as external to the mind.
 - That is, the original question was – how does the mind distinguish itself from other things? How does it construct the subject-object distinction?
- Kant's general argument is this:
 - Experience of objective change is necessary for the experience of an objective time order.

- The distinction between change in the subjective and change in the objective can be made only by means of the concept of causality.
- That is, in order to experience anything as external to me, as objective, it must be located in time – an external time.
 - For if not, well, being a temporal thing myself, how would I ever notice it? A thing of no duration could never appear in my intuitive manifold. (This is why, among other things, we can have no experience of a purely instantaneous event. ‘Purely instantaneous event’ is, for us, an oxymoron, because ‘event’ means “temporal thing” in effect.)
 - This means that every empirical object must be a part of the objective temporal order. I.e., every object must be involved in some kind of event.
 - If it is to be empirical, then it must be potentially experienceable by a human mind.
 - And in order to be experienceable by a human mind, the object must appear in time to us.
 - And further, this means that every event must have a cause.
 - For to be an event at all, to be an element of the temporal order, is to be a member of a sequence that is necessary and irreversible. I.e., it is to be a member of a causal order.

Finally

- Kant maintains that only an *a priori* concept can supply the necessity and irreversibility of the objective temporal order.
- I.e., just as in the case of space, Kant wants to emphasize that this feature of the empirical world is after all mind-dependent.
- That the necessity and irreversibility of the empirical world is an *a priori* contribution of the rational mind is evident from the fact that we cannot derive these ideas from experience alone.
 - I.e., necessity is not “given in sense”. Nothing in sense information corresponds to the necessity with which one event causes another. “All we see,” so to speak, is one event followed by another.
 - But that is decidedly *not* all we experience. What we experience is one event causing another – one event being part of a necessary, irreversible sequence of events.
 - That necessity and irreversibility, causality, the very temporality of the objective order itself, and the subject-object distinction along with it, is one of the basic contributions of Reason to experience.

The Schematism

Our main question is that posed by Gardner (pp. 168-171): how exactly do pure concepts apply to sensible intuition? At stake is whether such metaphysical concepts do in fact represent empirical reality. If they do not, then we face the same skeptical problem faced by Descartes: we have no reason to think that our metaphysical ideas apply to reality.

In order to appreciate this problem, we must distinguish *logical form* from (*pure*) *transcendental form* from *schematized form*.

- The *logical form* of a judgment (i.e., of a determinate thought) expresses its syntactical structure. For example, from the Table of Judgments (A70/B95),
 - o Categorical: a is F (i.e., subject-predicate form)
 - o Hypothetical: if P then Q
 - o In purely syntactical terms, a logic is not a representational phenomenon – it doesn't "depict" anything.
- The (*pure*) *transcendental form* of a judgment constitutes its pure, conceptual, representational quality. That is, where logic *per se* doesn't depict any reality, the transcendental aspect of a judgment does just that. Thus, for example, those ways of conceiving of reality corresponding to the above, from the Table of Categories (A80/B106), are these:
 - o Substance-inherence: i.e., some real thing instantiating some property
 - o Ground-consequent: i.e., some real thing's causal influence on something (else)
- Note the correspondence between logical and transcendental forms:
 - o The transcendently meaningful judgment 'The ball is red' has the subject-predicate a is F logical form.
 - o The transcendently meaningful judgment 'God created Adam' has the if- P -then- Q logical form.
 - o In other words, the structure of a transcendently meaningful judgment is determined by its logical form. (Evidently, this is why reality appears so "logical" to us. That structure is latent in how we think about it.)
- Note, too, however, that pure conceptual representation *per se* is *prior to* and thus *independent of* the sensible. Substance-inherence, for example, is a very abstract form of representation. It is capable of representing a sensible reality (e.g., The ball is red), but also capable of representing a non-sensible reality (e.g., The number five is prime).
- In other words, pure conceptual thought has no sensible content. In order to show that these pure concepts do apply to sensible intuition, Kant supplies an intermediary, the schema.

Schematism

- The difference between a pure judgment and an empirical one (i.e., one about some object of sense) is that in the latter case the pure categories of thought have been *schematized*.
 - o As represented above, the pure transcendental forms of thought are *unschematized*, expressing highly abstract forms of reality.
 - o The schematized forms of the above are as follow:
 - ♣ Schematized substance-inherence: a persisting, physical object
 - ♣ Schematized ground-consequent: causal power exerted in time
 - o That is, here we have pure concepts in an impure form. (Whether that makes sense is our question at hand.)
 - o For notice: *time* is *not* a pure concept; time is a form of sensible intuition.
- In the Schematism, then, we find Kant's account of how the pure concepts of thought apply to the sensible manifold. There is a significant problem to solve, here, for Kant, since conceptual representation is entirely distinct from sensible representation – the former is *a priori* – *prior to*, *independent of sense*. But if this is truly so, if nothing in sense is to be found in the Categories, how does Kant solve Descartes's problem? How does pure concept find anything in sense to apply to?
- Kant's solution is the Schemata – schematized Categories.

- For example, in order to apply the causal concept to the intuitive manifold, the mind employs the schematized concept of causal power exerted in time.
- This concept is “schematized” insofar as it reproduces the pure “cause-effect” structure in a temporal form. (As above, note that causality *per se* is not a temporal concept, as the concept of God shows.)
- Evidently, schematism (the process by means of which a pure concept is translated into a schema) is the work of the *imagination*. (We should be careful, however, to distinguish the schemata *per se* from mere “images”. The latter employ the former.)

The problem with Schematism

- Unfortunately, the schematism process is *obscure*, difficult to penetrate, intellectually. (Kant is under no illusion about this obscurity; see A141/B180-1.)
- More precisely, the difficulty is this (as Gardner puts it):
 - “Is a transcendental schema a *thought* about time, or is it *time* as thought in a certain way?” (p. 170)
 - If neither, then Kant evidently is committed to a *third* form of human representation.
 - And if not neither, then it seems the schema fails to perform a truly mediating function:
 - ♣ A *thought* about time is just a concept, and if pure, then of uncertain applicability to sensible intuition.
 - ♣ On the other hand, if the schema is, in fact, truly *time-like*, then it is an intuition, to which the Category of causality has no certain application.
- To be charitable, we should attempt to find a genuine intermediary in Kant’s schema. But given the dualistic nature of its task, it is difficult to see how it can exist.