

## Lecture 25 : Kant Part 4

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## 1 Roadmap

### 1.1 Transcendental Aesthetic

- In order to perceive the world, we need certain a priori concepts.
- In particular, we need space and time. The outside world cannot be perceived without a preconceived notion of space, and internal reflection requires space.

### 1.2 The Deduction

- We also get some other things a priori: the categories.
- Kant “saves metaphysics” by arguing that things like causation are actually a priori.

## 2 Stepping through the Deduction

### 2.1 Overview

1. We achieve some kind of self-consciousness.
2. The correct theory of self-consciousness is the *formal idealist* conception.
3. The “categories” - i.e. *a priori* concepts of the understanding - are preconditions for formal idealist self-consciousness.
4. Therefore, we have *a priori* concepts.

### 2.2 Validity

- The deduction is valid: if we accept 1-3, we have to accept 4.
  - In order to have formal idealist self-consciousness, we must have *a priori* concepts (the categories). We do have formal idealist self-consciousness, so we must have *a priori* concepts.
- Accordingly, we must consider the soundness of 1-3 in order to determine if 4 necessarily holds.

### 2.3 Self-consciousness

- The **material** conception of self-consciousness, supported by Locke, says that there is shared content between all perceptions, and that this shared content forms the self.
  - Kant, somewhat similarly to Hume, rejects this view because “there is no content in our experiences which could be *us*.”
- The **formal** conception of self-consciousness says that the self is not some shared content between the representations, but rather some “invariable form or structure.” Coming to understand this structure is how we come to understand ourselves.

- The **formal realist (empirical)** conception of self-consciousness holds that the formal structure of our perceptions comes from *outside us*, via external laws of nature.
- Kant rejects this view in favor of the **formal idealist** conception of self-consciousness. The law-governed nature of our representations must come from us, in particular from our a priori notions that we use to structure representations.
  - \* Reality cannot be the source of the uniformity, because even if the noumena were structured in a particular way, for this structure to exist in our perceptions, it must be through our a priori conceptions.
  - \* We cannot represent an object to be unified without having constructed it to be unified. Perceptions are *representations*.
  - \* Hume was right: necessary connections cannot be given in experience. But for Kant, this does not mean that they should be doubted. We can *trust* the order that we ourselves impose on the world because of our trust in *a priori* concepts.
  - \* Another line of reasoning: There is *necessity* and *universality* bound up in the possibility of self-consciousness. “The **I think** *must* be able to accompany all my representations.” Self-consciousness must involve a priori knowledge of the necessary and universal truth expressed in the principle of apperception. Thus, they must already be in the understanding prior to perceiving the world, because necessity cannot come from experience.
- Hume might say that we cannot rationally trust the necessity that we impose upon the world because it does not come from experience. Kant says that without this necessity, there is no world to perceive, and accordingly it should be *trusted* even above experience.

## 2.4 Necessity of the Categories

- Consider a ship with no sails, motors, etc. It must flow from upstream to downstream. We cannot imagine it any other way, or at least in a way that is objectively true.
- On the other hand, we might perceive a house by going from bottom floor to top or vice versa, neither is objectively necessary.
- How do we get these distinctions?
  1. The ship moving downstream is an *event*, while the house is a non-event (it’s an *object* as normally understood).
  2. The event (of the ship moving downstream) and the object (the house) are both mere sequences of representations which we synthesize.
  3. Nothing in the representations themselves, taken as such, or their sequencing in itself can provide the necessity we associate with the sequencing of representations in the cases of *events*.
  4. The necessity of the sequence ordering we find in cases of *events* (but not objects) must be something *added*, via the *a priori application of a rule of experience*, where this rule demands that “appearances in the ir succession...[i.e. as they happen] are determined by the preceding state.”
    - (a) (Recall that the *categories* - i.e. *a prioir* concepts - provide *rules* for the ordering of *nature*, the sum total of appearances.)
  5. But this is just our understanding of *cause and effect*.
  6. Thus, it’s an *a priori* synthetic truth that “All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect.”
    - (a) “The experience of an event [of anything *happening*] is itself possible only on this assumption.”

### 3 Extraneous Discussion

#### 3.1 How do we get the self from formal structure?

- If there exists order in our perceptions, what is the *source* of this order?
- Becoming aware of this structure is becoming aware of a uniformity that unites the perceptions over time.
- This uniform structure is what we come to know as the self.

#### 3.2 If human nature is universal, how do we get distinct identity of each person?

- Kant does say that we get the same architecture, that we perceive the world through the same categories.
- However, some representations are *ours*: our subjective experiences belong to us.
- There are some things that we perceive to be objective, and those are universal across human experience. However, the subjective elements of our perceptions are unique to us.
  - We can form objective conceptions about a house: it has four sides, two floors. We agree that everyone who perceives the house will agree with these perceptions. However, having grown up in the house, you may feel nostalgia for it. One will not come to believe that this subjective element is universal among humans. Filtering these subjective elements and stitching them together gives us the idea of who we are.