

Gentrain Unit 11 Philosophy of Immanuel Kant, 25 November 2013. Dr. Cindy Ausec

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) He born, lived, and died in the Prussian town of Königsberg

Works

- *Critique of Pure Reason*
- *The Critique of Practical Reason*
- *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- *The Metaphysics of Morals*

Kant's Goals

- To reconcile the claims of science to 'certain' and 'genuine' knowledge of the world with the claim of philosophy that experience could never give rise to such knowledge
- To reconcile the claim of religion that man was morally free with the claim of science that nature was entirely determined by necessary laws

Kant and Metaphysics

- Recognized that man could know only the phenomenal – any metaphysical conclusions concerning the nature of the universe that went beyond his experience were unfounded
- Whenever the mind attempted to ascertain the existence of things beyond sensory experience – such as God, the immortality of the soul, or the infinity of the universe – it inevitably found itself entangled in contradiction or illusion
- Metaphysics is beyond the powers of human reason

Kant, Hume and Newton

- Hume's dissolution of causality also appeared to undercut the claims of natural science to general truths about the world
- Kant was convinced beyond doubt that Newton, with the aid of experiments, had gotten hold of real knowledge of absolute certainty and generality
- Kant could see that within the bounds of sensory experience, as in natural science, mathematical truth was successful in explaining the world as we perceive it

“Copernican Revolution”

- Turning the focus of philosophy from metaphysical speculation about the nature of reality to a critical examination of the nature of the thinking and perceiving mind

Critique of Pure Reason

- Primary aim is to determine the limits of pure reason
- The existence of a mind-world correspondence in the critical sense that: the “world” science explicated was a world already ordered by the mind's own cognitive apparatus
- The human mind is not passive – it actively digests and structures sense data
 - Emphasis on the role our mental faculties play in shaping sensory data
 - All of our knowledge of the external world is filtered by our mental faculties, therefore we can know only what our mind presents to us

- Human observations of the world are never neutral – never free of conceptual judgments
 - ‘A priori knowledge’ (necessary and universal knowledge we have independent of experience such as mathematics) - associated with analytic judgments
 - ‘A posteriori knowledge’ (gained from experience) - associated with synthetic judgments
- Time and Space “a priori forms of human sensibility”
 - Any event experienced by the senses is located automatically in a framework of spatial and temporal relations
 - Mathematics involve a context of space and time
 - Number sense comes from our intuition of successive moments in time
 - Geometry comes from our intuition of space
 - Time and space cannot be known to exist in nature independently of the mind, but the world cannot be known by the mind without them
- Causality, substance, quantity, and relations are categories of understanding
- The a priori forms and categories serve as absolute conditions of experience
 - They are empirically applicable – **not metaphysically**
 - World of *noumena* = the world of things-in-themselves
 - World of *phenomena* = the world as it appears to our minds
 - The only world that man knows is the empirical world of phenomena
- Thinking and sensing must be interpenetrating and simultaneous

The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

- For the modern mind, the inevitable outcome of a critical rationalism and a critical empiricism was a Kantian subjectivism limited to the phenomenal world
- By demonstrating that man can know only phenomena, not things in themselves, he sought to make room for the truths of religious belief and moral doctrine
 - Science could not legitimately rule out the possibility that the truths of religion were valid
 - Although one could not know that God exists, one must nevertheless believe he exists in order to act morally
 - One could not justify doing one’s duty if there were no God, or if free will did not exist, or if one’s soul perished at death
 - Religion could be based in the structure of the human situation itself
- Moral Philosophy
 - Moral requirements are based on a standard of rationality - “Categorical Imperative” – we must act in a given way simply because the motive is admirable
 - Moral worth of an action is determined by its motive – not its end
 - A rational will must be regarded as autonomous, or free in the sense of being the author of the law that binds it
 - “Kingdom of Ends” – ideal society in which people are both the authors and the subjects of the laws they obey