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Jonathan Bennett

Kant's Analytic

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Kant's Analytic

Preface to this edition

JAMES VAN CLEVE



Bennett's *Kant's Analytic* is one of the two great Kant books of the 1960s, the other being Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense*. These books cast new light on Kant's doctrines and arguments in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and set several generations of philosophers to grappling with Kant.

Not everyone agreed with Bennett's approach to Kant, which he continued to pursue in subsequent works on the early modern philosophers. He said in the 1966 preface that he was going to fight Kant tooth and nail, and so he did. He treated Kant as someone to tilt with in the journals, demanding clarification on some points, offering clarification on others (perhaps using contemporary diction or distinctions), setting forth his arguments more explicitly than the master himself had, and subjecting the results to dispassionate evaluation. It was philosophy of a high order, so good that some of his critics refused to accept it as history of philosophy, apparently believing that no one could do both things at once.

There can be no going back on some of the distinctions and expository memes Bennett introduced. There is the observation that while for Locke and Hume, to have a concept is to harbour an introspectable mental item, for Kant it is to have the ability to recognize certain things, draw certain inferences, and answer certain questions. There is the capsule description of the Transcendental Deduction as showing that we cannot have experience without employing concepts and the Metaphysical Deduction as showing that to use any concepts we must use Kant's favoured dozen. There is the distinction between the genetic (bad) and the analytic (good) forms in which a thesis may be propounded. What Hume offered as an account of the causal conditions that make us believe in the existence of bodies is better seen as an analysis of what it means for bodies to exist; what Kant offered as a transcendental psychological theory of the operations that produce unity of consciousness is more profitably construed as an account of the criteria representations must satisfy to belong to a single self.

The most exciting parts of Bennett's book are those in which he analyses the notion of objectivity and advances Kant-inspired arguments for the existence of an objective realm. He thinks Berkeley and Hume, who

believed that objects were collections of ideas, could believe in objectivity only by believing that ideas could exist unperceived—which they cannot. Kant, by contrast, believed that the existence of objective or mind-independent items must be analysed somehow in terms of representations and the rules they follow, but not by way of any identification of objects with ideas or representations. Moreover, Bennett contends that Kant has sound arguments for the thesis that self-consciousness is possible only to a being who has experience of an objective realm. He finds intimations of this thesis in the Transcendental Deduction and arguments for it he endorses in the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Analogy. Studying these arguments, judging to what extent they are Kantian, determining whether they succeed, and trying to do better than Bennett if one can are among the invigorating challenges of reading this book.

Preface



This book concerns the first half of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; a treatment of the second half, under the title *Kant's Dialectic*, is in preparation. The present work ought to be readable by those who know nothing of the *Critique*. It is in some sense an 'introduction', but a selective one which does not expound all the *Critique's* most important themes. What I hope it provides is one fairly unified way of viewing a good part of Kant's achievement.

To this end I have freely criticized, clarified, interpolated and revised. I make no apology for adopting this approach, for fighting Kant tooth and nail. Had I instead indulged him, or even given him the benefit of every doubt, I could neither have learned from his opaque masterpiece nor reported intelligibly on what it says.

Like all great pioneering works in philosophy, the *Critique* is full of mistakes and confusions. It is a misunderstanding to think that a supreme philosopher cannot have erred badly and often: the *Critique* still has much to teach us, but it is wrong on nearly every page.

I have no feelings about the man Immanuel Kant; and in my exploration of his work I have no room for notions like those of charity, sympathy, deference, or hostility.

Because I aim to be clear yet fairly brief, I devote little space to acknowledging debts and pursuing disagreements with previous writers on the *Critique*. I am indeed somewhat out of sympathy with such of these as I have read; but I have learned from the works of Bird, Ewing, Kemp Smith, Körner, Walsh, Weldon and Wolff, more than my comparative silence about them might suggest.

I have, with difficulty, checked Kemp Smith's translation of every passage quoted from the *Critique*. I do not italicize the phrases 'a priori' and 'a posteriori'; my few other departures from Kemp Smith are noted as they occur.

Following standard practice, I refer to the first edition of the *Critique* as 'A' and the second as 'B'.

The present work was written in three large Parts and then, early in the re-writing, divided into fifty-four sections. At the last minute, I have

imposed a division into chapters. This was not part of my original plan, and I have not adjusted the text to accommodate it. Still, the chapter-titles are roughly accurate, and could help a reader who wishes to find whether and where I have discussed this or that large Kantian theme.

The Analytical Table of Contents, read in conjunction with the text, may help readers to grasp the book's main lines of argument and exposition.

The Notes at the end place every passage quoted or mentioned in the text, and refer to backing for assertions in the text about the views of Kant and others. The Notes contain nothing of any other kind. The few page-references given in the text are repeated in the Notes, so that the latter provide a complete list of passages referred to.

Drafts of some or all of the work have been read and helpfully criticized by A. J. Ayer, Malcolm Budd, N. Buder, A. C. Ewing, John Kenyon, M. J. Scott-Taggart, P. F. Strawson, W. H. Walsh and R. Ziedins; and for thorough criticisms of late drafts I owe a special debt to Gillian Bennett, Ian Hacking and Michael Tanner. I am also grateful to Saul Steinberg for his commentary on the uneasy relationship between the a priori and the empirical, which appears as the frontispiece.

Analytical table of contents



Aesthetic

§1. The Aesthetic is supposed to concern the senses, as the Logic does the intellect; but it is better seen as a treatment of some problems about space and time.

§2. In his account of the analytic/synthetic distinction, Kant overlooks sentence-ambiguity; explains the distinction in psychologistic terms; and sometimes seems to count as analytic only the elementarily analytic or true by definition. §3. An a priori judgment is 'necessary' in a very strong sense. Kant's view that Euclid's theorems are a priori but not analytic appears false unless 'analytic' means 'true by definition'. §4. However, Kant seems to think that Euclid's theorems are necessary not because they are (unelementarily) analytic but for some reason which does not rest on conceptual considerations. I shall construe him thus through §§5–8, but shall later re-interpret his conclusions in terms of what is analytic though not elementarily so.

§5. The outer-sense theory: the outer world as I experience it is Euclidean not because of uniformities in outer things but because of the uniform operation of my outer sense. §6. If this theory is a posteriori, so is Euclid's geometry; if it is elementarily analytic, it begs the question; and to call it synthetic and a priori is obscure. I shall argue that something like it is analytic, but not elementarily so (§§11–13). §7. Because he thinks it is synthetic and a priori, and because he offers it as a philosophical theory of great generality, Kant cannot take the outer-sense theory to be concerned with sense-organs or with anything phenomenal. §8. Kant's transcendental idealism (phenomenalism) says that what we can meaningfully say about phenomena, i.e. things which can be known through the senses, is restricted to what experience could teach us about them. He also thinks we have no concepts except phenomenal ones: so we cannot even speculatively apply concepts to the non-phenomenal, i.e. the noumenal. Yet he says there must be noumena, or at least that we must be able to 'think' noumena. The outer-sense theory seems to demand a noumenal subject-matter; but this would not be so if the

theory did not have to be construed as synthetic and so did not have to reify outer sense.

§9. A spatial world must obey a geometry, and Kant may have thought that Euclid's is, although synthetic, the only consistent geometry. But a spatial world might obey a geometry only usually and approximately; so why should Kant think that there can be *no* exceptions to Euclid's theorems? §10. He probably assumed, wrongly, that what we say about space must be based on what could in principle be seen at a glance.

§11. A case can be made for the suppressed premiss in §§9–10, namely that what is outer (objective, other-than-oneself) must be spatial. Strawson presents an auditory chaos which has no place for objectivity concepts and so contains nothing outer. §12. An ordering of the chaos which lets in objectivity concepts also introduces a spatial dimension. This is based on a 'master-sound', but a 'travel-based' ordering would be better. §13. The auditory world would be more objective still if there were movement and qualitative change in it, though if these were unrestricted, the world would collapse back into chaos. §14. Each development in §§11–13 increases the grip of objectivity concepts on the auditory world. A Quinean theory explains why: each development increases those concepts' abbreviating power.

§15. Strawson's theory, that what is outer must be spatial, may be analytic; but unlike Kant's examples of the analytic it is (a) unobvious, and (b) concerned with the preconditions for a concept's having any—even negative—work to do. It is useful to pretend that this is what Kant means by 'synthetic and a priori'. Like most worthwhile analytic results, Strawson's is not conclusively provable; and although its analyticity is important its apriority is not.

§16. The inner-sense theory: temporality is imposed on all experience by inner sense. Kant seems to be right that all our concepts presuppose temporality, and that it is nevertheless not analytic that the only reality is temporal; but this does not make the inner-sense theory acceptable. Kant's transcendental idealism about time is also unsatisfactory: applied to objective time it is uncomprehensive; applied to time in general it is trivial.

§17. Kant is sometimes psychologistic, and sometimes Wittgensteinian, in his talk about concepts. He aligns the concept/intuition distinction with the understanding/sensibility and active/passive distinctions, saying that there could be an active (non-sensible, intellectual) intuition, but not for humans. This is too obscure to be assessed. §18. Despite the criticisms of §8, Kant's negative use of 'noumenon' makes a valid point: that our world

is temporal is a contingent fact, yet we cannot entertain the possibility of its not being a fact. But he is wrong to equate 'noumenal' with 'knowable by a non-sensible intuition' and to assume that such an intuition would confront us with things as they are in themselves. The equation of intellectual or active intuition with intuitive understanding is also wrong: it exploits an ambiguity in 'intellectual'.

§19. Kant regards intuitions of space and time as somehow basic to concepts of them. This seems to come down to a claim about the logic of such phrases as 'a space' and 'a time'—a claim which Kant wrongly thinks will explain why space and time are necessarily singular. §20. Anyway, Kant's assumption that space is necessarily singular (and infinite) is false; his corresponding assumption about time may be true but does not prove his conclusion that time is 'an a priori intuition, not a concept'.

Analytic of concepts

§21. In defensible uses of 'concept', e.g. Kant's, concepts correspond to *functional kinds* of judgment. To have the concept of cause, say, is to be able to handle judgments which work like those we express in sentences using 'cause'. So Kant can speak of concepts of totality (associated with universal judgments), negation (negative judgments) etc. §22. Kant lists twelve functional kinds of judgment. He thinks they are the basic 'forms' a judgment may have: all its other features either pertain to its 'content' or, if formal, are definable in terms of Kant's twelve. §23. He thinks that his twelve judgment-kinds—and thus the corresponding concepts—are indispensable just because they are the basic 'forms' of judgments. Apart from the shakiness of the form/content distinction, this argument fails. Kant's twelve fall into four trios, and the most he can claim is the indispensability of one from each trio. This is too weak for his purposes; and if it is true it must be true by definition. To get untrivial results of the sort Kant wants, we must analyse 'judging' or 'employing concepts' or the like; we cannot argue from a list, as Kant tries to do.

§24. 'Concept' is useful only in describing a language in which general and past-tense judgments can be expressed. Kant seems to think that judgments require language, and that all languages must be concept-exercising. Thus, doubly wrongly, he equates 'x makes judgments' with 'x has concepts'. Still, his views about self-consciousness (§§28–31) entitle him to focus on the special case of judgments expressed in a concept-exercising language. §25. Some of Kant's favoured dozen—his 'categories'—are arguably indispensable to any concept-exercising

language; others are not. §26. Although Kant purports here to prove the indispensability of all twelve categories, he later re-argues the case for just the relational ones—perhaps because these do not correspond as they should to the relational judgment-kinds.

§27. Our concern has been with what it is to have concepts, not with how they are acquired. There may be interesting analytic truths about the species concept-learning, but not about the genus concept-acquisition. The debate over ‘innate ideas’ has been fed by neglect of the difference between acquisition and learning.

§28. The Transcendental Deduction seeks to show—roughly speaking—that there cannot be experience which is not brought under concepts. Kant’s premisses are that every sensory state must be (a) a state of a unified mind and (b) accompanied by self-consciousness. (b) is true at least of the kinds of experience which concern Kant, viz. those of which one can intelligibly ask: ‘What would it be like, “on the inside”, to be like that?’ §29. In an ‘empirical’ act of ‘synthesis’, one reasons one’s way to an awareness that a unity—e.g. of different properties of a single thing—obtains. Awareness that one’s own mental states belong to a single mind cannot be achieved in this way; and Kant says that in this case a ‘transcendental synthesis’ is involved. §30. On the worthless *genetic* interpretation, ‘transcendental synthesis’ is an atemporal intellectual act. Kant also hints at a better *analytic* interpretation: to say that *x*’s awareness of a unity involves a ‘transcendental synthesis’ is to say (a) that the unified items must satisfy unity-criteria and (b) that *x* grasps these criteria, i.e. could use them in time-taking ‘empirical’ syntheses. Such a grasp is required for an awareness of one’s past, and is thus required by any self-conscious creature. §31. There are no criteria for answering ‘Are these two sensory states both mine?’, for there can be no such problem; but there are criteria for answering ‘Was that pain mine?’ if this means ‘Was I in pain then?’ or ‘Did “that” pain exist at all?’ Questions about my past states must involve, among other things, criteria for mental identity. Upshot of §§28–31: Any state of being which I can intelligibly suppose I might find myself in must include self-consciousness, and thus knowledge of my past states, and thus the intellectual capacity and the opportunity to have and assess such knowledge. So I cannot wonder what it would be like—‘on the inside’—to lack such abilities, or to have experience which did not enable me to exercise them.

§32. Kant’s analysis of objectivity concepts improves greatly on Berkeley and Hume: for Kant a concept is a rule rather than an ‘idea’ or image, and so he can take objects to be logical constructions out of,

rather than collections of, intuitions. He rightly stresses the first-person singular: my world-picture and my conceptual scheme must be built, in ways *I* understand, out of what *I* know. §33. In the Transcendental Deduction Kant tries to anticipate his later argument for 'A self-conscious being must have experience of an objective realm', by (a) exploiting an ambiguity in 'object', (b) invalidly converting 'Knowledge of objects requires persons', and (c) giving restricted meanings to 'judgment' and 'experience'.

§34. The use of 'imagination' in the Transcendental Deduction in A is especially confusing. It seems unlikely that any worthwhile theory of imagination underlies Kant's terminological shifts.

Analytic of principles

§35. Kant says that each concept is associated with a 'schema', i.e. a rule for imagining instances of the concept. §36. This theory seems to offer a technique for applying any concept: 'Make an image in accordance with the schema (= rule), and then check the putative concept-instance against the image.' This requires two concept-applications, and so cannot be implemented by anyone who needs it. In fact, Kant himself shows why there cannot be a technique for concept-application as such. §37. Schematism is meant to solve a 'problem' about category-application. This, like Kant's 'solution' of it, is incoherent. A by-product of the 'solution': we apply to empirical things not the category but its schema. This involves images, and therefore sensibility, and therefore time. E.g. the schema of cause (= conditionality) is the concept of conditionality-in-time, which Kant takes to be the ordinary concept of cause.

§38. Kant thinks that Hume's analysis of cause must omit a non-empirical notion of necessity. He rightly does not attack Hume through counter-examples: *known* counter-examples could not discredit the programme for an *empiricist* analysis of cause. What does Kant mean by causal 'necessity'? Four possible answers, including: (a) Perhaps he moves from 'There must be causal laws [if there is to be graspable experience]' through 'Causal laws are necessary' to 'Each causal law involves necessity'; but the lemma is ambiguous, and the whole move invalid. (b) According to a genetic version of the transcendental-synthesis doctrine (§30), causal laws are necessary because imposed a priori on experience by the understanding. This, which is part of Kant's 'Copernican revolution', is worthless. §39. A fifth possible answer: he misleadingly uses necessitarian language to make the claim—which Hume could not

have accepted—that causal laws must be ‘strictly universal’, i.e. that a law which failed in even a single instance could not be used in genuine explanations.

§40. The ‘Principles’ chapter offers: (a) a single principle about ‘quantity’ in a different sense from that introduced in the Metaphysical Deduction (§41); (b) a single principle about reality and negation, with nothing said about limitation (§§42–3); (c) three principles about substance (§§45–50), cause (§§53–4) and community; and (d) three explanations of the modal categories in their empirical employment. The ‘community’ part of (c), and the whole of (d), will not be discussed further.

§41. An extensive magnitude is one which something has by virtue of having parts: size and duration seem to be the only extensive magnitudes. Kant tends wrongly to subordinate size to duration. The Aesthetic implies that all intuitions have extensive magnitude; but this does not, as Kant thinks, guarantee that ‘pure mathematics, in its complete precision’ must apply to the empirical world. §42. ‘Intensive magnitude’ is definable only as ‘non-extensive magnitude’. Kant fails to prove that sensations must have continuous degrees of intensity; but successfully uses the general notion of intensive magnitude to correct some old mistakes about ‘the real in space’, by distinguishing ‘How much of this region is occupied?’ from ‘In what degree is [the whole of] this region occupied?’ This refutes ‘If there is motion there is empty space’, but Kant denies that anything could count as evidence for the existence of empty space (wrong) or of eventless time (right).

§43. Kant uses ‘intensive magnitude’ against Mendelssohn’s argument for the soul’s immortality. His rebuttal is correct, but he accepts Mendelssohn’s false premiss that change must be continuous if time is.

§44. The third Analogy will not be discussed; nor will the ‘principle of the Analogies, but note its hint that time is central to the Analogies.

§45. A substance₁ is a thing with qualities; a substance₂ is a sempiternal thing. The two concepts are often conflated. Kant hopes that the table of judgments yields substance₂ and that substance₂ is its schema. This is doubly wrong; and Kant implicitly admits this, for in the first Analogy he tries to show the indispensability of the concept of substance₂. §46. The issue over substantiality is not an issue over objectivity: for Kant the former arises *within* the objective realm. §47. The alteration of a substance is the existence-change of its ‘determinations’ or properties. Kant says that all happenings must be alterations, which implies that if something apparently substantial were annihilated we ought to stop speaking of it in the substantial mode. §48. He may have reasoned thus: if all the evidence there could be for X’s existence-change consists in facts about

Y's alteration, then X's existence-change is Y's alteration and so X is a property or 'determination' of Y. §49. Standard anti-reductionist moves do not suffice to show that we could not deprive a physical thing, say, of its substantival status and yet still say everything we had to say about it. Recounting a pig's history without using a phrase like 'the pig' is possible if we avail ourselves of all the statements which, in a language which *did* have 'the pig', it would seem absurd to express as statements about the properties and relations of things other than the pig. §50. Kant's proposal, although possible, is undesirable. We have reason to demand moderate durability of substances, but not sempiternity. Also, his sempiternity criterion could lead to the conclusion that nothing is substantial: 'Through every happening, something persists' does not entail 'Something persists through every happening'. One point in Kant's favour: it is not clear how one could report, in a quantified form, the existence-change of a substance.

§51. Kant argues that there can be inner experience only if there is outer experience. This 'realism argument' is sketchy and obscure, but its conclusion is defensible. If someone had only inner experience there would be a one-one correlation between his present-tense memory-reports and his statements about his past, and hence no reason for calling the former 'memory-reports' or the latter 'statements about his *past*'. Only a being with outer experience can give work to his concept of the past (cf. §14); and so no self-conscious being can have purely inner experience. Wittgenstein has an argument which is a little like this, but his is significantly different in content and purpose. §52. Kant says that (1) transcendental idealism is sufficient, and also that (2) the realism argument is necessary, to refute empirical idealism. Since (1) does not entail (2), this must be wrong; and it is not saved by the distinction between two sorts of empirical idealism.

§53. From his wrong analysis of the distinction between perceiving an objective process and 'surveying' an unchanging object, Kant invalidly infers that every objective process must be governed by causal laws. §54. His 'ordering argument' is better: to recollect the order of occurrence of two past events—even purely inner events—one must appeal to causal considerations bearing directly and specifically upon that temporal ordering. Subject to certain qualifications, this is true; but it does not establish the second Analogy in its full strength.

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