PART I: Kant and the Revolution in Philosophy

CHAPTER I: Human Spontaneity and the Natural Order

Key Concepts:

• The subject of experience is active – i.e. “spontaneous” – not passive.

• Kant executes a “Copernican Turn” in philosophy by reversing the traditional view that our modes of cognition or knowledge (Erkenntnis) must conform to objects, demonstrating instead that objects must conform to our modes of cognition/knowledge if they are to be objects of possible experience. The basic idea is that the subject of experience is an active, cognitive processing agent.

• There are two fundamentally different ways in which the subject can stand before something. The subject can place itself before a singular, individual object right here and now, which Kant calls an “intuition” (Anschauung), or the subject can place itself before a general kind or type of object, which Kant calls a “concept” (Begriff). The basic idea is that experience consists in taking something singular and individual – intuitive representation – as belonging to a particular category or type of object – conceptual representation. Simply put, experience is a matter of taking something individual as of a particular type.

1) NB: Spontaneity is to natural order as freedom is to the moral order.

a) It’s hard to overestimate the importance of the concept of freedom is for German Idealism and its abiding legacy. Freedom is the central concept of German idealism in all of its forms. Indeed, Kant claims that his epistemology – his “theory of knowledge” or account of how we know – is fashioned in order to make room for a commitment to the indispensable role of freedom in human social commerce: “I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for belief” (Glaube) [in the presupposition of human freedom: C. L.]. (Kant, 1965).

b) We use the word “spontaneity” and “spontaneous” in a very limited way to characterize someone as whimsical, capricious, or flighty. Kant uses the word in its original meaning of being active on one’s own, self-originating, or self-moving. The self is “spontaneity” in the sense, then, of being the source of its own activity, capable of acting without being prompted or caused to do so by something outside itself.

2) One key to understanding surrounding the reception of [The Critique of Pure Reason] is to be found in an essay by Kant published in 1784: “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” In that essay Kant identified enlightenment with “man’s
release from his self-incurred immaturity (Unmündigkeit) … the inability to use one’s understanding without the guidance of another” (Kant’s Political Writings, p. 55) [19]

a) Immaturity (Unmuendigkeit) is best understood in terms of accounting for oneself, not simply to others but, perhaps most importantly, to oneself. Why does one do, feel, or believe this or that? On what basis does not hold that such goals and beliefs? The activity of reflecting upon and critically examining one’s goals and beliefs opens up a “space of reasons” within which one must become independent or “standing on one’s own” (Selbststaendig). When one understands “maturity” in terms of this critical reflective ability to examine the grounds or reasons (Gruende) for one’s intentions and convictions, then it is easy to see why immaturity is “self-incurred.” Immaturity consists in accepting goals of action and beliefs about the world on the basis of another’s authority, perhaps simply out of habit or convenience, and any such arrangement allows some source outside oneself to authorize one’s own understanding of, and standing within, the world. The key point for Kant is that any such tutelage – i.e. being subject to an outside sovereign or slave to some master – is something that one lets or allows to happen, hence a “self-incurred” servitude for which one is responsible.

3) THE PRIMACY OF FREEDOM: Kant’s words fell upon an audience already prepared to receive them. The age of “tutelage,” “immaturity” was over, like growing out of childhood: the illusions of the past were to be put aside, they could not be resurrected, and it was time to assume adult responsibilities. Moreover, this “immaturity” had not, in fact, been a natural state of mankind, but a “self-incurred” state, something “we” had brought on ourselves. On the question of what was needed to accomplish this, Kant made his views perfectly clear: “For enlightenment of this kind, all that is need is freedom” (Kant’s Political Writings, p. 55). Kant’s words captured a deep, almost, subterranean shift in what his audience was coming to experience as necessary for themselves: from now on, we were called to lead our own lives, to think for ourselves, and, as if to inspire his readers, Kant claimed that all that was required for this to come about was to have the “courage” to do so.

a) The notion of freedom introduced here is different from traditional notions of freedom as “the absence of restraint,” the presence of ability, or “having mobility or latitude of action.” Here, freedom is understood as the ability to lead our own lives on the basis of the ability to think for ourselves. This type of freedom is not so much the physical scope of one’s doing things as the intellectual ability to critically reflect upon one’s having always already authorized particular goals of action and beliefs about the world. This is the freedom from having others authorize one’s way of life, in contrast to freedom to do things. This is not the freedom to realize one’s desires free of interference or hindrance but, instead, the freedom to reflect upon and analyze one’s reasons for acting, the activity of taking responsibility for acting on certain types of reasons as opposed to others. This is a freedom from causal determination, on the one hand – i.e. spontaneity –
and freedom to adopt certain types of reasons for one’s actions. It’s important to note that this type of freedom – freedom from anything just given to me in my circumstances – is not something that can be taken away from one. Notice that freedom to do whatever one happens to desire – the absence of restraint or presence of physical ability – is often a form of servitude or subservience to what one is given naturally. One has only to think of addictions, sadistic desires, or aggressive impulses, and self-destructive proclivities to become wary of any notion of freedom that endorses the wholesale realization of one’s given desires. Kant conceives of freedom as freedom from being determined by the (natural or social) desires that we just happen to have: our freedom is the ability to adopt or discard such desires, making freedom a matter self-shaping, self-determination, or self-authorization.

4) DOGMATISM VERSUS CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY: **Dominating the Critique** is the sense that, from now on, “we” moderns had to depend on ourselves and our own critical powers to figure things out. The opposite of such a “critical” (or, more accurately, self-critical) stance is “dogmatism,” the procedure of simply taking some set of principles for granted without having first subjected them to that kind of radical criticism. In the Critique, Kant in fact characterizes “dogmatism” as marking, as he puts it, the “infancy of reason” just as skepticism marks its growth (although not its full maturity). The point is not to remain in the “self-incurred tutelage” of our cultural infancy, nor to be content simply with the “resting place” that skepticism offers us. It is instead to find a home for our self-critical endeavors, a “dwelling point,” a *Wohnplatz*, as he put it, for ourselves. Such a radical, thoroughgoing self-critical project demands nothing less than that reason must, as Kant put it, “in all its undertakings subject itself to criticism … [and that] reason depends on this freedom for its very existence”

a) DOGMATISM TO SKEPTICISM TO CRITICISM:

i) Kant’s reception of 4 skeptical dangers that emerged from David Hume’s devastating empiricist critique of classical and rationalist metaphysics:

1) The Challenge of Determinism: Freedom of the will is illusory.
2) The Threat of Skepticism: Distinction between reason and animal faith is illusory.
3) Disillusionment of the Enlightenment pretention of reason as a supreme faculty: “Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions” (Hume).
4) The desublimation of art: aesthetic pleasure is merely a natural sentiment of the human animal, which may well be variable, transitory, and changing.

5) REASON ACTIVELY PROJECTS POSSIBLE FRAMES OF KNOWLEDGE; IT IS NOT A PASSIVE OR RECEPTIVE FACULTY: And, as such “reason” must claim “insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and that must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature’s leading-strings, but must itself show the
way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give
answer to questions of reason’s own determining” (Critique, Bxiii) [21]
a) Think here of the remarkable ingenuity, creativity, and artifice of scientific
experimentation, and think of such experimentation as setting up an interrogation
of a subject (matter) in which we pose the questions, demanding “yes” or “no”
answers to our own questions. Scientists actively construct the framework within
which some natural phenomenon is allowed to show itself under the terms or
conditions that we provide. This is “spontaneity” or freedom in the sense of
setting out the framework or arena in which we watch for answers to our own
questions.
b) The most basic and elemental unit of human experience or action is the activity of
holding oneself together a viewpoint or outlook upon the world. The human self
is not, in the first instance, a passive subject exposed to the world’s impingements
but, instead, an active subject that holds itself together as a viewpoint or
perspective upon the world.
c) We watched the protagonist of Christopher Nolan’s Memento struggling to
maintain himself as a perceiving, knowing, and acting agent in the world. Lenny
insists that one has to have “a system” to be able to make sense of all of the
photos and images he has. Lenny knows that having an image or photo is not
efficient; one must take or understand the image in terms of categories and kinds
to be able to make sense of the world. One must literally hold together, select,
and frame or organize such images and photos – what Kant called “intuitions” –
in order to become a relatively stable viewpoint upon the world.

6) FTNT: Dogmatism, skepticism, and critical philosophy.
   a) It’s difficult to overestimate the importance of this line up of terms for Kant.
      They represent the world-historical progression of reason from accepting claims
      without question (dogmatism), to rejecting claims because no argument is
      absolutely conclusive (skepticism), to, finally, a mature exercise of reason that
      knows itself as the author of itself (critical philosophy).

7) … the themes of “freedom” and the “thinking for oneself” were indeed
motivating the Critique … [21]

8) JUDGMENT AS THE ATOMIC UNIT OF KNOWLEDGE/KANT’S
    FORMALISM/THE QUID IURIS: There are two ways, Kant suggested, that we can
look at judgments: on the one hand, we can regard the form of the judgment (how
the subject is related to the predicate), and, on the other hand, we can regard the
judgment in terms of how we go about justifying it [21]

9) ANALYTIC VERSUS SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS: With regard to form,
   judgments can be said to be, in Kant’s technical language, either “analytic” or
   “synthetic.” An analytic judgment is one if which the predicate is said to be
“contained” in the subject (as a smaller circle might be drawn inside a larger circle). “Triangles have three sides” would be an analytic judgment, since the predicate (“three sides”) is already “contained” in the subject (“triangles”). Thus, one of the marks of an analytic judgment is that it would always be a self-contradiction to deny it. (“A triangle does not have three sides” would be an example of such a self-contradiction). Synthetic judgments, by contrast, do not have the predicate “contained” in the subject, and thus it would never be a self-contradiction to deny them. (“Kant’s hat was black” would be an example of such a synthetic judgment). 

10) APRIORI VERSUS APPOSTERIORI: With regard to justification, we establish the warrant of judgments, so it seems, either by appeal to experience (what Kant called a posteriori justification) or by an appeal to something independent of experience.

11) THE QUESTION OF CRITICAL METAPHYSICS: The first question that had to be asked therefore, as Kant slyly put it, was whether there are any such synthetic a priori judgments at all.

12) THE DISTINCTIVE VALIDITY OF MATHEMATICS AND GEOMETRY: GEOMETRICAL AND ARITHMETIC JUDGMENTS AS JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF PERFORMING CONSTRUCTIVE OPERATIONS: He quickly concluded in the affirmative. First of all, the judgments of mathematics are not analytic, yet they are both necessary and proven independently of experience. “7 + 5 = 12” is such a synthetic a priori judgment. Kant’s line of reasoning, very roughly characterized, was something like this. To make that judgment, we need to perform a series of operations: first, we must construct the number seven by an operation performed on some arbitrarily chosen magnitude (roughly, by an iterative procedure that generates seven units of that magnitude), and then we must construct the number five by the same kind of operation, except that the latter operation is carried out as a succession to the construction of the first operation that constructed the number seven, and then we must examine what the results are of performing these two operations successively. Although 12 is the necessary result of these two operations being carried out in that order, it is not “contained” in the subject of the judgment (“7 + 5”). Nor can this be interpreted as a matter of just following out the meanings of the words (“seven” and “five” and “plus” and “equals”), since arithmetic, indeed, all mathematics, cannot be understood as being simply a kind of
formalism, a kind of “game” with rules that can be manipulated independently of whether one thinks the game has any relation to the real world [23]

13) Thus, we are presented with two types of functioning examples of synthetic a priori judgments from arithmetic and geometry. That obviously raised the next issue: how was it possible to justify these judgments? [23]

14) OBJECTIVE VALIDITY OF GEOMETRY AND MATHEMATICS: The very possibility of making true judgments in mathematics and geometry, Kant asserted, would prove to be dependent not on the structure of any objects in the universe that we could be said to encounter in ordinary experience, but rather on the necessary general structure of the mind [24]

a) The basic idea is that the mind imposes or sets out particular forms that first make experience possible. Without such forms, there would be no experience, which is an organization or configuration of sensory data.

15) DISTINCTION BETWEEN CONCEPTS (BEGRiffe) AND INTUITIONS (ANschauungen): Neither concepts nor intuitions are ultimately reducible to the other; each is an independent type of representation [24]

a) Insisting upon the distinction between concepts and intuitions is crucial to Kant’s negotiation of EMPIRICISM, which privileged sensations to the exclusion of concepts, and RATIONALISM, which privileges concepts to the exclusion of sensory intuitions.

16) CONCEPTS AND INTUITIONS: In encountering something as humdrum as a stone, Kant pointed out, we are conscious of it in two ways: as an individual thing and as possessing certain general properties. The stone is this stone, but we can also note that it shares, for example, a color with another stone. We are intuitively, sensuously aware of the individual stone, and we make conceptual judgments about it when we characterize it in terms of its general features [“markers” or Merkmale: C.L.] … we are directly aware of the individual thing and only indirectly (conceptually) aware of the general properties it has. After all, intuitions, as Kant himself put it, put us in an “immediate relation” to an object, whereas concepts only put us in a mediated relation to them; indeed Kant even says that a judgment is a “representation of a representation” of an object – that is, a combination of an intuitive representation of an object and conceptual representation of that intuitive representation, or what Kant (following the logical vocabulary of his time) call a synthesis of representations. Our experience, therefore, seems to consist of two types of “ideas” or “representations”: There are the intuitive representations of things as individuals and the conceptual representations of them in terms of their general features [25]
a) It’s crucial to understand the basic terms in which Kant presents his various arguments, and it’s hard to exaggerate the importance of understanding the basic Kantian notion of “representations.” It’s crucial that one not associate “representation” with something “mental” or, for that matter, “physical.” Kant is not making a naïve or dogmatic metaphysical or ontological claim in using the term “representation.” Instead, he is asking the critical question of how one can be related to – that is, have experience of – something, which is prior to any determination we might make in regard what type of things there are. Kant begins with the rather humdrum observation that things are present to us or show themselves to us, so that we take ourselves as standing or placed (stellen) before something (vor uns). The genus “representation” (Vorstellung) is then specified into fundamentally different types of “presentations” or ways in which something presents itself: namely, immediate and singular, on the one hand, and mediate and general, on the other.

i) Demonstratives, pronouns, proper names are linguistic devices for referring to individuals. With them we pick out an individual, not through a general description – that is, mediately or “through a list of general properties” that the thing must satisfy – but, instead, directly – that is, immediately, without offering any descriptive specification of the individual. It is one singular thing, and individual, that the speaker presents via demonstratives (“this,” “that,” “those,” etc.), pronouns (“he,” “she,” “it,” “they,” etc.), and proper names (Barbara Boxer, Immanuel Kant, etc.). Such linguistic devices are used to directly (immediately) refer to individuals (singularities).

ii) Perception is always the presentation of singular objects in particular times and places, on the one hand, and the presentation of instances of general properties (brown, smooth, square, etc.) and categories (table, chair, bench, etc.). What is present before us in perception and memory is, then, at once, something particular and general, immediate and mediate, given and thought, and Kant distinguishes such moments in terms of intuitions, on the one hand, and concepts, on the other.

b) Kant will analyze experience in terms of how intuitions and concepts are “combined” or “synthesized” into the presentation of objects. His term for such unities of intuitions and concepts is judgment (Urteil), which captures two fundamental factors of the basic unit of human experience: first, there are distinct components, aspects, or moments of experience, intuitions (singular representations) and concepts (general representations); second, although distinguishable, the function together as the most basic (Ur) unit of human experience. Since Kant will argue that “intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty,” it’s prudent to consider them “aspects” or “moments” of an otherwise unified complex presentation.

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1 The crucial characteristics of intuition from the point of view of a semantic interpretation of Kant are given by 5 features: (1) immediacy, (2) relatedness of sensibility, (3) prior to thought, (4) singularity, and (5) object dependence (See Hanna 2001, “What an Intuition Is?” 227-232).
i) “Judgment” will strike the contemporary ear as something highly developed, intellectual, and abstract – the product, perhaps, of sustained thought and complex inferences. Judgments are also deliberate in the sense of an explicit decision. The German term *Ur-teil* will likewise have connotations of being abstract, deliberate, willful, and intellectual. Nevertheless, *Ur-teil* preserves, etymologically, the connotations “part” (*Teil*) and “primordial” (*Ur-*) and, hence, the primitive sense of “telling things apart” or “taking things apart” as our most basic way of being in the world. Taking something *apart* (*geteilt*) from other things is, in the first instance, the primordial event of the foreground/background structure of perception, of one thing being parted from all others, which recede into the (relatively) homogenous background. The most basic event of perception is this separation or parting of focus and horizon, foreground and background. In another sense, we “take apart” and “put back together again” the foregrounded object by identifying its characteristics or marks, its “properties,” as when we notice the color and shape of a lamp. Later phenomenologists, e.g. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, will speak about these two feature of perception in terms of the “external” and “internal” horizon of the object. The English word for object (*Gegen-stand*) still preserves this basic drama in the sense that what it is to be an object is to *object* to, “stand in the way of,” or “impede” our view. An object is that which “comes to a stand over against us.” The key philosophical point of this play of words is this: judgment is not a deliberate and willful act of abstract thought but, instead, the basic structure of being directed to something, anything at all.

17) SPACE AND TIME AS INFINITE *GIVEN* MAGNITUDES: In light of these distinctions, Kant asked his readers to consider the judgments about infinities found in geometry and mathematics. No purely *sensory* intuition could supply a representation of such an infinity, since sensory intuitions always of individual things. Neither could we construct a purely conceptual understanding of those infinities, since it was impossible in the formal logic in Kant’s time to represent such infinities. Therefore, if the synthetic a priori judgments found in mathematics and geometry are to be possible, it must be because we are both *intuitively aware of such infinities* and are capable of constructing the objects of both disciplines by basing our constructions on that intuitive awareness … we must therefore have a *pure intuition of space, a kind of intuitive awareness of the infinite “whole” of space* for us to be able to make those geometrical judgments and constructions … we must have a “pure intuition” of temporality [25]

18) Time and space, Kant therefore concluded, were “ideal” since they could not be object of direct sensory experience and therefore had to be available to us *only in our “pure” representations of them*. Stones and branches were “real” and available to us in ordinary experience; but space and time as treated in the sciences of geometry and arithmetic were only available in our “ideal” representations of them. From that,
Kant concluded, we could not say that space and time were “objects” out there in the world. Or, to put it another way, we could not say, apart from the conditions under which objects are experienceable by us, whether those objects are spatial or temporal [25]

19) Kant then astounded them even more by asking: could we therefore know anything about the objects of experience simply by having direct intuitive encounters with them, unmediated and uncolored by conceptual activity, even with pure intuition? [26]

   a) “Intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuitions are empty.” This is Kant’s definitive and provocative challenge to empiricism and rationalism.

20) MYTH OF THE GIVEN: There could be no direct intuitive knowledge of anything, even in mathematics and geometry; all knowledge required the mediation and use of concepts deployed in judgments [26]

   a) Kant claims that there can be us (finite beings) is no direct – i.e. non-conceptualized – knowledge. Think about this in the following way: can anything be there for you without your reading it or grasping it as something or other, however vague it might be? What is it to face or take oneself as before something? Kant demonstrates that what it is for something to “be there” – better, for one to take oneself as before something – is to have, so to speak, some “read” or “grasp” of what “it” is. Could something just be given to a perceiver directly, without any “take” or “grasp” or thought of what it is? Kant argues that our sensory manifold – colors, sights, sounds, tastes, and feels – are always already taken by a perceiver as the presence of something or other.

   b) THE “SHORT ARGUMENT” FOR IDEALISM: What it is for one to take oneself as presented with anything whatsoever requires that the subject distinguish, in its experience, between itself, on the one hand, and the object, on the other. This duality, however, is not an ontological duality between two domains – say mind and body – but, instead, a distinction from within one’s representations between the perceiver and the perceived. So, the logical structure of experience is something like this: I take myself as before something that I am not. Said differently, my experience belongs to me and to me alone – hence “subjective” – but what it is an experience of is not something subjective but, instead, “objective” in the sense of being, at least in purport, something independent of me. Hence, subject and object are not two distinct ontological domains of “things” that somehow must be paired up. Instead, experience is made possible by being structured in a “subjective” and “objective” dimensions or features.

21) There are the passively received representations of objects in space and time given by sensible intuitions; and there are the discursive representations (concepts) that we combine with the intuitive representations to produce judgments. Concepts, in turn, should be thought of as rules for the combination of representations, as
when we “combine” a representation such as “that thing over there” with another representation, “green,” into the simple judgment: that thing over there is green. In all of this, we are aware of ourselves as having a viewpoint on the world and making judgments about it that may be true or false [26]

22) THE INTERNALIZATION OF THE OBJECT WITHIN THE REPRESENTATION: The guiding question behind the “Transcendental Deduction” was itself deceptively simple: what is the relation of representations to the object they represent? … the conditions under which an agent can come to be self-conscious are the conditions for the possibility of objects of experience – that is, all the relevant questions in metaphysics can be given rigorous answers if we look to the conditions under which we can be self-conscious agents, and among those conditions is that we spontaneously (that is, not as a causal effect of anything else) bring certain features of our conscious experience to experience rather than deriving them from experience. A crucial feature of our experience of ourselves and the world therefore is not a “mirror” or a “reflection” of any feature of a pre-existing part of the universe, but is spontaneously “supplied” by us [27].
a) This “guiding question” of the “Transcendental Deduction” – What is the relation of representations to the object they represent? – is “deceptively” simple in the following sense. First, it’s laconically formulated but expansively complex, because it aims at the heart of empiricism and rationalism. The basic problem with both empiricism and rationalism is their shared assumption: namely, that we have direct and immediate access to ideas, whether sensory ideas or intellectual ones. Of course, empiricists take ideas to be sensations – colors, sights, sounds, touches, tastes, and feels – and rationalists take ideas to be concepts – abstract general representations – but, regardless of this difference between types of ideas (contents of the mind), they share the same conviction that we have direct and immediate relation to such ideas as “objects in the mind.” Kant rejects this basic assumption: we have no unmediated access to any object, whether internal or external, sensory or conceptual.

23) THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE IS A NECESSARY PRESUPPOSITION OF RELATEDNESS TO OBJECTS: Kant took the key to answering his basic question (“What is the relation of representations to the object they represent?”) to hinge on how we understood the respective roles played by both intuition and concepts in judgments and experience. Abstracted out from the role they play in consciousness as a whole, sensory intuitions – even a multiplicity of distinct sensory intuitions – could only provide us with an indeterminate experience, even though as an experience it implicitly contains a multiplicity of items and objects. However, for an agent to see the multiplicity of items in experience as a multiplicity, those items must, as it were, be set alongside each other; we are aware, after all, not of an indeterminate world but of a unity of our experience of the items in that world. We are aware, that is, of a single, complex experience of the world, not of a series of
unconnected experiences nor a completely indeterminate experience; and, moreover, our experience also seems to be composed of various representations of objects that are themselves represented as going beyond, as transcending, the representations themselves.” [27]

24) An intuitive awareness would not be able to discriminate between an appearance of an object and the object that is appearing – that is, that kind of unity of experience cannot in principle come from sensibility itself, since sensibility is a passive faculty, a faculty of receptivity, which would provide us with an indeterminate field of experience and there not a representation of any objects of experience. That distinction (between the representation of the object and the object represented) thereby requires first of all that the intuitive multiplicity be combined in such a way that the distinction between the experience (the appearance) and the object represented is able to be made. This combination must therefore come from some active faculty that performs the combination [28]

25) DISTINCTION BETWEEN OBJECT AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED AS A NECESSARY NORMATIVE DIFFERENCE WITHIN EXPERIENCE: The distinction between the object represented and the representation of the object must itself therefore be established within experience itself. The original question – what is the relation of representations to the object they represent? – thus turns out to require us to consider that relation not causally (as existing between an “internal” experience and an external thing) but normatively within experience itself, as a distinction concerning how it is appropriate for us to take that experience – whether we take it as mere appearance (as mere representation) or as the object itself. That we might associate some representations with others would only be a fact about us; on the other hand, that we might truly or falsely make judgments about what is appearance and what is an object would be a normative matter. The terms in question – “true,” “false” – are normative terms, matters of how we ought to be “taking” things, not how we do in fact take them. Taking an experience to be truly of objects therefore requires us to distinguish the factual, habitual order of experience from our own legislation about what we ought to believe [28]

a) To understand Kant’s arguments, one must constantly remind oneself that he is not doing ontology: that is, he is not raising questions about different types of objects. Instead, he is reflecting upon how we can even be in the business of being related to something objective – how, in other words, we can have an experience of an object. If we dogmatically presume at the outset that experiences are one type of thing – mind -- and that objects are a different type of thing – matter – then we will miss the much more basic, critical question Kant is raising: what are the conditions of the possibility of experience. We will miss the prior, “critical” question of how it is possible for us to even refer to or “represent” objects. Kant raises the basic question of how we can relate ourselves to – refer to or represent – objects of any object whatsoever! This type of question is more fundamental than asking what type of things there are. In contemporary analytic
philosophy, this type of inquiry is called a “general semantic theory”: how is it possible for us to even be in the business of making judgments at all.

26) That way of taking our experience involves three steps: (1) first, we must **apprehend** … (2) Second, we must therefore **unify** that intuitive, experiential multiplicity of items according to some set of **rules** … (3) and finally, we must **make judgments** [29]

27) The decisive issue, so Kant saw, involved getting to the third step and asking how it could be possible at the third step that we would be assured that the conditions for our bringing intuitions under concepts in a judgment would be possible – which, again, is a version of his original question: what is the relation between judgments, as representations, to that which they represent? The key to answering that question involved understanding the way in which the most basic of our **unifying activities** (of apprehension and reproduction by the “transcendental imagination”) take place against the requirements of **what is necessary to have a unified point of view on the world.** Such a point of view requires there to be an **activity that establishes that point of view as a point of view**, and this has to do with the conditions under which we can make judgments about experience [29]

28) TUA = **TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY OF APPERCEPTION = BASIS OF ANYONE TAKING SOMETHING AS SOMETHING**: “It must be possible,” as Kant put it in a key paragraph, “for the ‘I think’ to accompany all my representations: for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me.” . . . That particular move, of course, meant that the condition for any representation’s being a representation (having some cognitive content, being experienced as a representation of something) had to do with the **conditions of self-consciousness itself** . . . Kant’s term for the kind of self-consciousness involved in such a thought is **apperception**, the awareness of something as an awareness (which itself is a **condition of being able to separate the object from the representation of the object**). The question then was: what is the nature of this apperception? [30]

a) The TUA sounds like something unusual when, in fact, it is the most pervasive – and hence unnoticed – feature of conscious life: namely, we become a perspective upon the world by holding our representations of it **together**. Without this activity of unifying the moments of experience, we would lose hold upon ourselves as a perspective upon a single world. What it is to have “objective experiences” – that is, to have experiences that are “of,” “about,” or “directed to” an object – is, at the most basic level, to apply certain distinctions within the full field of one’s experiences, and that requires that the multiplicity of different representations **belong to me** as the one who is, so to speak, **my being presented with** something that I am not. Again, this is not an epistemological issue of how I can know but, instead, the deeper semantic issue of what it is to even be in the business of **purporting to experience and object**. Ultimately, what it means for an experience
to “belong to me” is simply that I subject it to basic normative operations or appraisals: that is, take it as something or other. So, for instance, a succession of representations can never be the representation of a succession unless I take up and run through such a multiplicity as belonging to the flow of my representations.

29) The unity of the multiplicity of experience is therefore in Kant’s words a “synthetic unity of representations” [30]

30) THE COHERENCE OF THE SELF AND THE CONTINUITY OF THE WORLD ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN OF ACTICE, SENSE-MAKING OPERATIONS OR COMPUTATIONS: Thus, we need one complex thinking subject to have a single complex thought [30]

a) This sounds more complex than it is. If my representations are to be of or about anything whatsoever, then I must be taking many different representations as nevertheless presenting one single thing in different ways (for instance, from different spatial perspectives).

31) CORRELATION THESIS: The same complex thinking subject – as the same subject of different experiences – is correlated therefore to the “synthetic” unity of the multiplicity of experience. On the basis of this, Kant drew his most basic conclusion: a condition of both the synthetic unity of the multiplicity of representations (and what he called the analytic unity of apperception) is the synthetic unity of apperception. That the “I that experiences or thinks about X” is the same “I that experiences or thinks about Y” is, after all, not an analytic truth. (From “somebody thought of Kant” and “somebody thought of Hume,” it does not follow that it was the same person who thought of both Kant and Hume). On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary that all the different experiences be ascribed to the same thinking subject, that they be capable of being “accompanied” by the same “I think.” Since it is both necessary (and therefore only knowable a priori), and also synthetic (not a self-contradiction to deny), the judgment that I have a unity of self-consciousness is, odd as it sounds, a synthetic a priori judgment [31]

a) The CORRELATION THESIS maintains that consciousness is structured by an essential correlation between, on the one hand, a unitary subject of experiences and, on the other, a multiplicity of its experiences. Simply put, I must have my own experiences to relation myself to what I am not, to objects.

32) What follows from that? Whatever is necessary for my being able to comprehend myself as the same thinking subject over a series of temporally extended experiences is also necessary for representations in general to be representations, that is, to have cognitive content, to be not merely internal, subjective occurrences within one’s mental life but to be about something – which brings Kant around
to another version of his original question: how can a representation be about anything at all? [31]

33) JUDGING (UR-TEILEN) IS A NORMATIVE AND HENCE REFLEXIVE ACTIVITY: If there is any way in which the intuitive representations in our consciousness must be combined, then that “must” embodies the conditions under which anything can be a “representation” at all; and the key to understanding what might be further implied by that move, Kant noted, lay in the very idea of judgment itself, the topic with which he had begun the Critique. To make a judgment – to assert something that can be true or false – is different in kind from merely associating some idea with some other idea. [HUME] To make a judgment is to submit oneself to the norms that govern such judgments. It is, however, simply a matter of fact and not of norms whether I associate, for example, “Kant” with Prussia or Germany or long walks in the afternoon, or, for that matter, with disquisitions on the proper way to throw dinner parties. To make a judgment is to do something that is subject to standards of correctness, whereas to associate something with something else is neither to be correct nor incorrect – it is simply a fact about one’s psychic life. [31]

34) CONCEPTS AS RULES OF COMBINATION OF REPRESENTATIONS TO FORM JUDGMENTS: Judgments themselves, as normative matters, are combinations therefore of two different types of representations into a unity according to the rules of right judgment … a concept is a “unity of the act of bringing various representations under one common representation” … To have a concept, Kant argued, is to be in possession of a norm, a rule of “synthesis” for a judgment. Having a concept is more like having an ability – an ability to combine representations according to certain norms – than it is like having any kind of internal mental state [31-2]

35) All this finally comes together, Kant argued, when we think about the conditions under which we could become apperceptively self-conscious as thinking subjects. For me to be aware of myself as a thinking being is to be aware of myself as a unity of experience – as a kind of unified point on the world – and that unity must be brought about by myself in the activity of combining representations into judgmental form. In combining the multiplicity of sensuous intuitions into a “synthetic unity” (in seeing my experience as more than a series of subjective, psychic events, but instead as a connected series of representations of things), I combine the elements of that experience (intuitions) according to the rules that are necessary for such combinations. Establishing the necessity of these rules thus must consist in looking at how sensuous intuitions must be combined if we are to make judgments about them [32]

36) THAT A REPRESENTATION IS A REPRESENTATION OF SOMETHING IS NOT SOMETHING THAT JUST HAPPENS TO A PASSIVE SUBJECT;
INSTEAD, ONLY AN ACTIVE SUBJECT THAT SUBJECTS ITS REPRESENTATIONS TO NORMATIVE APPRAISALS IS ABLE TO REPRESENT OBJECTS TO ITSELF. THE SUBJECT IS A SELF-LEGISLATING OR “SPONTANEOUS” LOCUS OF ACTIVITY: To see them as representations, moreover, is to see them as representations of an object. Kant says: An object is that in the concept of which the multiplicity of a given intuition is united” We combine various intuitive occurrence – such as black, oblong shaped, and so forth – into the notion of their all being perspectival representations of a single object (the stone). The intuitions themselves cannot, as it were, tell us of what they are intuitions; we make them into intuitions of something, into representations by actively combining them according to the rules of judgment, of conceptual representation in general … I must be able to take them as combined in certain basic ways [32-3]

37) The basic categories themselves thus have to do with the way in which we order and structure our sensory experience into that of a unified experience that represents a single world which consists of objects in space and time interacting with each other according to deterministic causal laws … “logical forms of judgment” … to represent within our experience the distinction between the experience of an object and the object itself, to represent ourselves “taking” our experience in certain ways, which presupposes our capacity to bring the logical forms of judgment in normative play in our own experience. The categories of experience … emerge as required for us to self-consciously make judgments about our own experiences [33]

38) AGAINST EMPIRICIST AND NATURALIST MODELS OF MIND (5 CONCLUSIONS):

a) ACTIVE NOT PASSIVE SELF: (1) Kant’s line of thought first of all implied that the mind cannot be understood as merely a passive entity of any sorts; in becoming aware of the objects of experience, we do not merely passively see or hear something, nor do we stand merely in any kind of causal relation to an object; our cognitive relation to objects is the result of the active stance we take toward them by virtue of the way in which we combine the various elements (intuitive and conceptual in our experience [34]
b) RELATION TO OBJECT A SYNTHETIC ACCOMPLISHMENT OF TAKING THINGS AS: (2) Second, our representations cannot be conceived as “mirrors of nature” (to use Richard Rorty’s phrase); nature cannot determine anything as a representations – things in nature simply are, and they do not, outside of our activity of taking them in a certain way, represent or “stand for” anything. . . . Our sensory intuitions become representations of objects of nature only by being combined with non-intuitive conceptual forms. Moreover, apart from their combination with intuitions, concepts are merely empty, formal rules: in Kant’s famous slogan: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A51/B75). [34]

c) NORMATIVITY OF ONE’S EXPERIENCES: (3) Nor, third, are our representations merely internal episodes going on within the confines of our private mental lives, as we might at first naively think; they are rule-governed active “takeings” of experiential elements by acts of “synthesis” that produce the various unities necessary for us to have any experience at all – in particular, the unity of thinking and the unity of the objects of experience. For me to make a judgment is for me to be oriented by the rules that would count for all judges. [34]

d) NECESSITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF SPACE AND TIME: (4) Fourth, the kinds of objects of which we could be conscious had to be objects in space and time, since space and time were the forms of any possible intuition.

e) (5) Fifth, the representational content of thought could not be explained by patterns of association or by naturalistically understood causal patterns: the cognitive content of thought is constituted entirely by the norms governing judgmental synthesis itself. [35]

39) SPONTANEITY = COPERNICAN TURN: COMPARE TO THE “COGNITIVE TURN” OR “COMPUTATIONAL TURN” IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY: THE SUBJECT IS NOT A THING BUT AN ACTIVITY: The upshot of Kant’s rather dense argument was startling. Behind all our experience of the world is an ineluctable fact of human spontaneity, of our actively taking up our experience and rendering it into the shape it has for us. Neither nature nor God could do that for us; we must do it for ourselves [35]

40) Kant had also provided a method for answering the perennial questions of metaphysics. Traditional metaphysics had tried to assert things about non-sensible entities that transcended our experience. Kant proposed something new: his new, “critical” philosophy would be a transcendental philosophy that would show which concepts of non-sensible entities were necessary for the very possibility of our experience [36]

41) This amounted, as Kant so proudly put it, to effecting a revolution in philosophy as fundamental as the revolution in astronomy effected by Copernicus: what is orbiting around what, suddenly seemed to be at issue in a way nobody had previously imagined [36]
42) With one feel swoop, so it seemed, Kant had dismantled both rationalist and empiricist trains of thought [36]

43) Those concepts were, moreover, **not innate but were generated by the spontaneity of the human mind** itself as it shaped experience into judgmental form. The empiricists had also **confused psychological explanations** of how we come to have certain patterns of association with **normative considerations** of how we adjudicate judgments as being true or false [36-7]

44) We could, that is, **never be aware of anything like simple “seeing blue”** in a way that was unmediated by any conceptual content [37]

45) … the capacity to **judge** things to be causally connected (as distinct from “experiencing” them as causally connected) was, in fact, a condition of the possibility of experience at all. We were required to conceive of the objects in the world as causally connected since, if we did not, we could not combine our sensory experience in any way that would make it susceptible to judgment and therefore intelligible [37]

46) **EPISTEMOLOGICAL RESTRICTION:** However, it was not a condition of the very possibility of conscious experience itself that it contain within itself a representation of God; and it was not a condition of the possibility of experience that it contain any encounters with an immortal soul. **This was not to deny that such things might exist “beyond” the bounds of experience; it only showed that neither “pure” nor empirically applied reason could establish any truths whatsoever about those things, since the only synthetic a priori truths that were available to us either had to do with the propositions of mathematics and geometry or with the conditions necessary for the possibility of a self-conscious relation to ourselves.** From the standpoint of pure reason, we simply had to be agnostic of those matters [38]

   a) **“Pure” reason** = philosophical study of the forms or structures of the mind = study of the architecture of human cognition.

   b) **“Empirically applied” reason** = empirical scientific study of nature (physics, chemistry, biology, etc.).

47) The **“transcendental imagination”** … prepared the **temporal succession of intuitions** and the **abstract form of judgment** to be suitable to each other. The two aspects of our mentality — **receptivity and spontaneity, intuition and concept, sensibility and understanding** — had to be mediated with each other, and it had to be done by the spontaneous faculty itself (since intuitions could not combine themselves). **The “spontaneous” faculty, that is, must be able to supply both the rule and the conditions for the application of the rule** [39]
48) The logical forms of judgment actually become the *categories* of experience only when they are rendered into temporalized form, what Kant called their “schema,” which provide us with the rules to construct them in terms of how they actually apply to experience [39]

49) To have a mind is not to be made of any kind of particular “stuff”; it is to be able to *perform* certain kinds of activities that involve norms (or “rules” in his terminology) [39]

50) it is to be able to do something – to add and subtract, to construct a geometrical figure or proof, or to be able to recognize and discriminate horses from other things (such as cows or boulders) [40]

51) **EPISTEMOLOGICAL RESTRICTION**: … famously, he concluded that we simply cannot know anything about things-in-themselves; apart from what we discover in possible experience and what can be demonstrated by the methods of transcendental philosophy, we *know* nothing [40]

52) Although it quite boldly asserted we could know nothing of things-in-themselves, it also asserted equally boldly that behind all human experience was the necessity of human spontaneity in generating that experience [41]

53) Kant then turned that distinction between phenomena and noumena to the **critique of traditional metaphysics** [41]

54) Concepts, Kant had shown, have *significance* (*Bedeutung*) only in relation to possible experience or as transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience. Traditional metaphysics had simply erred when it had tried to use pure reason to speak of what things-in-themselves were like – as when it asked whether, for example, the things of the world were “in themselves” manifestations of one substance, or were instead changeable instantiations of eternal forms, or were sets of unconnected monads, or were mere atoms in the void, and so on … the “*transcendental illusion*” [41]

55) THE TEMPTATION OF REASON: Stepping beyond the boundaries of possible experience is not simply a failing on our part, nor is it simply falling for an enticing illusion. In fact, the very nature of reason itself demands that we go beyond the bounds of possible experience in certain ways if we are to be able to make sense of our experience as a whole [42]

56) Kant called such “wholes” conceived as totalities “Ideas” of reason (*Ideen* in German to distinguish them from ordinary “representations,” *Vorstellungen*). Whereas concepts apply to the objects of perception (and make conscious perception
of such objects possible), Ideas structure and order our reflections about the world.

57) KANT’S THIRD ANTINOMY: The most famous of these antinomies was the third, which asserted that there must be a radical freedom of will that initiates a causal series but is not itself an effect of any other cause; and that there must be a cause for every event, and hence there can be no freedom. This was curious even in Kant’s own terms. The transcendental employment of other Ideas resulted in antinomies—such as the world’s having and not having a beginning in time—in which both assertions were held to be without ultimate cognitive significance. However, with regard to freedom and determinism, Kant held that we must believe both that we are beings obeying the laws of a deterministically conceived universe, and that we are radically free, and determine our own actions; both elements of the antinomy were true. The solution to antinomy, as Kant was to later argue, was that, from a practical point of view, we must conceive of ourselves as noumenally free, but, from a theoretical point of view, we must be either agnostic on the question of freedom or deny outright its very possibility. However, what Kant seemed to be saying in his first Critique was that the issue of freedom—what in fact seemed to be the crucial issue in all of his work—simply in principle admitted no theoretical resolution to itself. Thus, on Kant’s view, freedom was the great problem of modern thought, and modern thought was destined by the very nature of reason itself to find any solution to this problem quite literally to be unintelligible since the necessary answers contradicted each other. We simply had to live with the beliefs that we were both free (regarded from a practical standpoint) and not free (regarded from a theoretical standpoint) [43]

a) FREEDOM/NATURE PROBLEM: Kant’s immediate reception and, indeed, legacy to this very day, was his controversial insistence upon bifurcating human life into two, apparently incompatible components: namely, our natural and hence determined condition as animals, on the one hand, and our intelligible being as moral agents— that is, as free—on the other.

58) There was, quite simply, no theoretical knowledge to be gained of God at all. Kant himself, however, claimed that he had only made clear what was really at stake in such religious matters; as he remarked in his preface to the 1787 edition: “I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.” That call for “faith,” though, was intensely worrisome to many of his German readers and was equally liberating for others; out of it came a new theological debate that has shaken intellectual life until our own day [44]

59) Moreover, alongside Kant’s destruction of traditional metaphysics was his radically new emphasis on human spontaneity and freedom … Thinking was to be understood in terms of judging according to the normative rules that govern discursive synthesis, not in terms of any kind of natural, causal, or metaphysical relation to objects … the specific way in which we take up a
normative stance to experience, and without that active “taking up,” there is, quite simply, no consciousness, no mentality at all [44]