

## Notes for HuVAT talk on Immanuel Kant

### Meta instructions

Read from S Körner's back page blurb:

published by Penguin Books

Immanuel Kant, who was born in 1724 and died in 1804, is by universal consent one of the greatest philosophical thinkers of the modern Western world. He combined the rare gifts of analytical acumen and constructive imagination with the still rarer gift of keeping the balance between the two. Perhaps no thinker ever influenced his successors more. Even the writings of those among them who opposed or oppose him, or who have never properly studied his work, abound in thoughts which he was the first to formulate.

This introduction offers an outline of Kant's system, one of its chief aims being to show that his problems and solutions are not merely of historical interest, but that they concern everybody who makes statements of fact and judgements of value.



Körner's book does not discuss Kant's views about religion. It concentrates on the fundamental epistemological challenge he faced from David Hume.

Talk focuses on Kant's conclusions/view about religion derived from his epistemology which is a vast field.

Kant's technical philosophy can be likened to Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica* in the level of difficulty to read.

### OCR---->

Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg, East Prussia, in 1724 and died there in 1804. He was a younger contemporary of Hume, whose works influenced him deeply. The other chief influences on his life came from science, from religion, and from one other man—

Rousseau. Kant was greatly impressed by the development of science and was himself a competent physicist, astronomer, geologist, and mathematician. His name is remembered in science for his authorship of the nebular hypothesis, which is still known as the *Kant-Laplace* hypothesis. As an astronomical theory, it has been replaced by others, but its importance as a step in the history of astronomy can hardly be over estimated. In it Kant attempted to explain the origin of the solar system out of a primordial nebula, making use only of physical laws and without calling upon the intervention of God in nature; in essence, he said all explanation in science must be physical explanation, and if we have the thought of design at all, we may properly use it only as a guiding hypothesis in the discovery of physical causes.

The religious influence in Kant's life came from the sect known as the Pietists. Pietism was a religious movement in Germany somewhat like Methodism, which appeared later in England. The Pietists, or at least those Pietists close to Kant's own humble family, placed great and indeed almost exclusive emphasis upon upright behavior and simple faith, and they had no truck with ritualism or theological dispute.

Later, when he attended school, he was exposed to a more excessive kind of Pietism with an overemphasis upon public worship and on the depravity of little boys who did not gladly take to it; and it so bored and offended him that from that time on he never voluntarily entered a church and never had much good to say for the organized forms of religion, though he remained abreast of theological literature.

Rousseau's influence is chiefly seen in Kant's respect for the dignity of the common man, and in his political theory, which is strongly republican. He was a partisan of both the French and American Revolutions, at a time when to favor either was to bring suspicion upon oneself in Germany.

Kant's life was calm and uneventful. Everyone knows the story that the housewives of Königsberg set their clocks by his regular daily walk. Heine said that his life passed with the regularity of the most regular of regular verbs. Everyone has been told that he never left the environs of his native city, but it is not so easy to explain the

thoughts he had which made scholars from all over Europe come to Konigsberg to hear him lecture and to participate in the table-talk that made him known as one of the great conversationalists in that age of great talkers.

(Point from Existentialist beginner guide: Kant did these walks late in his life when he became desperate he could not finish his writings and had to adopt a very disciplined life style).

Perhaps the only real excitement in his otherwise quiet life was provided by the royal prohibition on his teaching and writing on the subject of religion. This ban of censorship was applied soon after his chief work on religion was published, though he had been having trouble with the censor during its publication and had had to employ somewhat roundabout procedures to have it published. Kant's response to the ban was: "As your Majesty's humble servant, I agree not to publish or teach on religious subjects." But when Friedrich Wilhelm II died, Kant again felt free to publish his thoughts on religion, explaining then the mental reservation which lay hidden in the form of his obedience to the royal censor. That is, he was bound as the servant of Friedrich Wilhelm II to do what was required, but he was not bound in this way to that king's successors. To this clever ruse we owe the later editions of one of the most important religious treaties of the eighteenth century, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*.

Before we take up this work, however, we must trace the path along which Kant gradually approached it. His most important book was the *Critique of Pure Reason*, published in 1781. This vast and difficult masterpiece of philosophy had as one of its purposes to show that human knowledge is not able to extend to things which cannot be experienced. In this respect, Kant's conclusions are somewhat like those of Hume, but they are reached by a very different route, and it

## 64 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

is, regrettably, difficult to follow closely what he called its "thorny paths." But the outcome, at least, is clear metaphysics, or knowledge of ultimate reality and a supersensuous world, is not possible; all our knowledge is restricted to the world of phenomena, or nature, which is only the appearance of an unknown reality; of

this world, scientific knowledge is objectively valid.

Among the objects included in the traditional scope of metaphysics, of course, is God. In striking down metaphysics, Kant denies that we can have any knowledge of God. Philosophers who had believed that they could prove the existence of God had transgressed the limits Kant found in knowledge. But instead of just writing off these proofs as illegitimate because they belonged to metaphysics, Kant showed, by long and intricate arguments, that the proofs for the existence of God are fallacious.

- There are three classical arguments for the existence of God, and Kant examines each. They are:  
the ontological;
- the cosmological;
- and the teleological (or argument from design).

### **Ontological argument**

The ontological argument was invented by St. Anselm in the eleventh century, but was rejected by St. Thomas Aquinas. It was revived in the seventeenth century by Descartes and was used by Spinoza. It is meant to prove the existence of God from the definition of God as a perfect being. Any characteristic (predicate) which is implied by the definition of a thing must apply to it. A perfect being, the argument runs, must possess all perfections, for otherwise it would not be perfect. Existence is a perfection; therefore God exists. Just as "triangle that does not have three sides" is a self-contradictory concept, so also "non-existent perfect being" is said to be self-contradictory.

Kant refutes this argument by showing that "exists" is not a predicate at all, and therefore it cannot be a predicate of a perfect being, even if a perfect being should in fact exist. Though in grammar the word "existent" is as good a predi-

KANT 65

cate as the word "perfect" and each obeys all the grammatical rules for the use of adjectives, logically, from the standpoint of how these

words behave in inference, they are quite different. When one says of something that it exists, one is not ascribing a property to it, as when he says it is blue or it is perfect; a concept of a non-existent thing x contains all the predicates that the concept of an existing x contains, for "existence" is not a predicate contained in, and therefore to be proved by, a concept. Kant's demonstration of this is sound, but it is very complicated—Kant is never easy to read—so we shall present a modern version of the critique of the ontological argument which is simpler and easier to follow.

The question is: Is a judgment that asserts that something exists, e.g., "Cats exist," logically like one that ascribes a predicate to a thing, e.g., "Cats scratch"? If they are not logically as well as grammatically similar, then "exist" is not a predicate that can be found by analyzing another predicate, like "perfect." Take, says Professor Broad a true statement, "Cats scratch." We can reformulate this sentence, and we find that the person who makes it means one of the following:

- (a1) If there were any cats, they would scratch; or
- (a2) There are cats, and they do scratch.

Now, on the assumption that "exists" is a predicate like "scratches," let us translate the sentence "Cats exist." We get:

- (b1) if there were any cats, they would exist; or
- (b2) There are cats, and they do exist.

Now (b1) is necessarily true whether there are cats or not, and it does not tell us that there are cats. And (b2) tells us that there are cats, twice. But if a man says "Cats scratch" and "Cats exist," he is saying something which is instructive

## 66 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

—i.e., it gives us information—and which happens to be true but which might have been false. Yet if we think "Cats exist" is logically like "Cats scratch," i.e., if we think "exist" is a predicate like "scratch," we would really be saying something uninformative (b2) or something necessarily true whether there are cats or not (b1).

We now apply this paradigm to the judgments "God is perfect" and

"God exists." Translating as before:

(c1) If there were a God, He would be perfect; or

(c2) There is a God, and He is perfect.

(d1) If there were a God, He would exist; or

(d2) There is a God, and He exists.

But none of these proves that God does exist: (d1) is a tautology and is true whether God exists or not; (d2) merely tells us, twice, that God does exist. There is no way to go, logically, from (c1) to (c2) or from (c1) to (d2)

The error of the ontological argument, therefore, is as follows. If "exists" is a predicate, then all statements that a thing exists (like [b1], [b2], [d1] and [d2] ) are either logically necessary or uninformative, merely repeating themselves. But this is not the kind of truth we mean when we say a thing exists. To find out whether a thing exists, we have to examine facts, not just do logic to find out if the statement that something exists is logically necessary like "a is a." Hence the ontological argument, since it implies a false conclusion about how we get knowledge of existing things, is invalid.

### **Cosmological argument**

From the ontological argument, Kant passes on to the other two arguments which are allegedly based upon the facts of experience and not upon empty logic. The cosmological argument is one that argues from the existence of the world to the existence of a necessary being as its cause or condition. This is the familiar causal argument: Anything which exists has a cause, which has a cause, which has a

KANT 67

cause . . . ; there must be a cause of everything which is not an effect of anything else. This is the first cause, or God. Put another way: If things in the world are dependent for their existence on something else, and do exist, then there must be something that is not dependent on anything else for its existence. This would be a necessary being, or God.

The objection to this argument is that it would not, even if otherwise

valid, lead to a conception of God. For "first cause" and "necessary being" are not equivalent to "God" unless "first cause" and "necessary being" are equivalent to "perfect being," and "perfect being" must imply "existing being." Hence, at a crucial stage in this argument, the ontological argument is surreptitiously introduced. It is one link in this chain, and when it breaks the whole falls to the ground.

## Argument from Design

The physico-teleological argument, as Kant calls the argument from design, is already familiar to us from Hume's discussion. "This proof," says Kant

deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with the common reason of mankind. It enlivens the study of nature. . . . It suggests ends and purposes . . . and extends our knowledge of nature by means of the guiding concept of a special unity, the principle of which is outside nature.

Through knowledge gained under the guidance of the principle that all the parts of nature are interconnected under law as if by a Divine Intelligence, the belief in a Supreme Author of Nature "acquires the force of an irresistible conviction."

Nevertheless, the argument is logically inadequate. It is easy to see that it is a special case of the argument from effect (nature) to cause (God), and because that cosmological argument depends upon the ontological argument if it is to prove the existence of God, the teleological argument likewise falls.

## 68 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

The conclusion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is, therefore, that no theoretically valid arguments for the existence of God can be given, because Kant thought that these were the only three possible rational arguments. The Critique of Pure Reason did not, however, deny the existence of God; it only denied that we could know it. He said: "I have found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith." This sounds a good bit like some passage

already quoted from Hume, Hume said that theology could not be based upon reason, and that if we would be religious we should have to have recourse to faith.

But though Hume and Kant sound as though they were saying the same thing, in fact **they were not**. **Hume contrasts reason with faith**, and when he recommends faith he knows that it will be taken with the proper grain of salt. **Kant contrasts faith with knowledge, not with reason**, because he believed that there was a reasonable form of faith, faith that a rational man could not fail to have and remain rational in tracing out the implications of his experience. **Such faith is rational but it is not knowledge**; yet it is **not a blind faith** that has no reasonable standards and criteria and that arises only from our emotions and sentiments. When Kant makes room for rational faith in his philosophy, it is without the skeptical and perhaps ironic attitude with which Hume had recommended faith just a few years earlier. Faith for Hume, as for most theologians, is something outside the realm of reason; faith for Kant is only one of the aspects of reason, the other being knowledge.

## Ethical theory

**Rational faith is based on morality**, not on science and speculative philosophy. We must therefore look briefly at Kant's ethical theory as expounded in his second great work, the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant made a sharp distinction between actions which are **moral** and those which are **merely proper or prudent**. A prudent action, like telling the truth in order not to lose one's good standing, is one that

KANT 69

is likely to be successful in achieving some purpose or satisfying some desire we have. The desire may be selfish or unselfish; but so long as we do the action solely because we want to accomplish some end we desire, the action is merely prudent; it may not be morally wrong, but it is **not a genuinely moral action**, done because it is morally right. A moral action is one which has a unique 'motive, the motive of doing the right action because it is right, and it is one we ought to do regardless of any desires which may have to be

frustrated by it. Reason, operating on our desires, may lead to prudent or clever actions; but pure reason itself, acknowledging a moral law which is not a law of how to satisfy our desires or to be happy, provides the motive for genuine morality.

The question is: Why are we motivated by our reason's acknowledgment of the moral law? Some would say it is because reason recognizes the moral law as a law given by God, who will reward us for our obedience. But Kant did not say this, for this would obliterate the distinction between morality and prudence. It would make Christianity only the most enlightened form of selfishness, with eternal reward in the hereafter outweighing the advantages which might accrue to us in our earthly life if we were immoral but careful. In such a conception as this, there is no more moral worth in obeying God, whom we do not see, than in obeying a traffic policeman, whom we do see.

Kant said that we respect the moral law because it is a law which we, as reasonable beings, legislate for ourselves. We are not merely subjects in the realm of the moral law; we are also sovereigns and legislators. In his political theory, he held that men could not be legitimately bound to laws imposed upon them by fear of the power of the state; such laws make men slaves, not citizens. Laws are valid only to the extent that we participate in their establishment and thereby give free consent to them. Analogously, he said that

## 70 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

the moral law binds us only by virtue of our free consent which is shown in our participation in its establishment.

### **Moral law is decreed by us**

Reason does not so much discover the moral law as decree it. The moral law is not only a law for reasonable beings, but a law reasonable beings give to themselves and voluntarily undertake to obey. Kant calls this the concept of moral autonomy, or moral freedom from all laws which do not have their origin in our own reason.

It is no accident that Kant was a follower of Rousseau and believed in self-government by the people. He extended this concept,

however, far beyond the political sphere and regarded the moral law as a law given by ourselves and to ourselves. The concept of God as the source of moral law is replaced by the concept of ourselves as free rational beings, both sovereign and subject in the kingdom of morality.

It looks as though Kant has firmly banished the notion of God from any place in his ethical theory. Certainly he has built a moral theory that is not based upon any knowledge of God, indeed one that is not built even upon faith in God. Yet the stone that has been thrown out of the foundations is given an essential place in the superstructure. Let us then see how Kant went about to re-establish and rehabilitate the concept of God.

### **How Kant rehabilitated the concept of God**

Morality, as we have seen, cannot be based upon the desire for happiness; that desire, plus intelligence, makes only for prudence and propriety; and it may lead actually to immorality. But Kant knew that we cannot give up our desire for happiness, however able we may become to control it and to disregard its enticements when we are trying to do our duty. Nor should we give it up, but only control it so that it does not infect our consciousness of duty and prevent us from being willing to do what duty requires of us. In fact, **it is inconceivable that in a rational world, moral values should be permanently out of concord with our other legitimate values** and inescapable desires, as they often seem to be

KANT 71

in this **vale of tears**. The highest good in the world is not stark virtue, but happiness proportional to and dependent upon virtue. Virtue is not happiness, but it is **worthiness to be happy**; and if the world is rational at all, we cannot think of this worthiness to be happy as inevitably and invariably frustrated. We know that in the world as we experience it, the proportion between virtue and happiness does not often exist; the morally best people are not always the happiest. We do not know that this proportion is made actual in another world beyond this, though religion teaches that it is. We cannot know this, **not because it is false** but because we have no knowledge at all of

what lies beyond our experience.

But unless we are to regard the moral law as null and void, i.e., as not logically consistent in the order it requires us to enforce upon our will and desires, we must at least believe that this proportioning of desert and reward is possible in the world which we do not know, in the world of things as they are instead of as they appear to our senses. The moral law requires us to seek the highest good, and if we are not to give up the moral law as **chimerical**, we must believe that what it holds before us as a moral ideal must be at least possible. The highest good is possible, however, only if God exists as the **moral governor of the universe**, dispensing reward and punishment according to our moral deserts. Hence Kant concluded that **God is a postulate**, logically required by our acknowledgment of the full implications of the moral law, which we cannot deny.

God, then, is not an object of knowledge but of faith, and of a rational faith and not of a faith based upon sentiment. Is this sufficient to give stability to the moral sentiment? Or must my knowledge of what I ought to do be based upon knowledge of God? Kant answers: Faith is sufficient; and such knowledge would be dangerous to morality. If we knew that God existed,

## 72 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

transgression of the law would indeed be shunned, and the commanded would be performed. But because the disposition from which actions should be done cannot be instilled by any command, and because the spur to action would in this case be always present and external, reason would have no need to endeavor to gather its strength to resist the inclinations by a vivid idea of the dignity of the law. Thus most actions conforming to the law would be done from fear, few would be done from hope, none from duty.

It was therefore for the sake of morality that Kant denied knowledge in order to make room for faith. The faith he provided a place for was not faith in contrast to reason, but faith as an adjunct to moral reason. It is rational, but it is not knowledge.

It is **not even a substitute for knowledge**. We do not go a certain distance toward God, as it were, along the path of knowledge, and then finish the journey by an act of faith, as in the philosophy of St.

Thomas. The whole movement of the mind toward God is from the beginning a morally motivated movement, **not scientifically motivated** or guided. The resulting conception of God is a wholly ethical one. The only valid theology is ethico-theology, and all the attributes we properly ascribe to God are either moral (holiness, beneficence, justice) or are derived from them. This conception, Kant argues, is **less anthropomorphic** than that of those who use the argument from design, for we have a purely rational conception of moral attributes, independent of their embodiment in human form.

Holding this rational faith in God is the same thing as having true religion. "Religion," he says, "is the recognition of all duties as divine commands. . . ." It is not that they are divine commands, or that they owe their authority over us to their being decrees of a divine lawgiver who also created us; for in that event, we should have to know about God before we could know what our duty is, and we do not know

KANT 73

God, while even the most unphilosophical person knows his duty. Moreover, such a theory would be incompatible with moral self-government, or autonomy. **Religion is not the basis for morality**, but rather the contrary; religion is a rational attitude based upon morality, tracing out its ramifications in our conception of the world we do not know. From this, it follows that there are no specifically religious duties; there is no duty, for instance, to believe in the existence of God. Morality and religion differ from each other in their formal structure and vocabulary, but not in their substance. Any religion that requires anything of man other than earnest and conscientious morality is mere superstition and **idolatry**.

Christianity, even in its historically imperfect form, according to Kant approaches the ideal of a pure moral theology more closely than any other religion. The doctrine of Christianity presents the highest moral insights in symbolic language, which we must be careful to interpret properly. For instance, the essence of both morality and religion is destroyed if our reason for obedience to the moral law is a hope of reward in heaven. Moral philosophy requires that we act out of respect for law itself, while religion requires that the motive

for genuine goodness be love of God in purity of heart; but to love God means to do willingly His commandments. The duty and the goodness are the same in any specific case. One of Kant's pupils wrote him: "I verily believe that if Jesus could have heard your lectures on the moral law, He would have said, 'That is what I meant by the love of God.'" Such adulation was alien to Kant's dry un-enthusiasm; but the influence of **moralistic Pietism** persisted throughout his ethical writings, even when he was most adamant in refusing to base ethics on a prior religious belief.

Five years after the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant published his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, the book that brought him under the censure of the Prussian

#### 74 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

government for having "misused his philosophy to the detriment and disparagement of many fundamental tenets of Holy Scripture and Christianity." It is hard to forgive the bigoted royal censor; yet it is not difficult to see what it was in this book that was offensive to him.

The principal themes of this book, in so far as they bear upon religious disputes and the authority of the church, are Kant's theory of the natural evolution of religion and his distinction between service and pseudo-service of God, which he defines as the conflict between true religion and clericalism. There is also, in this book, a new argument for the rationality of faith in God.

Kant held that there is an evolutionary progress in morality from a state of nature, in which there is war of each against all, through civil society in which men are held together in uneasy peace through the externally imposed decrees of a powerful ruler, to an **ethical commonwealth**, or a community in which men hold themselves together by their reverence for law and by trying to **treat each other as ends in themselves**. Moral law is then regarded as if it were a divine command, and the ethical commonwealth is a people united by common allegiance to a supposed author of these commands, namely God. The ethical commonwealth is, therefore, the Kingdom of God or the Church Invisible.

Human nature, being imperfect, and human beings, having an innate propensity to evil, are such that perfect virtue is unattainable.

"Out of such crooked lumber as man is made of," he says elsewhere, "nothing perfectly straight can be built." Perfect virtue is hardly even an effective ideal for men who are aware of the forces of evil in themselves, of their weakness against them, and of the evil in others who surround them. Virtue is an inward state, though it can be securely achieved only in a social situation in which others are likewise committed to its attainment; but no one is

KANT 75

responsible for the moral state of society. But just as he held, in the second Critique, that what we must believe in order to be moral we have a right to believe and indeed must believe in order to organize our moral conceptions in a rational way, here he repeats this kind of argument for a somewhat different conception of God. He argues that the moral need for the ethical commonwealth, which man alone cannot satisfy, requires us to have faith in God, not as the rewarder and punisher, but as the author of the moral system in which men can indeed do their duty. This is faith not merely in God, but faith in the establishment of the Kingdom of God as a condition for the realization of our whole duty.

In fact, however, the visible church appears on the scene of history long before the Church Invisible makes itself effective in the consciences of good men working together for moral betterment. It always begins with some alleged revelation, and its dogma is always worked out with priestly meticulousness and appears as ritual. The visible church, moreover, is often only a political power, with the vested interests of the priestly caste often allying themselves with the powerful of this earth. The visible church, therefore, is often the enemy of true virtue, for it locates the source of the moral law in Scripture (which, as Spinoza and Kant together point out, it often misreads) instead of in man's sovereign moral reason. Only later does there begin an ethical and rational critique of ecclesiastical and dogmatic faith, to the end that the church, originally only an institution in the power-structure of society, is refined into the invisible moral commonwealth. Ecclesiastical faith—faith in Scripture, faith in clerical authority, faith leading to outward conformity in hope of an eternal reward—is replaced or gradually reformed into pure rational faith in God and His Kingdom, the faith of the uncoerced moral consciousness.

In step with this slow evolution, the pseudo-service of

## 76 SIX SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

God in a statutory or clericalistic church is gradually replaced by the legitimate service of God: "Whatever, over and above good life-conduct, man fancies that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious illusion and the pseudo-service of God." For example, Kant believed that prayer was not only ineffectual in changing the way of the world but morally dangerous to him who prays, because it permits him to believe that there is a lenient Governor of the universe who may interfere with nature and history for his benefit, provided only He is approached with proper ceremonies and feelings. This makes us think that ritual propitiation is the proper service of God, rather than conscientious obedience to moral law. This false conception of God degrades the rational conception of God into something anthropomorphic and exposes religion to contempt; at the same time it leads men away from true morality by minimizing the inexorableness of moral law, whose demands are not to be abrogated by piety in desperation.

Men should free themselves, so far as possible, from the **slave mentality**, which thinks of God as an arbitrary monarch whose favor can be won by ritual and ceremonial orthodoxy or asceticism. This emancipation means replacing a religious ethics with an ethical religion, the substitution of actions done because our conscience or reason tells us they are right for actions done with an eye to divine rewards. The former actions are accompanied, however, by the faith that there is in the universe some Being who helps us to do what we know we ought to do, and who will in fact reward us for doing so.

This last great transition can occur only if men are allowed the freedom to think openly on religious questions. That such freedom of thought and of the press is essential for ethical and religious improvement, indeed for the **welfare of the state** itself, was forcefully argued in 1785 in Kant's little essay, *What is Enlightenment?* This essay insisted that

KANT 77

a teacher or clergyman, though an agent of the state or church,

does not act contrary to duty when he brings his critical thoughts to the attention of the learned public, even if his official duties require him to teach what he is told to teach although he may not wholly subscribe to the letter of the teaching. "But as a scholar," Kant said, the teacher or preacher ". . . has complete freedom, even the calling, to communicate to the public all his carefully tested and well-meaning thoughts on that which is erroneous in the symbol [i.e., in the visible form of the church] and to make suggestions for the better organization of the religious body and church. In doing this, there is nothing that could be laid as a burden on his conscience." If, however, he is so opposed to the spirit of the teaching that his public utterances as a minister are only hypocritical, he should resign his office, but the state should continue to allow him to write as he thinks.

Regrettably, the Prussian censor did not agree with this, and the Sage of Königsberg was forbidden to lay his thoughts before the learned world, even in books which few could understand. And the irony of it all is that, as Spinoza saw, the attempt to chain thought was bound to fail; and Kant's thoughts live on, while even the name of the censor is almost forgotten.

## Major works

### Precritical period

- (1755; Kant's *Cosmogony . . .*, 1900 and 1968; *Universal Natural History and Theories of the Heavens*, 1969);  
(1755; Eng. trans. by F.E. England in *Kant's Conception of God*, 1929);  
(1762; trans. in *Kant's Introduction to Logic and His Essay on the Mistaken Subtlety of the Four Figures*, 1963);  
(1763; *Enquiry into the Proofs for the Existence of God*, 1836);  
(1763; *An Attempt to Introduce the Conception of Negative Quantities into Philosophy*, 1911);  
(1764, 1766, 1771; *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, 1960);  
(1766; *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, 1900; *Dreams of a Spirit Seer, and Other Related Writings*, 1969);  
(1770; *Kant's Inaugural Dissertation and Early Writings on Space*, 1929);

### Critical and post-critical writings

- (1781; rev. ed., *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1787; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1929, 1950);  
(1783; *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 1951);  
(1785; *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, 1938; *The Moral Law; or, Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 1948; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1969);  
(1786; *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, 1970);  
(1788; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 1949);  
(1790, 2nd ed. 1793; *Kant's Kritik of Judgment*, 1892, reprinted as *Kant's Critique . . .*, 1914; new version, *Critique . . .*, vol. 1, *Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* and vol. 2, *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, 1911–28, republished 1952);  
(1793; 2nd ed., 4 pt., 1794; *Religion Within the Boundary of Pure Reason*, 1838; *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 2nd ed., 1960);  
(1795; 2nd ed., 1796; *Project for a Perpetual Peace*, 1796, many later editions called *Perpetual Peace*; 1915 ed. Reprinted 1972);  
(1797; 2nd ed., 1798–1803; *The Metaphysic of Morals*, 2 vol., 1799

and 1965; *The Metaphysic of Ethics*, 1836), comprising (*The Philosophy of Law*, 1887) and *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre* (*The Doctrine of Virtue*, 1964); (1798; *Kant on the Art of Preventing Diseases*, 1806); (1798; improved ed., 1800; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 1974); *Immanuel Kants Physische Geographie*, 3 vol. in 6 pt., 1801–04); (1800; *Logic*, 1819); (1803; *Kant on Education*, 1899; *The Educational Theory of Immanuel Kant*, 1904; *Education*, 1960); *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* (1804).

---

### **Points from Existentialism beginners guide book**

Kant critical of Leibniz's rationalism because it was speculative and lacked the empirical confirmation criteria that Kant demanded. Kant distinguished between phenomena and noumena.

The existentialists like many other people had to acknowledge Kant's philosophy so encompassing and influential was it.

---

### **Some post talk reflections**

I did not have time to mention some perspectives of Kant's work which would be highly desirable so I'll mention some here.

#### *Relationship to Hume*

Kant wanted to give a solid philosophical answer to Hume's scepticism where he, contra common sense, said we (humans) cannot ultimately “prove” cause and effect – that all we can do is to assert the phenomenon of “constant conjunction” - something we can perceive directly but had no logical basis to say more than just that despite that in practice we do assert cause and effect to many phenomena of constant conjunction.

Kant's answer was his “*synthetic a priori*” judgements that cause and effect was attributable to many constant conjunctions was the basic element for the philosophical basis of science which subsequently developed.

It is “synthetic” because we humans mentally, by thinking, “put together” certain conclusions following experience. It is “a priori” which is something which comes *before* experience even though we form such judgements *after* experience because our judgement is about how the universe or nature works. The modern philosophy of science can be clearly seen to emerge here.

Such synthetic a priori judgements become hypotheses subject to empirical confirmation. When they are confirmed knowledge and science advances. This line of thinking leads directly to *Karl Popper's* hypothetico-deductive conception of how science advances which is in direct opposition to *Francis Bacon's* conception that science advances by a process of induction. That is the view that scientists gather more and more facts and draw conclusions by extension. It was this view of knowledge advancing by induction which Hume attacked with his constant conjunction characterisation.

Kant's main magnum opus was his *Critique of Pure Reason* which tackled this empirical sceptical scientific aspect of human thinking. Lewis White Beck being more interested in Kant's moral philosophy concentrates on his second great work the *Critique of Practical Reason* where Kant applied his synthetic a priori judgements approach to morality.

From Kant building his thinking from ancient Aristotle he links his synthetic a priori judgements to *Categories*. From that it lead to his calling major morality judging criteria as the Categorical imperative. Today we call this basis of judging ethics “deontological” from deon meaning duty and logos meaning science. This contrasts with teleological ethics which looks at the consequences of actions.