

**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

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**Hamilton College**  
**Spring 2012**

**Class #28**  
**Kant on**  
**the Ontological Argument**



# Business

- Final Exam: Wednesday, 2-5pm
  - Review Session on Monday?
    - 10am?
    - 1pm?
- Course Evaluations

# Van Cleve on the Deduction

1. *The Unity Premise*: All representations of which I am conscious have the unity of apperception.
  2. *The Synthesis Premise*: Representations can have such unity only if they have been synthesized.
  3. *The Category Premise*: Synthesis requires the application of Kant's categories.
- Conclusion*: The categories apply to all representations of which I am conscious.



# The Category Premise

1. *The Unity Premise*: All representations of which I am conscious have the unity of apperception.

2. *The Synthesis Premise*: Representations can have such unity only if they have been synthesized.

3. *The Category Premise*: Synthesis requires the application of Kant's categories.

*Conclusion*: The categories apply to all representations of which I am conscious.

- Establishing the Category Premise is a long affair, taking Kant deep into the *Analytic of Principles*.
- Kant shows that the categories apply to all creatures that use intuition, that represent the world.
- Even my own existence is known only through the categories, only as an appearance.
  - “Although my own existence is not appearance (still less mere illusion), determination of my existence can occur only in conformity with the form of inner sense and according to the particular way in which the manifold that I combine is given in inner intuition” (B157-8, AW 752b).
- An infinite mind might work by direct awareness, not by representation.
  - That mind would have no use for the categories.
- Any pure concepts will only apply to objects of possible experience.
  - Mathematical propositions hold only for objects of possible experience.
  - “The pure concepts of the understanding, even when they are (as in mathematics) applied to *a priori* intuitions, provide cognition only insofar as these intuitions...can be applied to empirical intuitions... Consequently the categories cannot be used for cognizing things except insofar as these things are taken as objects of possible experience” (B147-8, AW 751a).

# The Categories and Inner and Outer Sense

- When I turn the empirical intuition of a house into a perception by apprehending the intuition's manifold, then in this apprehension I presuppose the *necessary unity* of space and of outer sensible intuition as such; and I draw, as it were, the house's shape in conformity with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. But this same unity, if I abstract from the form of space, resides in the understanding, and is the category of the synthesis of the homogeneous in an intuition as such, i.e. the category of *magnitude*. Hence the synthesis of apprehension, i.e. perception, must conform throughout to that category (B 162, AW 754a).
- This synthetic unity, as an *a priori* condition under which I combine the manifold of an *intuition as such*, is - if I abstract from the constant form of *my* inner intuition, i.e., from time - the category of cause; through this category, when I apply it to my sensibility, *everything that happens is, in terms of its relation, determined by me in time as such*. Therefore apprehension in such an event, and hence the event itself, is subject - as regards possible perception - to the concept of the *relation of effects and causes*; and thus it is in all other cases (B163, AW 754a).

# Transcendental Discovery of the Categories

- Abstracting space and time, we find that the categories were presupposed.
- We do not, via abstraction, create the categories.
- We discover them already imposed on our experiences.
- “The *possibility of experience* is what provides all our *a priori* cognition with objective reality. Now experience rests on the synthetic unity of appearances, i.e., on a synthesis of appearances in general performed according to concepts of an object. Without such synthesis, experience would not even be cognition, but would be a rhapsody of perceptions” (A156/B195, AW 761a).
- The forms of intuition meet up with the categories of the understanding because they are both *a priori* impositions of the subject.
  - ▶ “Either experience makes these concepts possible, or these concepts make experience possible. The first alternative is not what happens as regards the categories (nor as regards pure sensible intuition). For they are *a priori* concepts and hence are independent of experience...The categories contain the grounds, on the part of the understanding, of the possibility of all experience as such” (B167, AW 755a-b).
- We don’t know about the conditions on objects in the noumenal world.
- We do know that for us, experiences (i.e. appearances of objects in nature) must have certain abstract features.

# After the Transcendental Deduction

- Kant explains, or transcendently deduces, all of the particular categories.
- Then, he shows how his transcendental idealism applies to a variety of traditional philosophical problems and paradoxes:
  - the question of the existence of an external world
  - whether space and time are absolute or relational
  - whether we have free will
- In some cases, Kant sides with the rationalists, claiming that we have knowledge.
  - certainty of mathematics
  - knowledge of an external world
  - the self
- In other cases, Kant finds the rationalists' claims overly dogmatic, exceeding the limits of pure reason.
  - The existence of God
  - Atomism
  - Freedom

# Two Last Topics (for us) in Kant's *Critique*

1. The refutation of idealism
2. The ontological argument for the existence of God



# The Refutation of Idealism



Kant lecturing to Russian officers

# Overview of the Refutation

- Neither Berkeleyan idealism nor Humean skepticism are justified, given the conclusions of the Transcendental Analytic.
  - “**Theorem** The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me” (B275, AW 782a).
- First, Kant distinguishes between problematic idealism, which he attributes to Descartes, and dogmatic idealism, which he attributes to Berkeley.
  - The dogmatic idealist complains that space and time must be properties of the noumenal world.
  - But, since we can't know anything of the noumenal world, then we must have no knowledge of space and time.
- By taking space and time to be pure forms of intuition, Kant provides a context for rejecting dogmatic idealism.
  - We can take them to be objective properties without committing to knowledge of the noumenal world.
- Thus, the real problem for Kant is the problematic idealist.
  - The skeptic of the First Meditation
  - “Problematic idealism...alleges that we are unable to prove by direct experience an existence apart from our own...The proof it demands must...establish that regarding external things we have not merely *imagination* but also *experience*. And establishing this surely cannot be done unless one can prove that even our *inner* experience, indubitable for Descartes, is possible only on the presupposition of *outer* experience” (B275, AW 782a).

# Tlumač's Version of the Refutation, Part I

Actually, my version of Tlumač's version

1. I am judging.
2. Some act of judging is occurring.
3. Any act of judging is an act of consciousness or awareness.
4. Acts of consciousness or awareness are representative (have a content).
5. Awareness of the instantaneous is impossible.
6. So the content of awareness is non-instantaneous.
7. Any non-instantaneous content is a successive content, that is, a series of items occurring in an order, and not all at a single instant.
8. So judgmental awareness is of a succession of items.
9. Awareness of succession implies awareness of a plurality of items as a plurality - awareness of a diversity or manifold.
10. Awareness of a plurality of items as a plurality requires that the plurality be apprehended as a numerically identical collection over the time during which the awareness is occurring.
11. This identity of the manifold over time requires that the act of awareness of this identical manifold connect up or relate the various elements which comprise it, that is, be aware of all the elements together.
12. Such a connective awareness requires that earlier items in the series be recognized together with the later items, and that all the items be recognized as belonging to this unity over time.
13. Only a persisting, identical subject of awareness can be connective; a series or collection of diverse subjects of consciousness is incapable of such connective activity.
14. So any act of judgment requires a persisting judger.

# Tlumač's Version of the Refutation, Part II

15. An identical judge must be able to be aware of his unity of consciousness.
16. But awareness of an objectless awareness itself is impossible. I can be aware of consciousness only by being aware of the object of consciousness.
17. So awareness of a persisting consciousness requires awareness of a persisting object of consciousness.
18. So awareness of succession requires awareness of something persisting.
19. This something persisting cannot be an item in the series, or of the succession, since only by being aware of it can I be aware of the series.
20. This series of items (of acts of representation) constitutes my mental life.
21. So the persisting something is not part of my mental life.
22. But if something is not part of my mental life, it is existentially and attributively independent of me.
23. And since it is something which I can perceptually identify and which persists, it is re-identifiable.
24. So the persisting something required for awareness of succession, which in turn is required for judging, is an objective particular.
25. So I am aware of an objective particular.



# **The Ontological Argument**

# Descartes's Ontological Argument

- Existence is part of the essence of the concept of God.
  - having angles whose measures add up to 180 degrees is part of the essence of a 'triangle'.
  - the concept of a mountain necessarily entails a valley.
- The essence of the concept of God is perfection.
  - the three omnis
  - existence

# On Existence

- Gassendi said that existence is not a perfection, but no one believed him!
- “The idea of existence, then, is the very same with the idea of what we conceive to be existent. To reflect on any thing simply, and to reflect on it as existent, are nothing different from each other. That idea, when conjoined with the idea of any object, makes no addition to it. Whatever we conceive, we conceive to be existent. Any idea we please to form is the idea of a being; and the idea of a being is any idea we please to form” (Hume, *Treatise* §I.II.VI).
- Kant, following Hume, claims that existence is not a property in the way that the perfections are properties.
- Existence can not be part of an essence, since it is not a property.
- “A hundred real thalers do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible thalers” (AW 822a).

# Real (Determining) Predicates and Logical Predicates

- A logical predicate serves as a predicate in grammar.
- Any property can be predicated of any object, grammatically.
- The Statue of Liberty exists.
- Seventeen loves its mother.
- A real predicate tells us something substantive about an object.
- The Statue of Liberty is over 150 feet tall.

Existence is a grammatical predicate,  
but not a real predicate.  
Grammatical form is not a sure guide to  
logical form.



# Kant and Caterus

- Kant's objection accounts for the objection from Caterus
  - the necessarily existing lion
- Both urge us to distinguish concepts from objects.
- In predicating existence of a concept, we are just restating the concept.
- We are not saying anything about the object.

# Is Existence a Predicate?

- Kant: existence is too thin to be a real predicate.
- We do not add anything to a concept by claiming that it exists.
- The real and possible thalers must have the same number of thalers in order that the concept match its object.
- So, we do not add thalers when we mention that the thalers exist.
- But, do we add something?

# Debates About Existence

- The tooth fairy
- Black holes
- We seem to consider an object and wonder whether it has the property of existing.
- We thus may have to consider objects which may or may not exist.
- E.g. James Brown



# Meinongian Subsistence

- Meinong attributes subsistence to fictional objects and dead folks.
- James Brown has the property of subsisting, without having the property of existing.
- Kant's claim that existence is not a real predicate, while influential, may not solve the problem.



# The Fregean Argument for Kant's Solution

- First-order logic makes a distinction between predication and quantification.
- In our most austere language, existence is not a predicate.
- $(\exists x)Gx$  or  $(\exists x) x=g$
- Note the distinction between the concept (represented by the predicate or object) and existence (represented by the quantifier).

# Kant and First-Order Logic

- First-order logic was developed a full century after Kant's work
- But, it uses the distinction he made between existence and predication.
- The quantifiers deal with existence and quantity
- The predicates deal with real properties, like being a god, or a person, or being mortal or vain.
- First-order logic is supposed to be our most austere, canonical language, the *Begriffsschrift's* microscope.
- But, is first-order logic really the best framework for metaphysics?

# The End