

PHIL 971 – Kantian Conceptualism
Handout 7 – Transcendental Deduction (III)
10.17.13

1 The Deduction & Intentionality

1.1 Is the TD an argument about the foundations of intentionality?

Objective representation: A conscious representation of a mind-independent feature of (empirical) reality

Intellectualism: All objective representation depends, at least in part, on the operations of the understanding

Sensibilism: At least some forms of objective representations do not depend on the understanding

- Kant makes remarks throughout that are suggestive of a picture on which any cognitive 'relation to an object' depends on acts of the understanding¹
 - 'relation to an object' is commonly taken to mean representation of a mind-independent feature of reality^{2,3}
 - proposes a strategy to validate the categories—viz. they are objectively valid because they are necessary for objective representation

1.2 Problems for Intellectualism

- Difficulty making sense of Kant's conception of the structure of our representation of space and time
- Difficulty making sense of the independence of the two faculties⁴
- Difficulty accounting for the possibility of non-rational animal representation⁵

COMBINATION & SENSORY ATOMISM

- Intellectualism readings have difficulty motivating the problem of combination (§15) which sets up the Deduction proper
 - they largely assume that Kant is:
 - i. committed to sensory atomism and ideality of relations
 - ii. is merely signaling this commitment in §15
 - the assumption is encouraged by Kant's claim that "[E]verything in our cognition that belongs to intuition...contains nothing but mere relations"

¹ Understanding is, generally speaking, the faculty of cognitions. These consist in the determinate relation of given representations to an object." An object, however, is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united. Now, however, all unification of representations requires unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them. Consequently the unity of consciousness is that which alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, thus their objective validity, and consequently is that which makes them into cognitions...(B137; cf. A104-5).

² Kant's proposal is that an object is "that in the concept of which a manifold of a given intuition is united" (B137). Here 'object' should be read in the broad sense of objective feature of reality – a feature whose existence and nature is independent of how it is perceived (Pereboom (2006), 160).

³ [Personal identity and the argument of the TD] are linked by the concept of an objective state of affairs, which Kant, not quite happily, calls the concept of an object. This is the concept which marks the difference between 'I have a sensation of warmth' and 'There is something hot in my vicinity', and between 'I have a visual field as of seeing something red' and 'There is something red which I see'. (Bennett (1966), 126).

⁴ In contrast [to the pure forms of intuition], the categories of the understanding do not at all put forward conditions under which objects in intuition can be given to us. Consequently, objects could indeed appear to us without their being necessarily related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their conditions a priori (A89-90/B122).

⁵ Yet from the comparison of the similar mode of operation in animals...to that of humans...we can quite properly infer...that animals also act in accordance with representations (and are not, as Descartes would have it, machines), and that in spite of their specific difference, they are still of the same genus as human beings (as living beings). (CJ 5:464).

- Three problems with ideality thesis:
 - i. the problem of combination is supposed to apply to *intuitions* as well as sensations⁶
 - ii. Kant denies the ideality of all relations
 - real causal relations
 - relations among moral agents
 - iii. sensation is neither epistemically nor metaphysically prior to (pure) intuition

⁶ The **combination** (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition (B129-30).

2 An Alternative to Intellectualism?

The Strategy: Undermine 'Intentionalist' readings of the Deduction by looking at historical context and motivation of the argument. Specifically, considerations from Kant's philosophy of science support a reading that does not require the assumption of Intellectualism

Kant's Problem: Kant agrees with criticisms of scholastic science—viz. we are cut off from the real essences which ground our explanations of the behavior of things.⁷ Nevertheless, Kant wants to show how it is possible that natural science satisfies the high standards of a proper science

⁷ Through experience I observe much, which belongs to the being of a thing; e.g. extension in space, resistance against other bodies, etc. Now, the inner ground of all this is the nature of the thing. We can only infer the inner principle of the thing from those characteristics that are known to us; therefore the real essence of the thing is inscrutable to us, though we cognize many essential parts thereof. (Metaphysics Pölitz 28:553).

2.1 The Structure of Scholastic Explanation

- Scientific knowledge consists in saying why things are the way that there are for the members of the given domain
- Knowledge depends on articulation of real definitions of the subject matter of the science, which articulate the essences, or fundamental explanatory features, of the relevant individuals studied
 - Essences: individuate kinds, and explain why members of the kind have the features that they do
 - * propria: necessary but not explanatorily fundamental features of a thing—propria may be *inferred* from the essence (risibility in humans)
 - * accidents: non-necessary and non-explanatory features of a thing—accidents are *not* inferrable from the essence (e.g. the blackness of crows)
 - depends on articulation of the essences of the relevant members in order to provide simple real definitions

- Scientific definition proceeds by specifying:
 - the kind to which its members belong (*genus*),
 - the name of the thing (*species*) defined by its principle feature (difference*)
 - the characteristics (*properties*) which 'flow from' that principle feature
 - the remaining characteristics which are typical of the thing though not inferable from its principle feature
- A fully articulated proper science would be one which provides a set of real definitions of its members from which all the properties have been inferred or derived
 - Euclidean geometry is often taken as an exemplar

2.2 The Object of a Proper Science

Claim: We should understand the 'objects' with which Kant is concerned as the 'objects of a proper science'

Proper science [Wissenschaft]: set of cognitions ordered by a principle or set of principles that:

- i. organize the subject matter of the science as a whole and delineate it from other subject matter
 - ii. ground with 'apodeictic' certainty the various cognitions that constitute the subject matter of the science⁸
 - iii. ground/explain the universal reach and necessary application of claims made by the science
- What kinds of individuals constitute the subject matter of a proper science?
 - individuals with essences that explain the unity of their manifest features—viz. substances
 - We can see that this is Kant's aim by examining his remarks about objects in the context of his discussion of the structure of science

⁸ What can be called proper science is only that whose certainty is apodictic; cognition that can contain mere empirical certainty is only knowledge improperly so-called. (MFNS 4:468).

2.3 General vs. Special Metaphysics

- A metaphysics of nature, which "considers everything so far as it is, on the basis of a priori concepts" (A845/B873), has two parts:
 - i. General metaphysics
 - conditions of an object in general
 - intuition is of actual or instantiated properties
 - an object is a unity of a set of predicates/properties⁹
 - the ground of the unity of an object is in the cognizing subject¹⁰

⁹ What is an object? That whose representation is a sum of several predicates belonging to it. The plate is round, warm, made of tin, etc. Warm, round, being made of tin, etc., are not objects, although the warmth, the tin, etc., [are]. An object is that in the representation of which various others can be thought as synthetically combined. (R6350, 18:676).

¹⁰ Through [the] senses we can cognize only the properties or predicates of the object. The object itself lies in the understanding (LM 28:550)

- ii. Special metaphysics
 - corporeal nature (physics)
 - * conditions of material objects
 - thinking nature (psychology)
 - * conditions of mental objects
- General (or Transcendental) metaphysics concerns nature in its 'material' sense, as the sum total of all things insofar as they can be objects of the senses
- Special metaphysics is distinguished from General metaphysics in three ways:
 - i. not entirely 'pure' – it depends on empirical concepts (i.e. /, /)
 - ii. extends only to objects of a particular form of intuition (e.g. space, time)
 - iii. depends on the applicability of mathematics
 - the objects of inner sense cannot be mathematized, so there is no special metaphysics of mental objects—i.e. psychology is not a proper science

2.4 Essence vs. Nature

Essence: the ground of the possibility of a thing¹¹

Nature: the ground of the existence of a thing as determined by universal laws¹²

The goal of a special metaphysics is to articulate what belongs to the essence of its object (either matter or mind) by appeal to what belongs to the essence of an object in general (i.e. the categories) plus mathematical principles¹³

- If we are to explain the possibility of a special metaphysics of corporeal nature (i.e. physics) we need an account of how we know the essence of its subject matter—viz. *matter*¹⁴

3 References

- Bennett, Jonathan. 1966. *Kant's Analytic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Friedman, Michael. 2013. *Kant's Construction of Nature: A Reading of the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pereboom, Derk. 2006. "Kant's Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions." In *A Companion to Kant A Companion to Kant*, ed. Graham Bird, 154-68. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

¹¹ Essence is the first inner principle of all that belongs to the possibility of a thing. Therefore, one can attribute only an essence to geometrical figures, but not a nature (since in their concept nothing is thought that would express an existence). (MFNS 4:467, note).

¹² If the word nature is taken simply in its *formal* meaning, where it means the first inner principle of all that belongs to the existence of a thing then there can be as many different natural sciences as there are specifically different things, each of which must contain its own peculiar inner principle of the determinations belonging to its existence. (MFNS 4:467; cf. Pr 4:294, 318).

¹³ A special metaphysics...must explain the possibility of applying mathematics to the specific empirical concepts involved in a proper natural science restricted to this domain [i.e. of objects in nature]. It must explain how these particular concepts acquire their precise mathematical structure and, in this sense, how their mathematical construction is possible. (Friedman (2013), 567).

¹⁴ A property on which the inner possibility of a thing rests, as a condition, is an essential element thereof. Hence repulsive force belongs to the essence of matter just as much as attractive force, and neither can be separated from the other in the concept of matter. (MFNS 4: 511).