

Immanuel Kant (week 1)

From the preface to the *Reflections on the proper evaluation of living forces* 1747.

I rather flatter myself that sometimes it is not without benefit to place a certain noble confidence in one's own powers. That sort of assurance can enliven all our efforts and lend them that certain élan that is highly advantageous in the investigation of truth. If you are so disposed that you can be convinced to trust your own reflections too, and that it is possible to find that even a Herr von Leibniz has made a mistake, then you give your all in trying to prove your suspicion. And after you have gone astray a thousand times in your pursuit, the benefits thereby won for knowledge of the truth are far more exalted than if you had just kept to the main road. I have already marked out for myself the way I want to go. I will set myself upon the path and nothing shall stop me from going forward on it.

On his parents' Pietism

You can say what you want about Pietism. The people who took it seriously stood out in an admirable fashion. They possessed the highest thing that a human being can possess: that calm, that cheerfulness, that inner peace untroubled by any passion. There was no difficulty, no persecution that upset them, no quarrelling could stir them to anger or enmity. In a word, anyone just watching them, would be moved to respect in spite of themselves.

(1763)

There is but one Demonstration of the Existence of God possible, in Support of which the Argument is above given.

From the foregoing it is evident that among the four imaginable arguments, which we have reduced to two principal sorts, the Cartesian as well as that from the conception of existence taken from experience carried on by means of the solution of the conception of an independent thing, is false and totally impossible, that is, these arguments are not only not proved with sufficient strictness, but they are not at all proved. It has been farther shown that the proof, from the properties of things of the world to conclude the existence and the attributes of the Deity, involves an apposite and a very beautiful argument, only that it is never capable of the strictness of a demonstration. * Nothing now remains but that either no strict proof of this whatever is possible, or that it must rest upon that argument, which we have above adduced. As the possibility of a proof is absolutely the subject of present inquiry, nobody will maintain the former, and the issue is conformable to what we have pointed out. There is but one God and only one argument, by which it is possible to per-
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spect his existence with the perception of that necessity, which absolutely destroys all that is contrary. A judgment, to which even the

Observations on the feeling for the Beautiful and the Sublime (1764?)

That more discerning feeling that we're now trying to consider is mainly of two kinds: the feeling for the sublime and the feeling for the beautiful. Being moved by either is pleasant but in very different ways. The **sight of a mountain range** whose snowy peaks rise above the clouds, the description of a raging storm or the account of the realm of hell in Milton arouse pleasure, **but with a certain horror**; in contrast a view over flowering fields, valleys with winding streams covered with pasturing flocks, the description of Elysium or Homer's depiction of the girdle of Venus – all these also yield a pleasant sensation, but one that is joyful and smiling. In order for the former to make an impression on us in the appropriate strength, we need to have a feeling for the sublime, and to enjoy the latter correctly, a feeling for the beautiful.

Lofty oaks and solitary shadows in a sacred grove are sublime. Flowerbeds, low hedges and trees, trimmed into shapes are beautiful. **Night is sublime**. Day is beautiful.

Sensibilities possessing a feeling for the sublime, through **the peaceful stillness of a summer evening** as the **trembling light of the stars** breaks through the **brown shadows of night** and the **lonely moon stands on the horizon**, will slowly be drawn into higher feelings of friendship, of scorn for the world, of eternity.

The shining day brings a flood of **busy enthusiasm and sense of happiness**. The sublime moves us, beauty charms us.

The appearance of the person who finds themselves fully wrapped in the feeling for the sublime, is **serious, perhaps immobile, awestruck**. In contrast the lively sense of beauty makes itself known by a bright cheerfulness in the eyes, and traces of smiling, and often simply humour.

The sublime is one again of a different kind. **The feeling here is sometimes accompanied with a measure of horror or melancholy**, in some cases simply with a peaceful admiration and in still others with a beauty that encompasses a sublime enterprise.

I want to call the first of these the '**terrifying-sublime**', the second 'the noble' and the third 'the glorious'. **Deep solitude is sublime but of a terrifying kind. That is why the great far-flung wastelands like the huge deserts of Shamo in Tartary in every age have prompted people to populate them with fearful shadows, goblins and ghosts...**

On the form and principles of the sensible and intelligible worlds

Part II

On the general distinction between sense-objects and intelligibles.

3 Sensory nature is the receptivity of a subject through which it is possible for its own representing state to be altered in some way by the presence of some object. Intelligence (Reason) is the faculty of a subject through which it is able to represent things that – because of their nature – cannot be encountered in that subject's senses. The object of sensory nature is a sense-object; what contains only that which can be known by the Intellect is intelligible. In the old schools, the former was known as 'phenomenon', the latter as 'noumenon'. A cognition insofar as it is subject to the laws of sensibility is 'sensible', to the laws of intellect, 'intellectual' that is 'rational'.

4 Anything that belongs to a cognition of the sensible depends on a specific characteristic of the subject, insofar as it is capable of one modification or another by the presence of objects – and given the diversity of subjects, this can be as different as they are different; further, that any cognition that is not limited by that subjective condition must consider the object alone. So, it is clear that all the contents of the mind acquired through the senses are representations of things as they appear, while all that is in the intellect are representations of things as they are.

In sense-representation there is first something which you might call the 'matter' – that is the sensation, but then something which could be called 'form' (forma) – namely the outward structure (species) of the sense-objects. All the things that are presented, insofar as there is a variety of them affecting the senses, are organised by a natural law of the mind.

Thus sensation (which constitutes the *material* for a sensory representation) indicates the presence of some sense-object but depends for its quality on the nature of the subject, in that the subject is modified by that object. And likewise, the form of that same representation bears witness to a certain mutual aspect or relation of what is sensed, but it is not actually a sketch or some outline of the object, rather it is just a

particular law innate in the mind for co-ordinating the sensations aroused by the presence of the object. For objects do not meet the senses through form or 'species'; so in order for the various elements of the object that affect the sense to cohere in a holistic representation, there needs to be some internal principle in the mind which allows those diverse elements to acquire an outward structure according to stable and innate laws.

5 So sensory cognition involves both matter – that is the sensation, which is why the cognitions are called sensory – and form, due to which representations (even if not directly derived from any sensation) are labelled 'sensible'. On the other side, as regards the objects of intellect, we ought first to note that there is a twofold application of the intellect – that is the higher faculty of the mind. In the first it receives the concepts of things or their relationships. This is the application to the real. In the second however, the concepts (wherever they have been provided) are simply ranked – the lower beneath the higher (by their common characteristics) and are compared with one another in harmony with the principle of contradiction – and this is the logical application.

The logical application of the intellect is common to all the sciences, but not so the application to the real. For a cognition – however provided – is considered either as bounded by a feature common to many, or opposed to it, and that either immediately and proximately (as in judgments of a defining cognition) or indirectly (as in reasoning towards a comparative cognition).

Thus, once sensory cognitions are given, those sensory cognitions are ranked by the logical application of the intellect under other sense-cognitions as common concepts, and phenomena are ranked under more general laws of phenomena.

What is really important is to note at this point that the cognitions must in all cases be considered sensory, however great the logical application of the intellect has been with respect to them. What makes them sensory is their origin, not the fact that they are being arranged according to identity and difference.

As a result the most general empirical laws are nonetheless sensory, and the principles of sensory form (determinate relationships in space) revealed in geometry - however much the intellect is involved in them as it demonstrates from the data given through pure sensory intuition according to the laws of logic – still do not go beyond the class of the sensory.

Further, in the sensory objects and phenomena, that which precedes the logical application of the intellect is called ‘appearance’, but the considered cognition that arises as the many appearances are compared by the intellect is called ‘experience’. There is no route from appearance to experience except through reflection using the logical application of the intellect. The common concepts of experience are called ‘empirical’ and their objects ‘phenomena’. And the laws of experience – and generally of all sensory cognition – are called laws of phenomena.

Thus the empirical concepts do not become intelligible concepts in any real sense by being reduced to ever greater levels of abstraction, and they never go beyond the outward structure of sensory cognition, however far they ascend they remain sensory indefinitely.

6 As far as concerns intelligibles strictly so-called, in which the application of the intellect is real, the concepts both of the objects and their relationships is given by the very nature of the intellect, and are not abstracted by any application of the senses, nor do they contain any form belonging to a sensory cognition as such.

Here we have to note a very significant ambiguity in the term ‘abstract’, which I think we have to clear up sufficiently so as not to mar our discussion of intelligibles. Namely, we should really say: abstract, away from certain things, not ‘abstract something’. What the former means is that when we are examining a concept, we pay no attention to extraneous things that may in some way be bound up with it. The latter means that the concept is only given through some particular thing, and therefore that it needs to be separated from what is joined to it.

An intelligible concept is abstract in the sense of being considered apart from any sensory material, it is not abstracted *from* the sensory material. Perhaps we should call it more accurately an ‘abstracting concept’ than an

‘abstract’ one. And it might be better to call intelligible concepts ‘pure ideas’ and use the label of ‘abstract’ for concepts that are merely given empirically.

7 Now we can see that it is a bad explanation to distinguish ‘sensory’ as that which is only cognised more vaguely from ‘intelligible, as that which is a ‘distinct’ cognition. For these are simply logical distinctions and clearly have nothing to do with the data that are subject to logical evaluations. Sensory cognitions can be very clear and intelligible cognitions extremely confused. We see the first in the case of Geometry, the model of sensory cognition, we see the latter in the case of Metaphysics, that repository of all things intelligible – how hard it tries to dispel the clouds of confusion that darken the common understanding, is plain for all to see, although its results are not so happy as they once seemed...

8 The first philosophy which contains the principles of the application of pure intellect {reason} is metaphysics. The preliminary study for this teaches to distinguish between the sensory and intelligible cognition – as we illustrate in our discussion. So since there are no empirical principles to be found in metaphysics, the concepts we encounter there should not be sought in the senses, but in the very nature of pure intellect, not as innate concepts but as concepts drawn from the laws governing the mind by attending to the mind at work whenever there is experience – and thus these will be acquired concepts. Concepts of this kind are possibility, existence, necessity, substance, cause etc. together with their contraries and correlates. And since these never enter into any sensory representation as a part, they cannot have been derived from there in any respect.

9 There is principally a twofold purpose in intelligibles. The first is critical – which brings a negative benefit, that is to say, when they keep concepts derived through the senses apart from the realm of the noumena. They may not advance knowledge in great strides, however, they keep it safe from the contagion of error. The second is dogmatic. This is where the general principles of pure intellect – as presented in ontology or rational psychology – lead to a canonical concept that can only be conceived in pure intellect and which is the common standard of everything else insofar

as it is real – that is intelligible perfection. This can be in a theoretic or practical sense.

[We consider something theoretically when we merely attend to it as a kind of entity, we consider something practically when we examine what through its liberty *should* be there.]

In the first case we have the supreme being, God. In the second case moral perfection. Therefore moral philosophy, insofar as it provides the first principles for making judgments, can only be learnt through pure intellect and itself belongs to pure philosophy. And Epicurus is quite rightly criticised for dragging the criteria for morality down to the sense of pleasure or pain – as well as some of the newer philosophers who have followed him at a certain distance, like Shaftesbury among others.

In any category of things whose quantity is variable, the maximum is the common measure and the principle of cognition. In our time the maximum of perfection is called ‘the ideal’ – for Plato it was ‘idea’ (like the idea of his Republic) and it is a principle for everything contained under some general notion of perfection, insofar as it is thought that the lower grades can only be determined as a limit of the maximum. Now God – since as the Ideal of perfection he is a principle of cognition – as the one who really exists is also the principle of the coming to be of every perfection whatever.

10 Humans are not given an intuition of intelligibles, merely a symbolic cognition. And intellecting is only possible for us through universal concepts in the abstract, not through a single example in a particular. For our entire way of intuiting is constrained in principle to a certain form under which alone something can be perceived directly as a particular by our mind, rather than conceived discursively through general concepts.

Now this formal principle of our intuition (space and time) is the condition under which something can be an object of our senses, with the result that the condition of sensory cognition is not the medium for an intellectual intuition.

Apart from that, the material of all our cognition is only provided by the senses, but a noumenon (an intelligible) as such can only be conceived

through representations set apart from sensations. Therefore an intelligible concept as such is shorn of anything provided by human intuitions. In fact the intuition of our mind is always passive and therefore only possible insofar as something can affect our senses. However the divine intuition, which is the origin of objects and is not originated, since it has no dependency is the intelligible – and therefore perfect – archetype...

12 All the things that relate to our senses as objects are phenomena. Those that merely contain the unique *form* of sensory perception when the senses themselves are not touched are examples of pure intuition. That is intuition empty of sensation, and therefore not an intellectual intuition.

Phenomena are evaluated and explained first in regard to the external senses in empirical science, then with regard to the internal senses in empirical psychology. However for human beings, pure intuition is not a universal concept (something logical) *under which* sense-objects are thought, but a singular concept *in which* any sense objects are thought. It therefore contains the concepts of space and time; since these define nothing concerning the quality of an object, they are only the objects of knowledge as regards quantity. Thus pure mathematics considers space in geometry and time in pure mechanics.

There is of course a concept in addition to these which is in itself intellectual, but whose realisation in the particular requires the supporting notions of time and space (by adding more in succession and by being placed together simultaneously) and that is the concept of number that Arithmetic deals with. Therefore pure mathematics which sets out the form of our sensory cognition is the framework for any intuitive and distinct cognition. And because its objects themselves are not only the formal principles of every intuition, but themselves are primal intuitions, it provides the most accurate form of knowledge and at the same time the standard of the highest evidentiality in everything else. *Therefore we can have knowledge of sense-objects*, even though, because they are phenomena, we only have a logical understanding of them, not a real one. From this we can see in what sense those who drew inspiration from Parmenides and denied we could have knowledge of phenomena should be rejected.

III On the principles of the form of the sensible world.

The principle of the form of a universe is that it contains an orderly structure of universal connection, by which all substances and their states relate to the whole itself, which we call a world.

The principle of the form of the sensible world is that it contains an orderly structure of universal connection of all things insofar as they are phenomena.

The form of the intelligible world recognises an objective origin – that is, a cause, through which the things that exist in it are bound together.

However, the world considered as phenomenon (that is with respect to the sensory cognition of the human mind) only recognises a subjective origin of its form – namely a certain law of the mind through which it is necessary that everything that can be an object of the senses (through a characteristic of theirs) necessarily appears to belong to that Totality.

So whatever the origin of the form of the sensible world may be, nevertheless, it only contains realities insofar as they can be thought as falling under the senses. Therefore it does not include non-material substances which as such by definition are completely excluded from external senses, nor does it include the cause of the world, for since the mind itself exists by it and is able to deploy some form of sense, it cannot itself be an object of the senses.

I will now demonstrate that these formal principles of the phenomenal universe - absolute, primary, universal - the outward form and condition of any sensory object in human cognition are space and time.

14 On Time

The idea of time does not arise, but is presupposed by the senses...

The idea of time is singular, not general. No time can be thought except as a part of one and the same measureless time...

The idea of time is an intuition (a pure one)....

Time is a continuous quantity....

Time is not something objectively real. It is not a substance or an accident

or a relation, but it is a subjective condition necessary by the nature of the human mind, for organising all sense-objects by a specific law. It is a pure intuition...

15 On Space

The concept of space is not abstracted from external sensations...

The concept of space is a singular representation that contains all things within it...

The concept of space is a pure intuition...

...So those are the twin principles of sensory cognition. They are not (as in the case of intelligibles) general concepts, but singular intuitions, though pure ones.