Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*
Philosophy 270  
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I. Some Background

Look at *Prolegomena*: David Hume awoke Kant from his “dogmatic slumber.” Kant tried to see if he could put Hume’s problem in a general form. (p. 581b)

What is the general form? In a letter in 1772 Kant raises two questions:

1. How can we be justified in applying a priori categories to appearances in advance of experience, as we must if we are to do science?
2. Can there be any justification at all for applying a priori categories to reality?

The *Critique* is going to answer these questions

*Critique* has two aims:

1. In the Aesthetic and the Analytic to provide a philosophical basis for physical science. Think of the notions of cause, interaction, etc. – these are necessary for science but can’t be justified empirically
2. In the Dialectic “to deny knowledge to make room for faith” (Bxxx) What is at issue? God, freedom, immortality

Kant claims that his philosophy is akin to the *Copernican Revolution*

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects (transcendental realism), but this leads to problems concerning the possibilities of knowledge; let us assume that objects conform to our cognition (transcendental idealism)

We could say that there are two competing models of knowledge: a theocentric model of knowledge and an anthropocentric model

theocentric model: the standard of knowledge is a God’s-eye perspective on the way the world is; the point is to have the mind conform to the objects \(\rightarrow\) transcendental realism

anthropocentric model: the mind is to determine the way we are to conceive of objects \(\rightarrow\) transcendental idealism

II. The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

Kant draws the important distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions and combines this with the distinction between the a priori and the a posteriori

*a priori* – independent of all experience (B2), a priori cognitions arise absolutely independently of all experience; necessary and universal (B3-4)

*a posteriori* – derived from experience

*analytic* – predicate contained within the subject; later becomes clear that the principle of contradiction is involved

*synthetic* – predicate not contained within the subject (contributes something new)
All analytic statements are a priori
All a posteriori statements are synthetic

Now, Kant says, analytic a posteriori statements don’t exist. But, do synthetic a priori statements exist?

Consider the following:
  God exists
  The will is free
  The soul is immortal

And, also, mathematical propositions: “7 + 5 = 12”, “The sum of the interior angles of a triangle is 180°”
And natural science seems to rely on synthetic a priori judgments as principles (B17)

A 10/B 14: Mathematical judgments are all synthetic. Or are they?
common counter-argument: mathematical propositions are all true by definition; but is this what bothers Kant? i.e. I don’t think of “1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1” when I think of “5”

3 main classes of synthetic a priori judgments:
  (1) mathematical judgments
      7 + 5 = 12 I can’t imagine the contrary as being true; but
      the sum of the interior angles = 190° ??
  (2) judgments of natural science
      “in all alterations of the corporeal world the quantity of matter remains unaltered” or “in all communication of motion effect and counter-effect must always be equal”
      –both propositions are, according to Kant, synthetic a priori
  (3) metaphysics
      “the world has a beginning” : predicate not contained in concept; contrary can be imagined; but known independently of experience

General Problem of pure reason: How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?
How is pure mathematics possible?
How is pure natural science possible?
How is metaphysics possible?

III. Some additional terminology

At B 29ff. end of Intro: Kant makes here the important distinction between sensibility and understanding
  sensibility (Sinnlichkeit) is the stem of human cognition in which objects are given to us
  understanding (Verstand) is the stem of human cognition in which these objects are thought

Kant’s point is that sensibility and understanding must work together in order for us to experience the world.

Intuition (Anschauung – “Schau mir in die Augen, Kleine” – Humphrey Bogart)
“an intuition refers immediately to its object” (A 320/B 377)