A History of Philosophy
51 Introducing Immanuel Kant
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Well, we start in today on a two-week trek with Immanuel Kant, and I'd like today to be purely introductory, and then next time we'll be getting into the material from the Critique of Pure Reason, which will probably occupy us for four days. Then we'll have a day on the critique of practical reason about ethics, and a day on his religious views, something of that sort. So, to introduce him, I think to see his project, his philosophical project, in relationship to that of his predecessors would probably be as helpful as anything.

The Critique of Pure Reason, which is his best-known, longest, and most difficult work, came out in 1781, and like David Hume, he felt that he needed to provide, in addition, a more popular view of the same sort of thing, and so, some 10, 15 years later, he put out the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. Now, get a handle on this title. First of all, Prolegomena.

Now, if you've heard the story about elephants, you can anticipate something. The story is about people from different backgrounds who wrote books on elephants. The Englishman wrote a one-volume hardback introduction to the elephant, very decorous.

The American, An Elephant Digest, the Frenchman, an illustrated book on the elephant's love life, and the German, a three-volume Prolegomena to the Study of the Elephant. Well, this is his Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. Now, get the point, more significantly, of the metaphysics.

Because, in effect, David Hume became skeptical of any metaphysical knowledge, any knowledge of the nature of reality. All we know is appearances, phenomena, and beyond that, it's a matter of, at best, belief. So, it's in the light of Hume's metaphysical skepticism that Kant defines his project as Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics.

That is to say, in the light of Kant, what are the prospects for metaphysics? Yes, sir. Now, he's explicit about that orientation in the introduction to the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. So, I'll read some of this.

Since the essays of Locke and Leibniz, you remember Locke's essay on human understanding, and Leibniz's new essays on human understanding. Since their essays, or rather, since the origin of metaphysics so far as we know its history, pushing it further back, nothing has ever happened that could have been more decisive to its fate than the attack made on it by David Hume. He threw no light on this species of

knowledge, but he certainly struck a spark by which the light might have been kindled had it caught some inflammable substance and had its smoldering fire been carefully nursed and developed.

Hume started from a single but important concept in metaphysics, namely, that of the connection between cause and effect, including its derivatives like force. He challenged reason, which pretends to have given birth to the concept of cause and effect itself, to answer him by what right she thinks anything could be constituted that if that thing be posited, something else must necessarily posit it in the light of cause and effect. Now that's not a bad summation of what Hume did.

And he goes on on the next page, however hasty and mistaken Hume's inference may appear, it was at least founded on investigation. But Hume suffered the usual misfortune of metaphysicians. And take note of this if you're thinking of going into metaphysics, of not being understood.

It's positively painful to see how utterly his opponents, Thomas Reid, Oswald, BD, and two other Scottish realists, missed the point. For while they were ever taking for granted what Hume doubted and demonstrating with zeal, often with impudence, what he never thought of doubting, they so misconstrued his valuable suggestion that everything remained in its old condition as if nothing had happened. The question was not whether the concept of cause was right, useful, or indispensable.

Of course, Hume thought it was. But whether that concept could be thought by reason a priori independently of experience. Whether it possessed an inner truth independent of experience.

That was Hume's problem. Solely a question concerning the origin, not the need, for the concept. Well, he goes on to point out that the Scottish realists' appeal to common sense really is not sufficient.

He says it is indeed a great gift of God to possess plain common sense. But this common sense must be shown in action by well-considered, reasonable thoughts, not by appealing to it as an oracle when no other rational justification of one's position can be advanced. And so he comes to his project in the light of this.

I therefore first asked whether Hume's objection could not be put into a general form and soon found that the concept of cause and effect was by no means the only concept by which the understanding thinks of things a priori, but rather that metaphysics consists altogether of a priori concepts. I sought to ascertain their number. And you'll find he thinks for a twelve.

But when I had satisfactorily succeeded in this by starting from a single principle, I proceeded to deduce these concepts, which I was now certain were not derived from

experience. I proceeded to deduce them as Hume had attempted to derive them, but found they sprang from the pure understanding. So, in effect, he's going to try and respond to Hume by saying that the concept of cause and effect over which skepticism developed, along with other basic metaphysical concepts, are, after all, not empirically derived, but are in some sense a priori.

And later on, he goes on in this fashion. Metaphysics is properly concerned with synthetic a priori propositions. A priori propositions.

And he concludes his preamble with this rhetorical flourish. Even Kant is capable of a rhetorical flourish. All metaphysicians are therefore solemnly and legally suspended from their occupations until they shall have adequately answered the question, how are synthetic a priori propositions possible? Okay? The answer contains the only credentials that they must show when they have anything to offer in the name of pure reason.

But if they do not possess these credentials, they can expect nothing else of reasonable people who have been deceived so often than to be dismissed from their occupation without further inquiry. So, he's ready to fire all the metaphysicians who cannot show cause why they shouldn't stay. Well, his project then is pretty crucial.

He recognizes that in the light of Hume's skepticism, the very possibility of doing metaphysics is in serious question. So if there's going to be any possible metaphysics in the future, any future metaphysics, then it's necessary by way of prolegomenon to establish that such metaphysical concepts are a priori. Okay? Now, that's what he's trying to do.

And I think we can come at it by trying to look at his own terminology And this is terminology which he develops in the introduction to the critique of pure reason. And that material you have in the anthology from 367 to about 377. I'm not suggesting that the introduction is nothing but terminology, but I think the terminology that he introduces provides an entree into the much larger picture.

So, let's look at that. He makes a distinction at the outset among three philosophies. Dogmatic, skeptical, and critical philosophy.

Now, you have no difficulty identifying who or what he has in mind by being skeptical. David Hume. Yes.

The dogmatic philosophy, however, is the philosophy of the earlier metaphysicians. Those who've made dogmatic metaphysical assertions without examining the basis. So, he has in mind there certainly that continental rationalist tradition.

You recall our diagram where you have the continental rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. Each of them is developing their own metaphysical system using the methodology of Descartes. Trying to say that there are certain axiomatic first principles from which everything else can be deduced.

Now, that is dogmatic metaphysics. On the other hand, we have at an earlier stage people like Locke who also seem to think that metaphysical knowledge is possible, though on an empirical basis. And Berkeley, of course.

And their metaphysical conclusions would also qualify as dogmatic. So, it's David Hume, the skeptic, and the dogmatic philosophers. We should say that while Leibniz was around in the 1700s, there was a lot of other metaphysical philosophy going on in the 18th century before Kant.

So that there were successors of Leibniz in the German rationalism of the 18th century. And it was under these people that Immanuel Kant had studied. So that he was raised in the rationalistic tradition that had arrived from Descartes' methodological revolution, you see.

Now, he tells us he was awakened from those dogmatic slumbers by reading David Hume. Those dogmatic slumbers are the uncritical metaphysical assertions of that kind of system. And certainly Hume should awaken such people.

So, when he ventures into his own project, his project is critical philosophy. That is to say, trying to examine the conditions which would make metaphysics possible. Criticizing the epistemological foundations of metaphysics.

A critique, in that sense. So his major work, which he's now introducing us to, is called, you notice, a critique. Critical philosophy.

A critique of pure reason. Pure, that is to say, a priori, without any empirical input. So he's trying to look critically at the possibilities that lie in pure reason.

Reason independently of experience. Possibilities for metaphysics. A critique of pure reason.

Having to do with metaphysical knowledge. And the traditional approach to metaphysical knowledge. So, let's say, having to do with traditional metaphysical knowledge.

Now, you'll find that in addition to that first critique in 1781, he came up a little later with a second critique. A critique of practical reason. Now, the third term, practical reason, ever since Aristotle, has referred to ethical thinking.

So this turns out to be a critique not of metaphysical knowledge, but of moral knowledge. Now, remember that in that metaphysical tradition, it was maintained that moral knowledge was as deducible from first truths as was metaphysical knowledge. John Locke thought that, in principle at least, we should be able to derive moral knowledge in the same way as we get mathematical knowledge.

Deductively. From intuitive first principles or something. Or from our knowledge of the nature of man.

In the case of morals. And David Hume, in his first chapter to the Inquiry, you remember, distinguishes between abstract and practical philosophy. Where abstract philosophy is about metaphysics, practical philosophy is moral philosophy.

And the phrase moral philosophy was really not just ethics, but political theory and anything else that had application to human action. So, a critique of practical reason is a critique then of the epistemological status of moral knowledge. And, subsequently, he produced a third critique.

This was a critique of judgment. And that has to do with aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic knowledge.

Both in regard to nature, where we come up with all sorts of judgments about the order. You see, the orderedness of nature was the thing that the 18th-century scientific mind was saying. It was so set on.

The orderedness of nature. The beauty of nature. So, aesthetic judgment regarding nature.

And in regard to works of art. Now, aesthetic knowledge had been likened to moral knowledge by David Hume and by some of the moral sense philosophers. You see? So, having dealt with moral knowledge, he now comes to this other, aesthetic knowledge.

Raises questions there. And, in each case, what he is looking at, what he is looking at, or trying to look at, is the preconditions that would make knowledge judgments possible. The preconditions for the very possibility of moral knowledge.

Of aesthetic knowledge. And metaphysical knowledge. Now, you might note this in anticipation that the critique of pure reason comes to the conclusion that there is no possibility of metaphysical knowledge in the traditional sense that involves objectivity and logical certainty.

Dogmatic certainty in matters of metaphysics is not possible. And that applies to the three areas of metaphysics which were dominant in his day. They divided, in the German rationalist tradition, metaphysics into three parts.

Christian Wolf. One of them divided it into philosophical psychology. Philosophical cosmology.

And philosophical theology. Dealing, obviously, with mind, nature, and God. Of course, when you've talked about those three, there isn't a great deal left to talk about.

Nature, mind, and God. So it's pretty embracing. So his conclusions about natural theology, theology by reason alone, are negative.

He critiques the arguments for the existence of God on the basis of lacking adequate preconditions that make it possible. But here's the interesting thing that he goes on to suggest, to argue, that metaphysical belief is possible on the basis, yes, of some things in the traditional approach to metaphysics, but is possible on the basis of moral and aesthetic knowledge. So it's on this basis, as well as on this basis, that we develop, appropriately, metaphysical beliefs.

So again, you get the distinction between knowledge and belief. Kant critiques the possibility of metaphysical knowledge and logical certainty. But finds in all three of his critiques that there is a basis for certain metaphysical beliefs, including belief in God.

So that's the overall picture. Now, we have to add that his desire to make this accessible led to more readable and briefer versions of the first two. So the briefer version of the first one is the thing I read to you just now, the prolegomena to any future metaphysic.

And the briefer version of the critique of practical reason is the metaphysical foundations of morals. And typically, the selection about Kant's categorical imperative in ethics, which we have people read in introductory courses, comes from the metaphysical foundations of morals. So, that's the picture.

He also did work specifically on religion called Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone. Where you can see he's asking about the possibilities of religious knowledge independently of revelation. What sort of knowledge of God do we get that way? Okay.

We'll have something to say about all of these works over the next couple of weeks. Okay, any question, comment there? All of that in reference to what he means by

critical philosophy. After all, if critical philosophy is his project, you have to talk about his whole project, you see.

Who did I see? Yes. You said that his metaphysical beliefs are based on moral knowledge and aesthetic knowledge. Primarily those two, or does the first one come in? The first one comes in as well, that's why I have this arrow coming down.

His conclusion, and we've got a bit of it in the anthology, his conclusion to the first critique is in effect no, we only have knowledge of appearances, phenomena. But on the other hand, for practical reasons, we're constrained to believe, you see. It's a little more than a psychology of belief.

But again, he's appealing to what Hume and the Scottish realists call the proclivities of the human mind. You see, the proclivities of the human mind. So all three of them contribute to metaphysical beliefs.

The trouble is that just as with Hume, people sometimes read just the first four sections, find Hume a sceptic, and then forget what comes later, so with Kant, they read his negative conclusions and ignore what comes later. You see. But Hume's conclusion, just as Hume's conclusion is about belief, so Kant's conclusion is about belief.

In fact, there's one place in his preface to the first critique where he says we'll have to do away with knowledge to make room for belief. Do away with knowledge to make room for belief. You see, what he's doing, if you want to go back to Plato's divided line, is making that hard distinction between the two.

You see, nowadays we think of knowledge as just a subset of beliefs. Beliefs that meet certain conditions. But from Plato on through Kant, no, these are two very separate things.

Knowledge involves either direct awareness of some sort as a result of dialectic or intuition of what is axiomatic, self-evident, or else demonstrative knowledge from such first principles. You see, that's the notion of knowledge. Belief lacks that.

Did you say that this clear distinction is something that uplifts and parrots into the afterlife? No, it's not as if history said thus endeth the Platonic division between knowledge and belief, and we'll never look at it again. No, I wish it were that easy. Let's say that from Hume onwards, there is a weakening of the line between the two.

So that you can't assume that people are using the terms in the completely separate sense that you get in the Platonic tradition. No. There was a development in epistemology in the 1960s, the 1960s where we were defining knowledge as justified true belief.

So knowledge is a subset of belief. And since the 60s through the 70s and the 80s, people have been working on what are justification conditions. And under what conditions can you say you are justified in believing something's true? But this is because of the weakening of the sense of knowledge.

OK, let's see, what's the next one? A priori and a posteriori. A posteriori. Yeah, and there you can pick it up in your reading around 369 to 373 in that general region.

We're familiar already with the terms a priori and a posteriori simply because they have been so widely used, not so much by Kant's predecessors as by people talking about them. In Hume, the distinction was between relations of ideas and matters of fact. And in the subsequent empiricist tradition, Hume's distinction remains pretty firm.

The relations of ideas are simply analytic. They have the form simply of logical truths, such as A equals A, A is not non-A. A bachelor is an unmarried male.

Cat is a cat is a cat. Where have you got logical identity? OK, logical truths. Relations of ideas.

If you know the ideas, you can work out such relationships. So he thought of mathematics as belonging in relations of ideas. Because granted, the axioms, you work out relationships between axioms, the corollaries, in proving theorems.

And it's all knowledge derived from basic concepts interrelated. Now, matters of fact are described more in a synthetic fashion. That is to say, they could be false.

They're not necessarily true. They're contingent truths. They could be false.

And they could be false because the predicate adds something that isn't already logically tied to the subject. Well, bachelors are miserable, you see. It may be true, but there's no logical connection between the two.

So that you've got there, around synthetic truths, what is sometimes called factual truth, sometimes material truths. That is to say, they've got subject matter. So you've got these two.

And in the latter, you would have all the sciences. Physical science, life sciences, and psychological science would then be called mental science. So all the sciences would fit there.

And, of course, metaphysics, which was taken to be a science. It was Hume who told us, no, it's not. It's no science.

Because it doesn't yield knowledge. But prior to Hume, yeah, this is the way it would have been considered. Now, you can see from this that the definitions begin to appear.

Analytic, yes, the predicate is logically contained in the subject. And the proposition just unpacks it. Necessarily true.

Do you understand that? Predicate, what's predicated of the subject, is logically part of the subject. Three plus five equals eight. Bachelors are unmarried males.

In synthetic propositions, the predicate is not contained in the subject, but adds to the subject. Now, the distinctive thing that Kant does, however, is to bring to bear on that distinction the further distinction between a priori and a posteriori. Now, the term a posteriori is the easier one to get a hold of, meaning simply dependent on experience.

Dependent on experience. Posterior to experience. And Kant, therefore, was quick to say that there are sure synthetic a posteriori statements, propositions.

Yeah. There are things that we say that seem to be based simply on experience. Synthetic a posteriori.

And likewise, he wasn't saying anything new when he said we have analytic a priori propositions. A priori means, in its simplest terms, independently of experience. And obviously, analytic relations of ideas are independent of experience.

You don't have to count your fingers if you really understand the concepts of two and one to understand that two plus one equals three. Logically necessary. So, in those two regards, no problem.

The problem comes when he adds to that the notion of synthetic. A priori, which seems to be mixing apples and pears. Peaches and bananas.

Synthetic a priori. Now, in order to see more clearly what he's doing in this, let's get what he means by a priori a little more precisely. I guess in most of our introductory courses, we content ourselves with the statement that a priori means independently of experience.

But Kant wasn't content with that. Kant wants to say that a priori knowledge is going to be universal and necessary. Universal and necessary.

So that a priori truths are going to be universally true. Not just relative to some particular situation. Universally true.

And necessarily true. They couldn't possibly be false. Yeah.

Because it's not just the analytic which is necessarily true, but the a priori is necessarily true. So you've got two kinds of a priori knowledge. Not just one.

You've got the analytic a priori, like tautologies. And you've got the synthetic a priori, like physics. Perhaps metaphysics.

Certainly, mathematics, which he pulls down there. Yeah. Because the synthetic a priori for Kant involves math, physics, natural science, that is, metaphysics.

Doing anything more than just talking about phenomena. Math, physics, metaphysics. Yeah.

And you'll find that in the Critique of Pure Reason, there are three major sections in which he comes at these. There is a first one, which he calls the transcendental aesthetic. Where he explains the basis for mathematical knowledge.

Huh? Aesthetic? Well, hold the phone. But don't hold your breath. Yeah.

Aesthetic in German has to do with sense perception. With any kind of conscious awareness. Okay.

So, transcendental aesthetic. Then that's followed by the transcendental analytic. This introduces him to the knowledge of physics and the principles of physics.

And then the transcendental dialectic. Where he takes a look at, yeah, metaphysics. And it's the transcendental dialectic that has those three parts.

Dealing with rational or philosophical psychology. Rational or philosophical cosmology. Rational or philosophical theology.

You can check that out in the table of contents, which our editor gives us. Very helpful on page 366. Do you notice? Take a look at that.

On 366, he has the first part, transcendental aesthetic. Second part, transcendental logic. Division one, transcendental analytic.

Division two, transcendental dialectic. Well, his point is then that we have rational knowledge. Universal and necessary.

Or the question is whether we do. Really have universal and necessary knowledge, a priori. That is synthetic.

That is to say, that adds to the meaning of the terms. Is it possible to have factual knowledge, knowledge of matters of fact, a priori? That's the issue. Well, wasn't that his project to ask that? Is metaphysics possible on a priori basis? Metaphysics would involve synthetic knowledge, knowledge of facts about reality.

So this is the kind of conceptual apparatus that he's developing for that in mind. Now, to pin this down a little bit, look would you at page 369. 369.

Top of the second column. Those of you who did not bring the anthology will need it throughout Kant. And forever thereafter.

369, the second column at the top. My question is, what can we hope to achieve with reason when all the material and assistance of experience is taken away? Independent of experience, what can we achieve? A priori knowledge. Then, halfway down that column, he says there are two essential demands addressed to an author who ventures on this undertaking.

First, with regard to certainty. And halfway through that paragraph, he says, every kind of knowledge that professes to be certain, a priori, proclaims that it means to be taken for absolutely necessary. Absolutely necessary.

Pure knowledge, a priori, which is the measure of all apodictic philosophical certainty. Apodictic? Yes, proven, demonstrable. Logically necessary.

And over on 371, very bottom of the second column, general truths which bear the character of inward necessity, must be independent of experience, clear, certain by themselves. They're therefore called knowledge a priori. But notice he calls them general truths.

You see, they have the logically universal form. All. Not just some, not just local, but all.

So universal and necessary, a criterion is involved in the a priori. And at the top of 372, halfway through that first, well, six lines into that first paragraph, even if we remove from experience everything that belongs to the senses, there remain certain original concepts and judgments derived from them, which must have had their origin entirely a priori, independent of all experience. So pretty evident what he's after.

And at the top of 373, first column, he gives an illustration from mathematics, and I'll leave you to play with that. The phrase synthetic a priori is introduced on 374. Synthetic a priori, 374, second column, the top.

In synthetic judgments a priori, empirical help is wanting. If I want to go beyond the concept A to find another concept B, where is there anything on which I may rest and through which a synthesis A and B might become possible? Considering I cannot have the advantage of looking about in the field of experience. Take the proposition, and here's Hume's crucial one, the proposition that all that happens has its cause.

Take that. In the concept of something that happens, I no doubt conceive of something existing preceded by time, and from this, certain analytic judgments may be deduced, but the concept of cause is outside that. I undoubtedly have the idea of something preceding.

Sure, conjunctions. Regularities. Constant conjunctions.

Yeah, he agrees with Hume, we have that. All right. But we have no concept of cause.

And this indicates something different from just what happens, and it's not contained in the representation of what happens. So, how about the cause-effect connection? Okay. Any questions, comments? Okay.

Transcendental method. And you notice that in that context, the term transcendental is used several times. I call knowledge transcendental, he says on 375, that's occupied not with objects but with a priori concepts.

And that's a pretty good definition. Don't confuse transcendental with transcendent. Now, if you think as a theologian thinks, the word transcendental immediately triggers the thought of a god out there somewhere.

A god who transcends this creation and acts as if from outside it. Transcendent. The term transcendental doesn't mean anything of the sort.

Now, if you think not like a theologian but like somebody in American literature, you're familiar with the term transcendentalism. Where the term transcendental does not refer to something out there but something in here and under here and around here and pervading all. You see, American transcendentalism was the view that the human spirit is a creative, expressive power, but not confined to me.

It's the creative spirit throughout things that operates in and through my creative spirit. Sort of a panentheism. And that every human soul, mind, spirit participates in this world spirit.

You get that in Emerson. Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism was the American version of German Romanticism in the 19th century, with its pantheistic or panentheistic tendency.

Incidentally, there wouldn't have been any transcendentalism or Romanticism apart from Kant. He's the philosophical transition that made that possible. He had the term before they did.

They just stole it. Well, borrowed it. Piggybacked on it.

But you see, if you then have the notion of transcendentalism, you can work back to the seed of that idea in what Kant is talking about. He's talking about the inner resources of the human spirit. The inner resources of the human mind.

What is it that reason brings a priori to the quest for knowledge? And the transcendental method is the method of getting at these inner resources that the human mind brings. That's why I say forget, for a moment, the notion of a transcendent. Not out there, but in here is where transcendental focuses.

So if we say that critical philosophy is an attempt to critique the tradition by asking what the resources that the mind brings a priori are, then obviously the transcendental method is the method you want. The method of getting at those inner resources. Are there certain universal presuppositions that every human being brings to the quest for knowledge? You see, that's the kind of question he's asking.

Except the presupposition seems to imply some theory, some proposition, something more than what Kant's thinking about, which is a concept. Are there any universal concepts? Now, having said that, be careful. Because he's not talking about what we've learned to think of since Plato as innate ideas.

Now, an innate idea is a pre-formed idea that's already in your mind, and you can recollect it. Or in Descartes' language, an innate idea is something which is self-evident, which pops up in the mind clear and distinct. It's sort of a pre-fabricated idea that you've already got.

But the kind of a priori concept that Kant is after is not a full-blown concept. It's not a clear idea. It's not something self-evident.

It's more of a blueprint. Or more of the framework for your thinking. It's more of a grid through which you will sift what comes.

Or a mold into which you will pour experience. Now, my usual illustration of this, some of you have heard, is of an ice cube tray with those neat dividers. And you pour the water in, and lo and behold, after a while, it comes out with nice, pretty cubes.

You can get a handle on those. Sort of hard to hold the water in your hand. Jay Woods, I think, is of a crazy putty.

Plato. Yeah, a Plato thing where you squeeze the Plato out through the thing into all sorts of pretty animals. Animal shapes.

Well, you can think of it as a cookie syringe making Christmas cookies, squeezing the stuff through the nozzles and coming out all sorts of star-shaped cookies and all sorts of other fancy things. No, it's an a priori structure. A structuring.

A framework. Yeah. Change the metaphor.

It's as if we have an a priori lens that brings things into focus. Yeah, you're right. Lens.

When I shave in the morning, I have my glasses off because they get steamed up. But when it comes to doing the hairs just below the sideburns, I have to put them back on because I can't see what I'm doing. You know, I can go by feel all the rest of the way.

But being half as blind as a bat is completely blind. Without the glasses, you know, I have to have fun. Well, you can't know or think without the lens.

You know what I'm saying? It's the sort of thing you can't see. Everybody has the same lens. Go to the dime store and get your specs.

No, you don't need to. You come with it already, build it. You know what I'm saying? So that it's this a priori structure that he's trying to uncover with the transcendental method.

Use different kinds of terminology. We distinguish in talking about, let's see, relations of ideas and matters of fact between formal truths and factual truths. Formal, just having the logical form of.

Well, what is a priori for Kant is just formal principles that give rational form to things. Rather than factual concepts that tell you about things. So the a priori concepts by themselves tell you nothing.

They affirm nothing. They're just formal principles that help you, that automatically seem to order and structure your thinking in certain ways. And cause and effect is going to be one of those principles.

As I said, there are eleven others. All right, Copernican revolution. Yeah, Kant tells us that this represents a new Copernican revolution.

Now you're familiar with the first one. Copernicus. Who changed our way of thinking about the universe from geocentric to heliocentric?

Earth at the center to sun at the center. Previously, we sort of looked out from where we are at the very heart of everything we survey. Now, because of Copernicus, we're put out on the periphery somewhere.

We're put in our place. Not quite marginalized. But we sort of recognize our place and recognize that we are not at the center of things.

You see? In other words, the angle of vision, where we're coming from, the perspective, is different. Now, philosophically, the perspective, the angle of vision in thinking about things in the Enlightenment, was that of a thoroughgoing objectivity. The objectivity of all perception and knowledge.

Sometimes it's been called, John Dewey calls it that, the spectator theory. Knowledge is a spectator sport. You're an observer, not a participant.

You don't contribute to it. You're just a recipient. But the Copernican Revolution, the new Copernican Revolution, introduces subjectivity.

Subjectivity in the sense that the human subject contributes. It's not all subjective. No, but the human subject contributes the formal structures.

The a priori concepts. You see? So in that sense, the world we know is the world as we have shaped it. Yeah.

The world of cause-effect mechanisms, with necessary connections and forces at work, is the world that we conceptualized. Whether or not it's the way it is, in reality, is a further question. Now, the Copernican Revolution, far, far reaching, but the outcome for Kant is his distinction between phenomena and noumena.

Because if what we know is the world we have structured that way, then it's just the way it appears to us. What I know is what appears to me the way it is. The phenomena.

The phenomenon, which in his German terminology is the Ding für mich, the thing for me. Whereas the noumena, the reality of things, is the Ding an sich, the thing in itself. And because our subjectivity structures the world in a certain way, then what we know, if we know anything, we know through that grid, through that lens.

You see? We only know phenomena, not noumena. That's why his conclusion is negative about metaphysical knowledge. The very preconditions that make thinking possible.

A subjective precondition. Now, of course, what Leibniz and others had talked about was pre-established harmony. And if it should turn out that the structures that structure our thinking also structure the world, then we've got a corner on reality.

You see? So one way that some people have tried to handle Kant is to agree that there are a priori concepts, but to maintain that they do indeed structure reality. And so we do have metaphysical knowledge, and can do natural theology, and so forth. The problem is that while Kant regarded these a priori structures as universally the same for all human beings, you don't go far in the 19th century before they become culturally relativized.

That's what Max Weber did. You see? And others. So that if the a priori structures become relative to cultural whatever, then all human knowledge becomes relativized.

Now, I'm inclined to think there's a third alternative, namely that a priori structures are not logically necessary, but they are culturally, historically developed, tried and proven in the course of history and in human experience, so that they have pragmatically justified themselves. You see? And you have a justifiable belief that things are the way they see. And that allows for all of the Copernican, all of the scientific revolutions that people like Thomas Kuhn talk about.

Paradigm shifts, which are a change of the a priori grid. But you can see where Kant is leading here. Okay, maybe we should leave it there.

I'll pick it up at this point next time. I want to say one thing more by way of introduction, and it'll be a good way to start off, namely, about the historical impact of this in Kant. The historical impact.

And that'll tune us back in to what we've been saying today before we move on from there. Okay.