

February 15, 2013

Kant's Philosophical Importance

- Kant's Copernican Revolution
 - "Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but ... let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition"
 - Philosophy is divided into pre-Kant and post-kant b/c of this
 - Aristotle saw truth as something in the world that we were looking for. Kant says that the way our mind is structured, truth is an artifact of that.
 - One reason and one truth. One mind that organizes everything that we experience.
 - One objective truth
 - What is the source of disagreement?
 - Recognizing the limits of reason. Set the boundaries of what is possible through reason.
- Founding father of German Idealism
 - Thought to have bridged rationalism and empiricism

Hume - Only know generalities

- Happens most of the time (we drop something and it falls)
 - Kant says we can know things absolutely through reason and logic
 - Cause and effect is something that is absolutely true.

Kant's Personal Life

- Born in 1724 in Königsberg, Prussia
- 1755 - Kant first starts work as a lecturer. Appointed professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg in 1771
 - 1781 - Critique of Pure Reason
 - 1784 - What is Enlightenment
 - 1785 - Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
 - 1788 - Critique of Pure Practical Reason
 - 1790 - Critique of Judgment
- Dies in 1804 -
 - Last word = Genug (enough)

Explanation and Outline

- Branches of Philosophy - Physics - Ethics - Logos
 - Physics - study of the natural world and natural order
 - Ethics - Sphere of good action
 - Logic -
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- The character of the division
 - Material - what does happen
 - Formal - only has a side that doesn't require empirical evidence; through reason
 - A priori - what can be known w/o empirical research; necessarily follows because of the structure of reason
 - A posteriori - to reason from cause and effect
- What Ought to Happen and Freedom

- Only within the formal part of ethics do we have the question 'what ought to happen?'
 - We're looking for the formal part of ethics
 - It will give us the ideal, what reason tells us ought to happen
- Kant shows that we are free in part 3 chapter 3
 - In some ethically free sense
- Empirical Ethics vs Pure Ethics
 - Empirical Ethics – we are studying general regularities, and so doing something like social science
 - Kant calls empirical ethics 'practical anthropology'
- The Sole Aim of the Present Groundwork
 - Establishing the supreme principle of morality
 - Means we're looking for the source of morality, or are relationship of morality
 - Kant is looking for a source of a particular sort, the clearest and purest source of moral conduct will be a rational source and will, in some sense, be in people
 - Rational
 - In us
- The Method of the Groundwork
 - Ch. 1 – passage from ordinary rational knowledge of morality to philosophical knowledge of morality
 - Ch. 2 – passage from popular moral philosophy to a metaphysic of morals
 - Ch. 3 – final step from a metaphysic of morals to a critique of pure practical reason

February 19, 2013

Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals - Chapter 1 -

- The unconditionally good thing: the good will (vs: talents, gifts of fortune, qualities of character, etc.)
 - Nothing is good without qualification but the good will
 - Others fall short b/c they can be used for bad ends
 - Appeal to ends
 - Just a means, not an ends
 - Courage to protect people or to rob a bank
 - The good will makes these things good
 - Possible answers fall short:
 - Intelligence
 - Wit
 - Judgment
 - Talents
 - Power
 - Wealth
 - Honor
 - Morally good if it has good will
 - The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, good will is intrinsically good.
 - Even if incapable of carrying out its intentions, it still shines like a jewel for its own sake
- Merit and happiness
 - Happiness has conditional value
 - Happiness = good when people have good will
- The function of reason
 - Two args that happiness cannot be the function of reason

- Teleology/Organs/Instinct
 - See natural purposes in the world
 - What is the natural purpose of reason?
 - That answer can't be happiness b/c it's obvious that animals are much happier than we are.
- The Fact of Misology
 - The more you think about the world, how the world works, the kinds of things people are doing, Kant thinks this makes you more and more angry/sad.
 - People who are more thoughtful for Kant tend to be more depressed etc.
 - Thoughtfulness doesn't lead to happiness
- The goodness of the good will: duty
 - The good will is good b/c it acts from and for the sake of duty.
 - From - what is the motive,
 - For the sake of - end you're acting for
 - Doing the action b/c it's good
- The motive of duty (vs. self-love)
 - Two imperatives for Kant: (imperative = command)
 - Categorical - you must
 - Hypothetical - presupposes that you have some desire/interest/end external to the action
 - If you want this, then you should do this.
 - There are two motives for Kant:
 - Duty
 - Self-love (self-interest)
 - Connected to pleasure/good feeling
 - The Prudent Grocer
 - Prudent - what we do to be happy
 - The grocer acts for what will be his best interest
 - Preserve one's life from duty
 - Not commit suicide b/c it's the right thing to do even though your life is hard etc.
- Respect and universal law
- Ordinary practical reason and the need for philosophy

February 20, 2013

Good Will

- Good in itself/unconditionally
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- Not good b/c of results
 - Good will makes something good
 - Good will = a jewel
- Not good b/c it leads one to fare well
 - Don't
- Not good b/c it expresses/chooses/acts from pleasing inclinations
 - Heteronomous - letting inclinations affect you

Instead, the good will is good b/c it acts from and for the sake of duty

Source of the capacity is reason