

A priori knowledge, in Western philosophy since the time of Immanuel Kant, knowledge that is independent of all particular experiences, as opposed to a posteriori knowledge, which derives from experience.

Examples[edit] The intuitive distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge or justification is best seen via examples, as below: A priori Consider the proposition, "If George V reigned at least four days, then he reigned more than three days. A posteriori Compare this with the proposition expressed by the sentence, "George V reigned from to Analyticity and necessity[edit] Further information: Analytic-synthetic distinction Several philosophers reacting to Kant sought to explain a priori knowledge without appealing to, as Paul Boghossian MD explains, "a special faculty Quine put it, the notions of "true by virtue of meanings and independently of fact. In short, proponents of this explanation claimed to have reduced a dubious metaphysical faculty of pure reason to a legitimate linguistic notion of analyticity. However, the analytic explanation of a priori knowledge has undergone several criticisms. Most notably, Quine argued that the analytic-synthetic distinction is illegitimate. That there is such a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith. Relation to the necessary and contingent[edit] The metaphysical distinction between necessary and contingent truths has also been related to a priori and a posteriori knowledge. A proposition that is necessarily true is one whose negation is self-contradictory thus, it is said to be true in every possible world. Consider the proposition that all bachelors are unmarried. Its negation, the proposition that some bachelors are married, is incoherent, because the concept of being unmarried or the meaning of the word "unmarried" is part of the concept of being a bachelor or part of the definition of the word "bachelor". To the extent that contradictions are impossible, self-contradictory propositions are necessarily false, because it is impossible for them to be true. Thus, the negation of a self-contradictory proposition is supposed to be necessarily true. By contrast, a proposition that is contingently true is one whose negation is not self-contradictory thus, it is said that it is not true in every possible world. As Jason Baehr states, it seems plausible that all necessary propositions are known a priori, because "[s]ense experience can tell us only about the actual world and hence about what is the case; it can say nothing about what must or must not be the case. According to Jerry Fodor, " Positivism , in particular, took it for granted that a priori truths must be necessary Analytic propositions were largely taken to be "true by virtue of meanings and independently of fact", [6] while synthetic propositions were not one must conduct some sort of empirical investigation, looking to the world, to determine the truth-value of synthetic propositions. Aprioricity, analyticity, and necessity have since been more clearly separated from each other. The American philosopher Saul Kripke , for example, provided strong arguments against this position. Kripke argued that there are necessary a posteriori truths, such as the proposition that water is H₂O if it is true. According to Kripke, this statement is necessarily true since water and H₂O are the same thing, they are identical in every possible world, and truths of identity are logically necessary and a posteriori since it is known only through empirical investigation. Following such considerations of Kripke and others such as Hilary Putnam , philosophers tend to distinguish more clearly the notion of aprioricity from that of necessity and analyticity. It did not assume "possible world semantics" for the third distinction, merely that some part of this world might have been different. Thus, the relationship between aprioricity, necessity, and analyticity is not easy to discern. However, most philosophers at least seem to agree that while the various distinctions may overlap, the notions are clearly not identical: Albert of Saxony , a 14th-century logician, wrote on both a priori and a posteriori. Leibniz introduced a distinction between a priori and a posteriori criteria for the possibility of a notion in his short treatise "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas". Kant says, "Although all our cognition begins with experience, it does not follow that it arises [is caused by] from experience" [15] According to Kant, a priori cognition is transcendental , or based on the form of all possible experience, while a posteriori cognition is empirical, based on the content of experience. Kant states, "[a] it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself sensuous impressions [sense data] giving merely the occasion [opportunity for a

cause to produce its effect]. And unlike the rationalists, Kant thinks that a priori cognition, in its pure form, that is without the admixture of any empirical content, is limited to the deduction of the conditions of possible experience. Kant nominated and explored the possibility of a transcendental logic with which to consider the deduction of the a priori in its pure form. Space, time and causality are considered pure a priori intuitions. Kant reasoned that the pure a priori intuitions are established via his transcendental aesthetic and transcendental logic. He claimed that the human subject would not have the kind of experience that it has were these a priori forms not in some way constitutive of him as a human subject. For instance, a person would not experience the world as an orderly, rule-governed place unless time, space and causality were determinant functions in the form of perceptual faculties, i. The transcendental deduction argues that time, space and causality are ideal as much as real. One of these philosophers was Johann Fichte. His student and critic, Arthur Schopenhauer, accused him of rejecting the distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge: Fichte who, because the thing-in-itself had just been discredited, at once prepared a system without any thing-in-itself. Consequently, he rejected the assumption of anything that was not through and through merely our representation, and therefore let the knowing subject be all in all or at any rate produce everything from its own resources. For this purpose, he at once did away with the essential and most meritorious part of the Kantian doctrine, the distinction between a priori and a posteriori and thus that between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. For he declared everything to be a priori, naturally without any evidence for such a monstrous assertion; instead of these, he gave sophisms and even crazy sham demonstrations whose absurdity was concealed under the mask of profundity and of the incomprehensibility ostensibly arising therefrom. Moreover, he appealed boldly and openly to intellectual intuition, that is, really to inspiration.

Chapter 2 : Kant and Mathematical Knowledge, by Thomas J McFarlane

On the no-theory option Kant is primarily concerned with the conditions of empirical knowledge and the relation of experience to objects. So occupied, he in effect redefines what it is to be concerned with the (non-analytic) a priori in the first place: it just is to be concerned with such conditions.

The terms a priori and a posteriori are Scholastic terms that have their origin in certain ideas of Aristotle; but their use has been considerably extended in the course of history, and their present use stems from the meaning given to them by Immanuel Kant. The terms literally mean "from what is prior" and "from what is posterior. It is possible for these two senses of "prior" to have an application in common; substance, for example, is prior to other things in both of these senses and in others. It follows that to know something from what is prior is to know what is, in some sense, its cause. Aristotle believed that it is possible to demonstrate a causal relationship by means of a syllogism in which the term for the cause is the middle term. Hence, to know something in terms of what is prior is to know it in terms of a demonstrable causal relationship. To know something from what is posterior, on the other hand, can involve no such demonstration, since the knowledge will be inductive in form. According to the latter, to know reality a posteriori is to know it from what is actually found in the world, that is, by the senses, by the effects of reality in experience; to know reality a priori is to know it "by exposing the cause or the possible generation of the definite thing" *Nouveaux Essais*, Bk. It is also possible to speak of a priori proofs. As a general consequence of this, Leibniz could distinguish between "truths a posteriori, or of fact," and "truths a priori, or of reason" *ibid*. Thus the distinction between the a posteriori and the a priori comes to be a distinction between what is derived from experience and what is not, whether or not the notion of the a priori also has the notion of demonstration in terms of cause or reason associated with it. Such is the distinction in Kant, and it has remained roughly the same ever since. Since in Kant there is no simple opposition between sense experience and reason there being also the understanding, it is not possible to express the distinction he laid down as one between what is derived from experience and what is derived from reason. The distinction, then, is roughly equivalent to that between the empirical and the nonempirical. Kant also connected it with the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, a priori truths being necessary and a posteriori truths contingent. But to assume without further argument that the two distinctions coincide in their application is to assume too much. The same is true of the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic; this too cannot be assimilated without argument to that between the a priori and a posteriori. Whether or not these distinctions coincide in their applications, they certainly cannot have the same meaning. The distinction between the a priori and a posteriori is an epistemological one; it is certainly not evident that the others are. The Distinction Applied to Concepts The distinction between the a priori and the a posteriori has been drawn not only in connection with truths or propositions but also in connection with concepts. Indeed, some truths are doubly a priori; not only is their truth knowable independently of experience but the concepts that they involve are similarly independent of experience. The distinction between a posteriori and a priori concepts may seem a perspicuous one, for it may be thought to be a distinction between concepts that we derive from experience by building them up therefrom and concepts that we have independently of experience. It has sometimes been said also that the latter concepts are innate ideas, with which we are born, so that we have no need to acquire them. But the question whether ideas are innate or acquired seems to be one of psychology, as is the question how we acquire ideas if we do. The distinction under consideration, being an epistemological one, has no direct connection with psychology. A concept that is independent of experience may or may not be innate; and although it cannot be acquired directly from experience, it may still be that experience is in some way a necessary condition of our having the concept. What then does it mean to say that a concept is independent of experience? The answer must be in terms of the validation of the concept. It may be assumed for present purposes that a concept is what is meant by the corresponding term although this may not be a fully adequate view and bypasses the question whether concepts are independent of words. To have a concept will thus at least be to understand the corresponding term. Perhaps, then, an a posteriori concept is one expressed by a term understandable purely in terms of

experience, and an a priori concept one that does not satisfy this condition. The point has sometimes been made by saying that an a posteriori, or empirical, concept or term is one that is cashable in terms of sense experience. This is of course a metaphor, and what it means is that the meaning of empirical terms can be given by definitions that must ultimately depend on ostensive definitions only. Ostensive definitions are those which provide the definition of a term by a direct confrontation with experience. To define a term ostensively it is necessary only to repeat the expression together with some form of pointing to the object or phenomenon in question. It is highly questionable, however, whether any performance of this kind could ever constitute definition as such. For the meaning of a word to be taught in this way there would have to be as Ludwig Wittgenstein in effect pointed out at the beginning of his *Philosophical Investigations* a previous understanding that the noise made was a word in a language and in a language of a definite sort. Furthermore, it would have to be understood what sort of term was being defined—whether it was descriptive and, if so, what range of phenomena it was being used to describe. If all this must be understood, it can scarcely be said that the term in question is defined purely by reference to sense experience. Nevertheless, there is some distinction to be made here. Even if such terms as "red" cannot be defined purely by reference to experience, they could not be understood fully without experience, for example, by someone who does not possess and never has possessed sight. There is a sense in which the blind can, up to a point, understand terms such as "red," in that they can know that red is a color and even a color of a certain sort related to other colors in certain ways. But since they cannot know when to apply the term in fact, there is an obvious sense in which they do not have a full understanding of it—and the same applies to the notion of color itself. A posteriori terms and concepts may thus be defined as those that directly require our having experience in order for us to apply them or those that can only be fully understood by reference to terms that directly require our having experience to apply them. Whether or not a creature without experience could ever come to have a concept such as, for example, validity, it is clear that being able to apply the concept does not directly require experience. This may afford the basis of a distinction between a posteriori and a priori concepts. There may be various views about a priori concepts, concerning, for example, whether they are to be restricted to concepts of, or concepts involved in, mental operations on a posteriori concepts. Empiricists have in general held that the only a priori concepts are those that express relations of ideas. The field is thus restricted to the concepts of logic and mathematics. The Distinction Applied to Propositions In a sense, the distinction between concepts presupposes the distinction between propositions, since concepts can be applied only in propositions. According to the rough criteria already mentioned, an a priori proposition will be one whose truth is knowable independently of experience. It may be questioned, however, whether there are any truths that can be known if the subject has no experiences whatever. Hence, the matter is better put in terms of the validation of the proposition in question, in terms of its verification or falsification. It has sometimes been suggested that a proposition is a priori if its truth is ascertainable by examination of it alone or if it is deducible from such propositions. An a priori proposition would thus be one that provides its own verification; it is true in itself. This account is too restrictive, since there may be propositions whose truth is ascertainable by argument that makes no reference to empirical matters of fact, but that may not be deducible from any propositions of the kind previously mentioned. That is to say, there may be circumstances in which it is possible to validate propositions by argument that makes no reference to matters of fact discoverable by experience. Empiricists have generally denied this, but the possibility of what Kant called "transcendental arguments" cannot be so lightly dismissed. On the other hand, to say simply that a priori propositions are those whose truth can be discovered without reference to experience is too wide a definition. For it may be argued that the terms in which many such propositions are expressed could only be fully understood by reference to experience. A proposition may be a priori without its involving terms that are without exception a priori. It was for this reason that Kant distinguished between a priori and pure a priori judgments; only in the latter are all the terms a priori. In view of this, an a priori proposition may be defined as one whose truth, given an understanding of the terms involved, is ascertainable by a procedure that makes no reference to experience. The validation of a posteriori truths, on the other hand, necessitates a procedure that does make reference to experience. It has already been mentioned that Kant superimposed upon the a priori—a posteriori distinction the distinction

between the analytic and the synthetic. There are difficulties involved in defining this latter distinction, but for present purposes it is necessary to note that Kant assumed it impossible for analytic judgments to be a posteriori. He does this presumably on the grounds that the truth of an analytic judgment depends upon the relations between the concepts involved and is ascertainable by determining whether the denial of the judgment gives rise to a contradiction. This latter procedure is surely one that makes no reference to experience. Kant is clearly right in this. As already seen, it is not relevant to object that since analytic judgments, propositions, or statements need not involve purely a priori terms, evaluation of the truth of some analytic propositions will involve reference to experience; for in determining whether a proposition is a priori, it is necessary to take as already determined the status of the terms involved. It is similarly irrelevant to maintain that it is sometimes possible to come to see the truth of an analytic proposition through empirical means. It may be possible, for example, for a man to realize the truth of "All bachelors are unmarried men" as an analytic proposition as a consequence of direct experience with bachelors. But this consequence will be an extrinsic one. That is to say that while the man may attain this insight in this way, it will be quite accidental; the validity of the insight does not depend upon the method by which it is acquired. That is why the definition of an a priori proposition or statement involves the idea that its truth must be ascertainable without reference to experience. As long as a nonempirical procedure of validation exists, the proposition in question will be a priori, whether or not its truth is always ascertained by this procedure. It is quite impossible, on the other hand, for an a posteriori proposition to be validated by pure argument alone. Given that all analytic propositions are a priori, it is a further question whether all synthetic propositions must be a posteriori. This is a hotly debated question, with empiricists maintaining that they must be. But first it is necessary to consider the relation between the a priori and a posteriori dichotomy and the necessary and contingent one. Kant certainly associated the a priori with the necessary, and there is a prima facie case for the view that if a proposition is known a posteriori, its truth must be contingent. For how can experience alone tell us that some thing must be so? On the other hand, it might be maintained that we can learn inductively that a connection between characteristics of things holds as a matter of necessity. Some philosophers maintain that natural laws represent necessary truths, and they do not all think this incompatible with the view that natural laws can be arrived at through experience. What is sometimes called intuitive induction—a notion originating in Aristotle—is also something of this kind; we see by experience that something is essentially so and so. An even greater number of philosophers would be willing to assert that, in some sense of the word "must," experience can show us that something must be the case. Certainly the "must" in question is not a logical "must," and empiricists have tended to maintain that all necessity is logical necessity. This, however, is just a dogma. It seems plausible to assert that an unsupported body must in normal circumstances fall to the ground. Yet it must be admitted that the normal philosophical conception of necessity is more refined than this, and to say that an unsupported body must in normal circumstances fall to the ground need not be taken as incompatible with saying that this is a contingent matter. Similarly, there is an important sense in which natural laws are contingent; they are about matters of fact. If we also think of them as necessary, the necessity in question stems from the conceptual framework into which we fit them. It is possible to conceive of empirical connections in such a way that, within the framework of concepts in which we place them, they are treated as holding necessarily. It is still a contingent matter whether the whole conceptual framework has an application. If propositions expressing such connections are a priori, it is only in a relative sense. It seems at first sight that there is no necessity for nonempirical propositions to be necessary, or rather that it is possible to construct propositions which, if true, must be true a priori, while they apparently remain contingent. These are propositions that are doubly general. Such propositions have been called by J. Watkins following Karl Popper "all and some propositions."

Chapter 3 : Kant's Theory of A Priori Knowledge By Robert Greenberg

The Latin phrases a priori (lit. "from the earlier") and a posteriori (lit. "from the later") are philosophical terms of art popularized by Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (first published in , second edition in), one of the most influential works in the history of philosophy.

Her surname is sometimes erroneously given as Porter. Immanuel Kant believed that his paternal grandfather Hans Kant was of Scottish origin. He was brought up in a Pietist household that stressed religious devotion, humility, and a literal interpretation of the Bible. He never married, but seemed to have a rewarding social life. He was a popular teacher and a modestly successful author even before starting on his major philosophical works. A common myth is that Kant never traveled more than 16 kilometres. Young scholar [edit] Kant showed a great aptitude for study at an early age. He first attended the Collegium Fridericianum from which he graduated at the end of the summer of . Knutzen dissuaded Kant from the theory of pre-established harmony, which he regarded as "the pillow for the lazy mind". The theory of transcendental idealism that Kant later included in the Critique of Pure Reason was developed partially in opposition to traditional idealism. In , he published his first philosophical work, Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces written in . Kant also correctly deduced that the Milky Way was a large disk of stars, which he theorized formed from a much larger spinning gas cloud. He further suggested that other distant "nebulae" might be other galaxies. These postulations opened new horizons for astronomy, for the first time extending it beyond the Solar System to galactic and intergalactic realms. In the early s, Kant produced a series of important works in philosophy. Two more works appeared the following year: To miss this distinction would mean to commit the error of subreption, and, as he says in the last chapter of the dissertation, only in avoiding this error does metaphysics flourish. The issue that vexed Kant was central to what 20th-century scholars called "the philosophy of mind". The flowering of the natural sciences had led to an understanding of how data reaches the brain. Sunlight falling on an object is reflected from its surface in a way that maps the surface features color, texture, etc. The reflected light reaches the human eye, passes through the cornea, is focused by the lens onto the retina where it forms an image similar to that formed by light passing through a pinhole into a camera obscura. The retinal cells send impulses through the optic nerve and then they form a mapping in the brain of the visual features of the object. The interior mapping is not the exterior object, and our belief that there is a meaningful relationship between the object and the mapping in the brain depends on a chain of reasoning that is not fully grounded. But the uncertainty aroused by these considerations, by optical illusions, misperceptions, delusions, etc. Kant saw that the mind could not function as an empty container that simply receives data from outside. Something must be giving order to the incoming data. Images of external objects must be kept in the same sequence in which they were received. It is often claimed that Kant was a late developer, that he only became an important philosopher in his mids after rejecting his earlier views. While it is true that Kant wrote his greatest works relatively late in life, there is a tendency to underestimate the value of his earlier works. Recent Kant scholarship has devoted more attention to these "pre-critical" writings and has recognized a degree of continuity with his mature work. In correspondence with his ex-student and friend Markus Herz, Kant admitted that, in the inaugural dissertation, he had failed to account for the relation between our sensible and intellectual faculties. He needed to explain how we combine what is known as sensory knowledge with the other type of knowledge. These two being are related but have very different processes. Kant also credited David Hume with awakening him from dogmatic slumber circa Ideas such as "cause", goodness, or objects were not evident in experience, so why do we believe in the reality of these? Kant felt that reason could remove this skepticism, and he set himself to solving these problems. He did not publish any work in philosophy for the next 11 years. Any change makes me apprehensive, even if it offers the greatest promise of improving my condition, and I am persuaded by this natural instinct of mine that I must take heed if I wish that the threads which the Fates spin so thin and weak in my case to be spun to any length. My great thanks, to my well-wishers and friends, who think so kindly of me as to undertake my welfare, but at the same time a most humble request to protect me in my current condition from any disturbance. Although now uniformly

recognized as one of the greatest works in the history of philosophy, this Critique was largely ignored upon its initial publication. The book was long, over pages in the original German edition, and written in a convoluted style. It received few reviews, and these granted it no significance. These well-received and readable tracts include one on the earthquake in Lisbon that was so popular that it was sold by the page. Recognizing the need to clarify the original treatise, Kant wrote the Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics in as a summary of its main views. In , Karl Leonhard Reinhold published a series of public letters on Kantian philosophy. Friedrich Jacobi had accused the recently deceased Gotthold Ephraim Lessing a distinguished dramatist and philosophical essayist of Spinozism. The controversy gradually escalated into a debate about the values of the Enlightenment and the value of reason. Later work and death[edit] Kant published a second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason Kritik der reinen Vernunft in , heavily revising the first parts of the book. Most of his subsequent work focused on other areas of philosophy. The Critique of Judgment the third Critique applied the Kantian system to aesthetics and teleology. It was in this critique where Kant wrote one of his most popular statements, "it is absurd to hope that another Newton will arise in the future who will make comprehensible to us the production of a blade of grass according to natural laws". There were several journals devoted solely to defending and criticizing Kantian philosophy. Despite his success, philosophical trends were moving in another direction. Kant opposed these developments and publicly denounced Fichte in an open letter in Kant wrote a book discussing his theory of virtue in terms of independence which he believed was "a viable modern alternative to more familiar Greek views about virtue". This book is often criticized for its hostile tone and for not articulating his thoughts about autocracy comprehensibly. In the self-governance model of Aristotelian virtue, the non-rational part of the soul can be made to listen to reason through training. Although Kantian self-governance appears to involve "a rational crackdown on appetites and emotions" with lack of harmony between reason and emotion, Kantian virtue denies requiring "self-conquest, self-suppression, or self-silencing". They dispute that "the self-mastery constitutive of virtue is ultimately mastery over our tendency of will to give priority to appetite or emotion unregulated by duty, it does not require extirpating, suppressing, or silencing sensibility in general". Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. Kant maintained that one ought to think autonomously, free of the dictates of external authority. His work reconciled many of the differences between the rationalist and empiricist traditions of the 18th century. He had a decisive impact on the Romantic and German Idealist philosophies of the 19th century. His work has also been a starting point for many 20th century philosophers. Kant asserted that, because of the limitations of argumentation in the absence of irrefutable evidence , no one could really know whether there is a God and an afterlife or not. All the preparations of reason, therefore, in what may be called pure philosophy, are in reality directed to those three problems only [God, the soul, and freedom]. However, these three elements in themselves still hold independent, proportional, objective weight individually. Moreover, in a collective relational context; namely, to know what ought to be done: As this concerns our actions with reference to the highest aims of life, we see that the ultimate intention of nature in her wise provision was really, in the constitution of our reason, directed to moral interests only. If he fails to do either as often occurs , he may still ask whether it is in his interest to accept one or the other of the alternatives hypothetically, from the theoretical or the practical point of view. Hence the question no longer is as to whether perpetual peace is a real thing or not a real thing, or as to whether we may not be deceiving ourselves when we adopt the former alternative, but we must act on the supposition of its being real. This, however, is possible in an intelligible world only under a wise author and ruler. Reason compels us to admit such a ruler, together with life in such a world, which we must consider as future life, or else all moral laws are to be considered as idle dreams He never used the "Copernican revolution" phrase about himself, but it has often been applied to his work by others. These teachings placed the active, rational human subject at the center of the cognitive and moral worlds. Kant argued that the rational order of the world as known by science was not just the accidental accumulation of sense perceptions. Conceptual unification and integration is carried out by the mind through concepts or the "categories of the understanding " operating on the perceptual manifold within space and time. The latter are not concepts, [74] but are forms of sensibility that are a priori necessary conditions for any possible experience. However, Kant

also speaks of the thing in itself or transcendental object as a product of the human understanding as it attempts to conceive of objects in abstraction from the conditions of sensibility. The notion of the "thing in itself" was much discussed by philosophers after Kant. It was argued that because the "thing in itself" was unknowable, its existence must not be assumed. Rather than arbitrarily switching to an account that was ungrounded in anything supposed to be the "real," as did the German Idealists, another group arose to ask how our presumably reliable accounts of a coherent and rule-abiding universe were actually grounded. This new kind of philosophy became known as Phenomenology, and its founder was Edmund Husserl. With regard to morality, Kant argued that the source of the good lies not in anything outside the human subject, either in nature or given by God, but rather is only the good will itself. A good will is one that acts from duty in accordance with the universal moral law that the autonomous human being freely gives itself. This necessitates practical self-reflection in which we universalize our reasons. These ideas have largely framed or influenced all subsequent philosophical discussion and analysis.

Theory of perception[edit] Main article: Critique of Pure Reason Kant defines his theory of perception in his influential work the Critique of Pure Reason, which has often been cited as the most significant volume of metaphysics and epistemology in modern philosophy. Kant maintains that our understanding of the external world had its foundations not merely in experience, but in both experience and a priori concepts, thus offering a non-empiricist critique of rationalist philosophy, which is what has been referred to as his Copernican revolution. On the other hand, a synthetic statement is one that tells us something about the world. The truth or falsehood of synthetic statements derives from something outside their linguistic content. In this instance, weight is not a necessary predicate of the body; until we are told the heaviness of the body we do not know that it has weight. In this case, experience of the body is required before its heaviness becomes clear. Hume and rationalists cf. Leibniz assumed that all synthetic statements required experience to be known. Kant, however, contests this: This becomes part of his over-all argument for transcendental idealism. That is, he argues that the possibility of experience depends on certain necessary conditions "which he calls a priori forms" and that these conditions structure and hold true of the world of experience.

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A priori justification is a type of epistemic justification that is, in some sense, independent of experience. Gettier examples have led most philosophers to think that having a justified true belief is not sufficient for knowledge (see sec. 5, below, and the example, Sheep), but many still believe that it is necessary.

Internet Sources Next we turn to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant , a watershed figure who forever altered the course of philosophical thinking in the Western tradition. Long after his thorough indoctrination into the quasi-scholastic German appreciation of the metaphysical systems of Leibniz and Wolff , Kant said, it was a careful reading of David Hume that "interrupted my dogmatic slumbers and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction. This central idea became the basis for his life-long project of developing a critical philosophy that could withstand them. The rationalists had tried to show that we can understand the world by careful use of reason; this guarantees the indubitability of our knowledge but leaves serious questions about its practical content. The empiricists , on the other hand, had argued that all of our knowledge must be firmly grounded in experience; practical content is thus secured, but it turns out that we can be certain of very little. Both approaches have failed, Kant supposed, because both are premised on the same mistaken assumption. Progress in philosophy, according to Kant, requires that we frame the epistemological problem in an entirely different way. The crucial question is not how we can bring ourselves to understand the world, but how the world comes to be understood by us. Instead of trying, by reason or experience, to make our concepts match the nature of objects, Kant held, we must allow the structure of our concepts shape our experience of objects. Varieties of Judgment In the Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic Kant presented the central themes of the first Critique in a somewhat different manner, starting from instances in which we do appear to have achieved knowledge and asking under what conditions each case becomes possible. So he began by carefully drawing a pair of crucial distinctions among the judgments we do actually make. The first distinction separates a priori from a posteriori judgments by reference to the origin of our knowledge of them. A priori judgments are based upon reason alone, independently of all sensory experience, and therefore apply with strict universality. A posteriori judgments, on the other hand, must be grounded upon experience and are consequently limited and uncertain in their application to specific cases. Thus, this distinction also marks the difference traditionally noted in logic between necessary and contingent truths. But Kant also made a less familiar distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, according to the information conveyed as their content. Analytic judgments are those whose predicates are wholly contained in their subjects; since they add nothing to our concept of the subject, such judgments are purely explicative and can be deduced from the principle of non-contradiction. Synthetic judgments, on the other hand, are those whose predicates are wholly distinct from their subjects, to which they must be shown to relate because of some real connection external to the concepts themselves. Hence, synthetic judgments are genuinely informative but require justification by reference to some outside principle. Kant supposed that previous philosophers had failed to differentiate properly between these two distinctions. Both Leibniz and Hume had made just one distinction, between matters of fact based on sensory experience and the uninformative truths of pure reason. In fact, Kant held, the two distinctions are not entirely coextensive; we need at least to consider all four of their logically possible combinations: Analytic a posteriori judgments cannot arise, since there is never any need to appeal to experience in support of a purely explicative assertion. Synthetic a posteriori judgments are the relatively uncontroversial matters of fact we come to know by means of our sensory experience though Wolff had tried to derive even these from the principle of contradiction. Analytic a priori judgments, everyone agrees, include all merely logical truths and straightforward matters of definition; they are necessarily true. Synthetic a priori judgments are the crucial case, since only they could provide new information that is necessarily true. But neither Leibniz nor Hume considered the possibility of any such case. Unlike his predecessors, Kant maintained that synthetic a priori judgments not only are possible but actually provide the basis for significant portions of human knowledge. In fact, he supposed pace Hume that arithmetic and geometry comprise such judgments and that natural science depends on them for its power to explain and

predict events. But how are synthetic a priori judgments possible at all? This is the central question Kant sought to answer. Mathematics Consider, for example, our knowledge that two plus three is equal to five and that the interior angles of any triangle add up to a straight line. These and similar truths of mathematics are synthetic judgments, Kant held, since they contribute significantly to our knowledge of the world; the sum of the interior angles is not contained in the concept of a triangle. Yet, clearly, such truths are known a priori, since they apply with strict and universal necessity to all of the objects of our experience, without having been derived from that experience itself. In these instances, Kant supposed, no one will ask whether or not we have synthetic a priori knowledge; plainly, we do. The question is, how do we come to have such knowledge? If experience does not supply the required connection between the concepts involved, what does? Conformity with the truths of mathematics is a precondition that we impose upon every possible object of our experience. Just as Descartes had noted in the Fifth Meditation, the essence of bodies is manifested to us in Euclidean solid geometry, which determines a priori the structure of the spatial world we experience. In order to be perceived by us, any object must be regarded as being uniquely located in space and time, so it is the spatio-temporal framework itself that provides the missing connection between the concept of the triangle and that of the sum of its angles. Space and time, Kant argued in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" of the first Critique, are the "pure forms of sensible intuition" under which we perceive what we do. Understanding mathematics in this way makes it possible to rise above an old controversy between rationalists and empiricists regarding the very nature of space and time. Leibniz had maintained that space and time are not intrinsic features of the world itself, but merely a product of our minds. Newton, on the other hand, had insisted that space and time are absolute, not merely a set of spatial and temporal relations. Kant now declares that both of them were correct! Space and time are absolute, and they do derive from our minds. As synthetic a priori judgments, the truths of mathematics are both informative and necessary. We will see additional examples in later lessons, and can defer our assessment of them until then. But notice that there is a price to be paid for the certainty we achieve in this manner. Since mathematics derives from our own sensible intuition, we can be absolutely sure that it must apply to everything we perceive, but for the same reason we can have no assurance that it has anything to do with the way things are apart from our perception of them. Preconditions for Natural Science In natural science no less than in mathematics, Kant held, synthetic a priori judgments provide the necessary foundations for human knowledge. The most general laws of nature, like the truths of mathematics, cannot be justified by experience, yet must apply to it universally. As we saw last time, applying the concepts of space and time as forms of sensible intuition is necessary condition for any perception. But the possibility of scientific knowledge requires that our experience of the world be not only perceivable but thinkable as well, and Kant held that the general intelligibility of experience entails the satisfaction of two further conditions: First, it must be possible in principle to arrange and organize the chaos of our many individual sensory images by tracing the connections that hold among them. This Kant called the synthetic unity of the sensory manifold. Second, it must be possible in principle for a single subject to perform this organization by discovering the connections among perceived images. This is satisfied by what Kant called the transcendental unity of apperception. Experiential knowledge is thinkable only if there is some regularity in what is known and there is some knower in whom that regularity can be represented. Since we do actually have knowledge of the world as we experience it, Kant held, both of these conditions must in fact obtain. Deduction of the Categories Since as Hume had noted individual images are perfectly separable as they occur within the sensory manifold, connections between them can be drawn only by the knowing subject, in which the principles of connection are to be found. As in mathematics, so in science the synthetic a priori judgments must derive from the structure of the understanding itself. Kant supposed that any intelligible thought can be expressed in judgments of these sorts. But then it follows that any thinkable experience must be understood in these ways, and we are justified in projecting this entire way of thinking outside ourselves, as the inevitable structure of any possible experience.

Chapter 5 : Immanuel Kant (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

The prevailing interpretation of Kant's First Critique in Anglo-American philosophy views his theory of a priori knowledge as basically a theory about the possibility of empirical knowledge (or experience), or the a priori conditions for that possibility (the representations of space and time and the categories).

Some philosophers have gone so far as to claim that reason is the only human faculty whose operations can yield knowledge. We have seen that this was the view of Plato. At best, sense-perception can produce true opinion. Later philosophers would allow that beliefs that are based on sense-perception are probable but are not secure enough to be counted as knowledge. Traditionally, knowledge that is independent of sense-perception has been called a priori knowledge. Plato thought that mathematical knowledge is a priori, and many philosophers would add that knowledge of the truths of logic is a priori as well. What logic and mathematics have in common is that their objects are not accessible through sense-perception but only by reason alone. For Plato, it is through "recollection. He resorted to metaphors such as the activity of "the light of nature" to explain how a priori knowledge arises. For Descartes, the paradigm of a priori knowledge is knowledge of mathematical truths. One feature of mathematical truths is that they are necessary: Descartes explained this necessity by reference to God: The same holds for the truths of logic. Another item of a priori knowledge for Kant is the existence of God. In the fifth Meditation, Descartes tried to show that if one merely understands the meaning of the idea of God properly, one knows that God exists. Given that a priori knowledge is of necessary truths, the existence of God is a necessary truth as well. Further, this suggests another way to describe propositions that might be known a priori, namely those that are true by virtue of meaning, such as that a triangle has three sides. Some of the more interesting debates regarding a priori knowledge are these. Is there a real distinction between a priori knowledge and knowledge through sense-perception "a posteriori" or "empirical" knowledge? Are human beings in possession of any such knowledge? Are all propositions which are known a priori a priori truths true by virtue of meaning? Are they all necessarily true? Is there any a priori knowledge of objects of the senses? For some time, philosophers influenced by W. Quine had largely abandoned any claims to a priori knowledge. But interest was revived in by Saul Kripke, who argued that we have a priori knowledge of contingent non-necessary truths. See Naming and Necessity. In this class, we will be looking at a piece by Philip Kitcher Columbia University which tries to break the traditional mold in thinking about a priori knowledge. He seeks to clarify the definition of a priori knowledge given by Kant. More importantly, he tries to show that a priori knowledge can be understood from a standpoint according to which knowledge is a product of human beings in the world of physical nature. In this way, he rejects the view of Plato and Descartes that a priori knowledge is restricted to a soul that operates separately from the body. Independence from Experience Kant had defined a priori knowledge as that knowledge which is independent of all experience. According to this definition, knowledge obtained from recollection or innate ideas would qualify as a priori. But Kitcher points out that Kant thought that a priori knowledge is not obtained in this way. He gave experience some role. Kitcher suggests, following philosophers such as John Locke, that it can be divided into two sorts. If a priori knowledge is to be independent of all experience, then we might say that there is no particular stimulus, inner or outer, that is required for a particular item such knowledge. But it may be that experience does play a role in a priori knowledge. For example, consider the claims that some propositions "analytic truths" are true by virtue of their meaning. It may be that experience is required in order for one to obtain the concept which is analyzed in the proposition. Knowledge is a priori when the only experience required to obtain it is that which is needed to obtain the concepts involved in the known proposition. Even though the reasoning process itself may be independent of experience, it relies on premises that are derived from experience. With a different sequence of experience, the reasoner might lack the required premises. First Analysis of A Priori Knowledge Having given an informal characterization of a priori knowledge, Kitcher puts it together in the form of an analysis. An analysis is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be of a certain kind. Here, the kind in question is a priori knowledge. So he will tell us what conditions must hold if someone X has a priori knowledge of some

information p, and which conditions are such that if they hold, X has a priori knowledge of p. The two definitions are "stipulative," in that their author Kitcher is laying down or stipulating how it is that he will use "life" and "sufficient for" in the context of the analysis. This state may either be "outer" or "inner" states, depending on the location of the receptors whose stimulation give rise to the sensory state. The state itself is a physiological state, or state of the body. So it will be a collection of physiological sensory states. This is not how we ordinarily use the term "life," but as mentioned above, this is how Kitcher is using the term in this context. The idea is that some lives perhaps lives that are only possible contain experiences which allow X to form the concepts needed for X to believe that p. As was mentioned earlier, a person lacks a priori knowledge if that person lacks the concepts contained in the known proposition. If a life is one that X could have had, and if in that life X gains sufficient understanding to believe that p, then that life is sufficient for p. Now we have the tools required for the analysis of a priori knowledge: X knows a priori that p at t if and only if X knows that p at t and, given any life sufficient for p, X could have had that life at t and still known at t that p. Suppose I know that q: Do I know this a priori? According to the analysis, we have to look at any sequence of experiences which are enough to allow me to believe that q and ask whether it is possible for me both to have had that sequence of experience and at the same time know that q. The idea is that no sequence of experiences that give me enough conceptual material to understand q should block my knowledge that q. It does seem to be the case that any sensory stimulation I might encounter would never interfere with my knowledge that q. The analysis seems to be strong enough that any cases of a priori knowledge will conform to its conditions. But Kitcher objects that it is too strong, i. Suppose that I learned that q on the basis of having been taught that it was the case. I never understood the proof, however, and just took its truth on the authority of my teacher, who is an expert in mathematics, whom I had every reason to trust, and who in fact was telling the truth on the basis of what she knew. Then I might be said to have knowledge that q. But by the analysis, I have a priori knowledge, because no experience sufficient for q is incompatible with my knowing that q. To weaken the analysis, we need to say something about how it is that X knows that p in the first place. The Psychologistic Account of Knowledge To describe how a person knows something, we should have in hand some notion of what it is to know. Kitcher adopts what he calls "the psychologistic account of knowledge. He does not give an account of what makes an explanation appropriate, because he does not have to do this for his present purposes. The psychologistic account of knowledge is quite controversial. Most theories of knowledge do not require an explanation for the existence of the belief. They would hold that it does not matter where a belief originates. All that matters is whether or not the belief is "justified. Contrast this account with another one, in which a person measures, as best he can, the dimensions of roughly triangular figures he finds in the sensible world. Any knowledge one gains from this would be empirical, not a priori, because the process involves sensory states which rely on the external world for their input. We can say that a life which allows the process of "pure intuition" that operates with mental pictures might be sufficient for beliefs about the elementary properties of triangles. Thus being sufficient is in this case independent of experience. The belief is warranted independently of experience if its generated in the appropriate way. So if the use of pure intuition is appropriate, belief is warranted independent of experience. Finally, if the warranted belief is true in other situations where experiences are different "counterfactual situations" , then one has knowledge independent of experience--a priori knowledge. Final Analysis of A Priori Knowledge Putting this all together, we have the following analysis of a priori knowledge. Kitcher does not tell us in any detail how the cases are blocked. He only says that the analysis implies that in all cases of a priori knowledge, "the knowledge be obtainable in the same way. The idea is that in any life the student could know its truth using, say, pure intuition, but in some lives the student could not know its truth by the process of being in a sensory state and interpreting it as hearing a sentence uttered by her teacher. Perhaps this sensory state is wholly misleading, in which case she would lack warrant for her belief and hence lack knowledge. Types of Processes You might wonder why I described the process in terms of sensory states and their interpretation. The reason is that Kitcher wants in general to confine these processes "to those segments which consist solely of states and events internal to the believer. Kitcher does not explain exactly how it is that psychological processes should be divided into types. Instead, he leaves that to anyone who is trying to develop a substantive account of a priori knowledge. He

further clarifies the meaning of "could" in the analysis, so that it supposes that X has the standard mental capacities human beings actually have. Otherwise, the conditions might be satisfied by a life in which X has enhanced mental powers. A Priori Knowledge of Psychological States As was noted above, the standard accounts of a priori knowledge take it to be about mathematical truths, logical truths, and the like. If the process requires certain experiences before it can exist, then in those lives lacking them, the belief cannot be produced. Thus, if the belief is that I feel pain, if I can have the belief without feeling pain, or if I must have the pain in order to have the belief, I lack a priori knowledge that I feel pain. It might be thought that when we have the power to produce psychological states at will, and then exercise that power, we have a priori knowledge that we are in those states. So, if I will myself to imagine a red patch and by so doing produce a red patch in my imagination, perhaps I have a priori knowledge that I am imagining a red patch.

Chapter 6 : Kant's Theory of a Priori Knowledge - PDF Free Download

In natural science no less than in mathematics, Kant held, synthetic a priori judgments provide the necessary foundations for human knowledge. The most general laws of nature, like the truths of mathematics, cannot be justified by experience, yet must apply to it universally.

Existence-Nonexistence Necessity-Contingency While Kant does not give a formal derivation of it, he believes that this is the complete and necessary list of the a priori contributions that the understanding brings to its judgments of the world. Every judgment that the understanding can make must fall under the table of categories. And subsuming spatiotemporal sensations under the formal structure of the categories makes judgments, and ultimately knowledge, of empirical objects possible. Since objects can only be experienced spatiotemporally, the only application of concepts that yields knowledge is to the empirical, spatiotemporal world. Beyond that realm, there can be no sensations of objects for the understanding to judge, rightly or wrongly. Since intuitions of the physical world are lacking when we speculate about what lies beyond, metaphysical knowledge, or knowledge of the world outside the physical, is impossible. Claiming to have knowledge from the application of concepts beyond the bounds of sensation results in the empty and illusory transcendent metaphysics of Rationalism that Kant reacts against. That is, Kant does not believe that material objects are unknowable or impossible. While Kant is a transcendental idealist--he believes the nature of objects as they are in themselves is unknowable to us--knowledge of appearances is nevertheless possible. As noted above, in *The Refutation of Material Idealism*, Kant argues that the ordinary self-consciousness that Berkeley and Descartes would grant implies "the existence of objects in space outside me. Another way to put the point is to say that the fact that the mind of the knower makes the a priori contribution does not mean that space and time or the categories are mere figments of the imagination. Kant is an empirical realist about the world we experience; we can know objects as they appear to us. All discursive, rational beings must conceive of the physical world as spatially and temporally unified, he argues. And the table of categories is derived from the most basic, universal forms of logical inference, Kant believes. Therefore, it must be shared by all rational beings. So those beings also share judgments of an intersubjective, unified, public realm of empirical objects. Hence, objective knowledge of the scientific or natural world is possible. Indeed, Kant believes that the examples of Newton and Galileo show it is actual. In conjunction with his analysis of the possibility of knowing empirical objects, Kant gives an analysis of the knowing subject that has sometimes been called his transcendental psychology. Kant draws several conclusions about what is necessarily true of any consciousness that employs the faculties of sensibility and understanding to produce empirical judgments. As we have seen, a mind that employs concepts must have a receptive faculty that provides the content of judgments. Space and time are the necessary forms of apprehension for the receptive faculty. The mind that has experience must also have a faculty of combination or synthesis, the imagination for Kant, that apprehends the data of sense, reproduces it for the understanding, and recognizes their features according to the conceptual framework provided by the categories. The mind must also have a faculty of understanding that provides empirical concepts and the categories for judgment. The various faculties that make judgment possible must be unified into one mind. And it must be identical over time if it is going to apply its concepts to objects over time. Judgments would not be possible, Kant maintains, if the mind that senses is not the same as the mind that possesses the forms of sensibility. And that mind must be the same as the mind that employs the table of categories, that contributes empirical concepts to judgment, and that synthesizes the whole into knowledge of a unified, empirical world. So the fact that we can empirically judge proves, contra Hume, that the mind cannot be a mere bundle of disparate introspected sensations. In his works on ethics Kant will also argue that this mind is the source of spontaneous, free, and moral action. Kant believes that all the threads of his transcendental philosophy come together in this "highest point" which he calls the transcendental unity of apperception. First, in his analysis of sensibility, he argues for the necessarily spatiotemporal character of sensation. Then Kant analyzes the understanding, the faculty that applies concepts to sensory experience. He concludes that the categories provide a necessary, foundational template for our concepts to map onto our

experience. In addition to providing these transcendental concepts, the understanding also is the source of ordinary empirical concepts that make judgments about objects possible. The understanding provides concepts as the rules for identifying the properties in our representations. The cognitive power of judgment does have a transcendental structure. Kant argues that there are a number of principles that must necessarily be true of experience in order for judgment to be possible. Within the *Analytic*, Kant first addresses the challenge of subsuming particular sensations under general categories in the *Schematism* section. Transcendental schemata, Kant argues, allow us to identify the homogeneous features picked out by concepts from the heterogeneous content of our sensations. Judgment is only possible if the mind can recognize the components in the diverse and disorganized data of sense that make those sensations an instance of a concept or concepts. A schema makes it possible, for instance, to subsume the concrete and particular sensations of an Airedale, a Chihuahua, and a Labrador all under the more abstract concept "dog. That is, the role of the mind in making nature is not limited to space, time, and the categories. In the *Analytic of Principles*, Kant argues that even the necessary conformity of objects to natural law arises from the mind. In the sections titled the *Axioms*, *Anticipations*, *Analogies*, and *Postulates*, he argues that there are a priori judgments that must necessarily govern all appearances of objects.

Axioms of Intuition All intuitions are extensive magnitudes.

Anticipations of Perception Analogies of Experience In all appearances the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, i. In all variations by appearances substance is permanent, and its quantum in nature is neither increased nor decreased. All changes occur according to the law of the connection of cause and effect. All substances, insofar as they can be perceived in space as simultaneous, are in thoroughgoing interaction.

Postulates of Empirical Thought What agrees in terms of intuition and concepts with the formal conditions of experience is possible. What coheres with the material conditions of experience with sensation is actual. That whose coherence with the actual is determined according to universal conditions of experience is necessary exists necessarily 6. The purpose of the *Analytic*, we are told, is "the rarely attempted dissection of the power of the understanding itself. Kant calls judgments that pretend to have knowledge beyond these boundaries and that even require us to tear down the limits that he has placed on knowledge, transcendent judgments. The *Transcendental Dialectic* section of the book is devoted to uncovering the illusion of knowledge created by transcendent judgments and explaining why the temptation to believe them persists. Kant argues that the proper functioning of the faculties of sensibility and the understanding combine to draw reason, or the cognitive power of inference, inexorably into mistakes. The faculty of reason naturally seeks the highest ground of unconditional unity. It seeks to unify and subsume all particular experiences under higher and higher principles of knowledge. But sensibility cannot by its nature provide the intuitions that would make knowledge of the highest principles and of things as they are in themselves possible. Nevertheless, reason, in its function as the faculty of inference, inevitably draws conclusions about what lies beyond the boundaries of sensibility. Corresponding to the three basic kinds of syllogism are three dialectic mistakes or illusions of transcendent knowledge that cannot be real. The *Dialectic* explains the illusions of reason in these sections. But since the illusions arise from the structure of our faculties, they will not cease to have their influence on our minds any more than we can prevent the moon from seeming larger when it is on the horizon than when it is overhead. In the *Paralogisms*, Kant argues that a failure to recognize the difference between appearances and things in themselves, particularly in the case of the introspected self, leads us into transcendent error. Kant argues against several conclusions encouraged by Descartes and the rational psychologists, who believed they could build human knowledge from the "I think" of the cogito argument. From the "I think" of self-awareness we can infer, they maintain, that the self or soul is 1 simple, 2 immaterial, 3 an identical substance and 4 that we perceive it directly, in contrast to external objects whose existence is merely possible. That is, the rational psychologists claimed to have knowledge of the self as transcendently real. Kant believes that it is impossible to demonstrate any of these four claims, and that the mistaken claims to knowledge stem from a failure to see the real nature of our apprehension of the "I. But to take the self as an object of knowledge here is to pretend to have knowledge of the self as it is in itself, not as it appears to us. Our representation of the "I" itself is empty. It is subject to the condition of inner sense, time, but not the condition of outer sense, space, so it cannot be a proper object of knowledge. It can be thought through concepts, but without the commensurate

spatial and temporal intuitions, it cannot be known. Each of the four paralogisms explains the categorical structure of reason that led the rational psychologists to mistake the self as it appears to us for the self as it is in itself. We have already mentioned the Antinomies, in which Kant analyzes the methodological problems of the Rationalist project. Kant sees the Antinomies as the unresolved dialogue between skepticism and dogmatism about knowledge of the world. Each antinomy has a thesis and an antithesis, both of which can be validly proven, and since each makes a claim that is beyond the grasp of spatiotemporal sensation, neither can be confirmed or denied by experience. The First Antinomy argues both that the world has a beginning in time and space, and no beginning in time and space. The Fourth Antinomy contains arguments both for and against the existence of a necessary being in the world. The seemingly irreconcilable claims of the Antinomies can only be resolved by seeing them as the product of the conflict of the faculties and by recognizing the proper sphere of our knowledge in each case. In the first Antinomy, the world as it appears to us is neither finite since we can always inquire about its beginning or end, nor is it infinite because finite beings like ourselves cannot cognize an infinite whole. As an empirical object, Kant argues, it is indefinitely constructable for our minds. As it is in itself, independent of the conditions of our thought, it should not be identified as finite or infinite since both are categorical conditions of our thought. He considers the two competing hypotheses of speculative metaphysics that there are different types of causality in the world: The conflict between these contrary claims can be resolved, Kant argues, by taking his critical turn and recognizing that it is impossible for any cause to be thought of as uncaused itself in the realm of space and time. But reason, in trying to understand the ground of all things, strives to unify its knowledge beyond the empirical realm. The empirical world, considered by itself, cannot provide us with ultimate reasons. So if we do not assume a first or free cause we cannot completely explain causal series in the world. So for the Third Antinomy, as for all of the Antinomies, the domain of the Thesis is the intellectual, rational, noumenal world. The domain of the Antithesis is the spatiotemporal world. The Ideas of Reason The faculty of reason has two employments. For the most part, we have engaged in an analysis of theoretical reason which has determined the limits and requirements of the employment of the faculty of reason to obtain knowledge. Theoretical reason, Kant says, makes it possible to cognize what is. But reason has its practical employment in determining what ought to be as well. Kant believes that, "Human reason is by its nature architectonic. That is, reason thinks of all cognitions as belonging to a unified and organized system. Reason is our faculty of making inferences and of identifying the grounds behind every truth. It allows us to move from the particular and contingent to the global and universal. I infer that "Caius is mortal" from the fact that "Caius is a man" and the universal claim, "All men are mortal."

Chapter 7 : Kant: The A Priori - Bibliography - PhilPapers

The prevailing interpretation of Kant's First Critique. in Anglo-American philosophy views his theory of a priori knowledge as basically a theory about the possibility of empirical knowledge (or experience), or the a priori conditions for that possibility (the representations of space and time and the categories).

Includes bibliographical references and index. As the chapters progressed, and with the help of transitional passages, they gradually built up a unified interpretation of that theory. The content of the present offering does not differ from the content of the original in any fundamental way. But its form is now that of a regular book: The finished product is the result of many years of thought about the Critique. During this time I have given an ever changing course on the same material to my students and have also given papers on these topics at various conferences, here in the United States, in the United I VIII Preface feasible. It can safely be said, I believe, that the prevalent Anglophone interpretations of the Critique definitely do not accept both aspects of this view of mine. This first major thesis is intertwined with the second. It is only a theory of the possibility of a priori knowledge, not a theory of the possibility of empirical knowledge, that is committed to an ontology of objects that is distinct from the conditions of the possibility of the knowledge in question, that is, the knowledge whose possibility the theory is supposed to explain. Accordingly, the second major thesis of the book consists in my view that I Preface IX A work whose composition has taken such a long time to bring to completion generally has been the recipient of a certain amount of customary beneficence. But I would like to take this opportunity to express my special gratitude to a Kant scholar who early in my attempt to get my work on Kant published expressed confidence in its eventual publication and serious reception among Kant scholars. He is Richard E. His encouragement is especially noteworthy, given the many divergences between our respective points of view on the Critique. He is blessed with an intellectual tolerance that sometimes strikes me as being in rather short supply in our field of study. Other Kant scholars whom I would like to thank for their review of my writing and for their expressions of esteem for or agreement with at least certain aspects of my work include Robert Hanna, Eric Watkins, and Kenneth Westphal. I would also like to express my gratitude to Sanford Thatcher, Director of Penn State Press, who, at the very start of my dealings with the Press and on the basis of his own reading of my manuscript, saw a place for nLY work on his list at the Press. In this connection, I would also like to thank the two external readers for the Press who gave me many very valuable suggestions for improvement of my manuscript and even saved me from some blunders. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the Mazer Fund of Brandeis University for help in defraying expenses incurred in the preparation of the manuscript. Moreover, it should be noted that Chapter 1 contains material that has appeared in my article in the Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy: Metaphysics; and Chapters 9 and 13 are revisions of two of nLY articles in the History of Philosophy Quarterly. I would like to thank the respective editors of these publications for their kind permission to include the material here. And finally, I would like to express a word of thanks to all those who have served as conscientious and fair-minded referees on papers that I have submittted either for publication or for delivery at conferences. Newton, Massachusetts September R. Strawson and Jonathan Bennett,! When they see the Critique in a favorable light, it is concerned with showing how empirical knowledge, or experience, is related to objects of experience 1. Strawson, The Bounds of Sense: Cambridge University Press, One such commentator is actually quite explicit about his belief in the ease of a transition from a theory of empirical knowledge of objects to a theory of a priori knowledge of objects. He thinks the considerations he brings to bear on the former can be extended to the latter without difficulty. From these primary representations or conditions of possible experience and its objects there is supposed to "flow" B 40 certain a priori knowledge, including 1 mathematics, comprising arithmetic e. At least this is the view of those features of the Critique that current Anglophone commentary considers defensible. The major contention of this book, however, is that this view of the Critique reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the work. According to the view to be presented here-and this can be taken to be nLY interpretation of how I ant himself understood the problem of a priori knowledge-the work is instead concerned with showing how these sanle representations space, time, and the categories , and consequently the

a priori knowledge Kant claims they make possible, are themselves related to objects. Consequently, the interest that is of the first importance for Kant and that can also be given a sympathetic defense on his behalf is the possibility of a priori knowledge, as distinct from the possibility of empirical knowledge, or experience. And this remains the case even though the explanation of the former possibility, and hence the justification of our claims of a priori knowledge, actually depend on the latter possibility. He was quite aware that Kant wanted to explain how space, time, and the categories, and the knowledge that can come from them, are themselves possible. S Fidelity to ordinary language within a systematic approach to logic led Strawson to consider what he might find if he took a similar approach to metaphysics. This distinguished his investigation from earlier work that also hewed to ordinary language. This work had proceeded piecemeal, on the conviction that particular problems solved on the basis of material provided by ordinary language had to follow a method that is itself particularistic. The thrust toward system ran the risk of elevating merely empirical propositions into a priori ones, because of their central, indeed apparently inescapable, role in our thought about the world. This was a danger Quine had clearly warned against. We might actually find ourselves practicing the sort of philosophy positivism was designed to eliminate, root and branch: Foremost among these were those! The principle of meaning governing significant discourse demands no less. And postpositivism stayed true to this blanket rejection of nonanalytic a priori judgments. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* London: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics London: Harvard University Press, Quine, it should be mentioned, recommended dispensing with the analytic-synthetic distinction altogether *ibid.* The Possibility of A Priori Knowledge 7 propositions of our thought of the world are inescapable, all right, but not quite a priori. Could he read the Critique as a precursor of his own work, only bedeviled by the insupportable belief that metaphysics has to be a priori? Just as Kant admonished his predecessors for failing to tie down their metaphysical speculations to possible experience, so Strawson takes Kant to task for doing the very same thing himself as he attempted to secure metaphysical foundations of our a priori knowledge of objects. Here, too, Quine demurred to Strawson, staying within the Peircean American pragmatism and provisionalism. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*. As the scientist searches for the hidden powers and properties of things in the world of nature, so Kant went on to employ the "psychological idiom" belonging to an investigation of "the structure and workings of the cognitive capacities of beings such as ourselves. The model takes the objects that affect us through our senses as producing the appearances we have of them because of the combination of the constitution of our senses and the properties of the objects as they exist apart from us-as they are "in themselves"; so Kant looks to things as objects that affect us in the same way, that is, as things in themselves. But where the model can fall back on space and time to describe the affecting objects that are, along with our neurosensory makeup, responsible for their appearances in our experience of them, Kant cannot avail himself of these fundamental dimensions of things in order to describe the objects the Kantian things in themselves, since space and time have already been co-opted by his descriptions of our cognitive capacities. As such, they are also essential and exclusive to his description of the appearances themselves, which, according to the model he has adopted, have to be distinguished from the affecting objects the things in themselves that produce the appearances. He is therefore left with a conception of the affecting objects as nonspatial and nontemporal. And the same lack of recourse to space and time holds for his description of ourselves as beings that can have such knowledge, and therefore also for the affecting relation between ourselves and the objects. However, since Kant himself adopts the principle that the significance of all of our descriptive concepts depends on their applicability to possible experience and its objects, the exclusion of space and time from these Kantian conceptions of ourselves as cognitive subjects, of the objects that affect us in our cognitive involvement with them, and of the affecting relation between us and them, renders these conceptions illegitimate and the items that purportedly exemplify them-ourselves, the objects, and the relation between us and them-unintelligible. The Possibility of A Priori Knowledge 9 No doubt Strawson is correct in his observation that Kant tried to explain, in terms of our mental capacities, our knowledge of the necessities that govern possible experience. Again, these are the concepts of cognitive beings such as ourselves, of the objects that affect us, and of the affecting relation in which the objects act on us. So the choice is between having a transcendental epistemology without such a transcendental employment of

these concepts and having no transcendental epistemology at all. In the concluding section of the book the question of such a choice is discussed a bit more fully. It is there reiterated that this is a choice—a choice of viewpoint—and no absolutely right or wrong answer is in the wings to support it, though this is not to suggest that the choice cannot be made on the basis of reasonable considerations. Philosophy seems replete with such choices. Nor can it be completely explained by simply adding that the commentators themselves begin their investigations into the Critique with an initial interest in the possibility of empirical knowledge instead of a priori knowledge that is part of their own philosophical predilections. To find at least one factor that quite The Problem: But, again, I claim that this has been an unfortunate development in recent Anglophone scholarship on the Critique and that this view of the work reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of it, despite all these factors that have thus far been given here in explanation of how this view has come to be so prevalent among us. To repeat, I view the work as concerned instead with showing how these same representations space, time, and the categories, and consequently the a priori knowledge Kant claims they make possible, are themselves related to objects of experience. In support of my view I now begin by pointing out that! I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge [Erkenntnisart] of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori. B 25 Not every kind of knowledge a priori should be called transcendental, but that only by which we know that—and how—certain representations intuitions or concepts can be employed or are possible purely a priori. Neither space nor any a priori geometrical determination of it is a transcendental representation; what can alone be entitled transcendental is the knowledge that these representations are not of empirical origin, and the possibility that they can yet relate [beziehen könne] a priori to objects of experience. Though empirical knowledge, or experience, and its possibility are necessary parts of the justification of the claims of a priori knowledge, its own justification, and hence a theory of its own possibility, are not themselves at issue. The Critique has no independent interest in it. I would therefore make the conjecture that any attempt to provide a unified, coherent interpretation of the Critique as a theory of the possibility of empirical knowledge, or experience, will inevitably end in distorting, if not actually discarding, much of what Kant considers to be essential to his work. These two passages from the Critique, and others like them, can add to our understanding of the nature of the opposition between the two views of the Critique that is central to this book. These Anglophone accounts thus read the passages quoted above, and others like them, along Strawsonian lines: Though the passages surely commit Kant The Problem: The Possibility of A Priori Knowledge 13 to the view that the representations and knowledge have to be a priori, these accounts continue, by themselves they do not also commit him to the view that the knowledge in question must be a priori. Empirical knowledge, or experience, can very well be substituted for knowledge simpliciter in the passages, and a quite plausible reading, surely more plausible than, say, the one recommended in this book, can ensue. As conditions of our empirical knowledge, space, time, and the categories are not themselves thereby possible a priori, which is what the passages require; rather, they are necessary with respect to possible experience; that is, they are necessary with respect to what is possible a posteriori. Nor as conditions of possible experience are they thereby "employed" a priori; clearly, their employment in experience must be empirical. It may be thought that what Kant is envisioning in these passages is that they can be employed in possible experience and that that employment is a priori. But this is really no different from my own reading of the passages. But this further possibility—the possibility of the possibility of experience—is not the one that the predominant Anglophone commentators are intent to defend. They hold that Kant is trying to explain the possibility of experience itself, and not that of its own possibility. So we must conclude that these Anglophone readings of what Kant means by "transcendental" in the passages in question, not to mention others as well, fall short of what Kant was getting at. To sum up, a theory of the possibility of experience does not explain the possibility that is of interest to Kant, that is, the possibility of those very representations and the a priori knowledge they give rise to: It is these latter possibilities that Kant is truly interested in, as his characterizations of transcendental knowledge attest. Most of the present Anglophone interpretations of Kant do not even address this problem of the possibility of our a priori employment of these representations, especially their employment in the a priori knowledge that arises from them, at least not in a sympathetic manner, and those that do tend to consider it at

some distance from the center of their own investigations into the Critique. This book is distinctive in that this particular problem stands at the center of its investigations. This approach seemingly satisfies both Strawson and Kant. Apart from their application to possible experience, the claims have no significance; but they are nonetheless a priori in their independence from all particular experiences we as subjects actually enjoy. They are thus not characterized as extremely high-level generalizations from experience, to which Strawson restricted his theory. In addition to allowing Kantian claims of an a priori nature that could not obviously be reduced to analytic propositions about our concept of experience, Henry E. In a word, according to the view advanced in this book, Allison latched onto the wrong object for his monism.

Chapter 8 : The Importance of the Synthetic A Priori in Kant's First Critique | Blue Labyrinths

Kant argues that there are two kinds of knowledge. While most knowledge is derived from experience, part of our knowledge is a priori, and not derived from experience. In Kant's opinion, we can only know what is given to us in sense experience.

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Journal of the History of Philosophy Penn State University Press, This is one of the deepest and most carefully reasoned books on Kant I have read. It is a book for the scholar of the first Critique, not the "educated layman," but it very much needs to be read by the former. Even for Kant scholars, it is not easy. Typically, one either supposes Kant really has no theory regarding the possibility of specifically a priori knowledge in the first place, or--either for excessive subjectivism, reference to "things in themselves" in more than an Allisonian "methodological" spirit, or both--it is a disaster. Or, as in Guyer and before him Strawson, one distinguishes between a Kant of each stripe. On the no-theory option Kant is primarily concerned with the conditions of empirical knowledge and the relation of experience to objects. So occupied, he in effect redefines what it is to be concerned with the non-analytic a priori in the first place: In turn, he takes it for granted that, insofar as certain representations are indeed such conditions, they are sufficiently related to experience and its objects to meet the demands of knowledge. To the contrary, according to Greenberg, it is just this which Kant sees cannot be taken for granted. Rather, the ontology comprises "things simpliciter": Second, this is possible only insofar as experience itself relates to things as appearances. Thus to the contrary of standard readings, the primary focus is on the possibility [End Page] of experience, and its relation to objects, as a condition of a priori knowledge, not vice versa. This is of course not to deny the importance of space, time, and the categories as conditions of experience. It is just that their relevance to the possibility of a priori knowledge cannot consist wholly in the fact of such conditioning. That just illustrates the general point: This may be dissatisfying. There is no way that You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Kant draws two important distinctions: between a priori and a posteriori knowledge and between analytic and synthetic judgments. A posteriori knowledge is the particular knowledge we gain from experience, and a priori knowledge is the necessary and universal knowledge we have independent of experience, such as our knowledge of mathematics.

To simplify things, the mechanical materialists laid all the stress on the object material reality, nature, leaving no role for the thinking subject, which was portrayed as a passive receptacle *tabula rasa*, whereas the idealists laid all the stress on the subject mind, the Idea, etc. Kant asks what we can know, and how we can know it. This is one of the central questions of philosophy—the theory of knowledge or cognition "epistemology". We derive the greater part of our knowledge from observing the real world. From an early age, we see things, we listen, we touch, and so on. Gradually, we build up a picture of the world in which we live. This kind of knowledge is the knowledge of sense-perception. For empiricists like Locke, there is no other kind. In getting to know the world, the mind is not merely an empty vessel, which can be filled with any content Locke described it as a *tabula rasa*—a blank slate. For Kant, the act of cognition is not passive, but active. We do not simply make a list of the things we see, but consciously select, order and interpret them. For this, the mind has its own method and rules. Kant argues that there are two kinds of knowledge. While most knowledge is derived from experience, part of our knowledge is a priori, and not derived from experience. However, the things in themselves, which cause our sensations, cannot be known. Here, Kant is skating on thin ice. Although he denied it, these views seem to be similar to the subjective idealism of Hume and Berkeley. Kant changed some of his formulations in the second edition, precisely to avoid this conclusion. In the first edition, he implied that the thinking subject might be the same thing as the object which it perceives. Later, he changed this, maintaining that things outside ourselves certainly exist, but they manifest themselves to us only in appearance, not as they are in themselves. According to Kant, there are some ideas which are not derived from sense-perception. This shows the difference between the philosophy of Kant and that of Locke, who held that all knowledge whatsoever came from the senses. By contrast, Kant claimed that some knowledge was inborn, namely, the knowledge of space and time. If we make abstraction from all physical aspects of phenomena, he says, we are left with just two things—time and space. Now time and space, together with motion, are the most general and fundamental properties of matter. The only way that it is possible to understand them is in relation to material things. But Kant was an idealist. He insisted that the notions of time and space were inborn. They did not come from experience, but were what he called a priori from the Latin meaning "from the beginning". To support his idea that space and time are a priori phenomena, Kant uses a very peculiar mode of reasoning. He maintains that, whereas it is impossible to think of objects without time, it is quite possible to think of time without objects; the same in relation to space. In point of fact, space and time are inseparable from matter, and it is impossible to conceive of them as "things in themselves. But this is not so. Space without matter is just as much an empty abstraction as matter without space. In point of fact, time, space and motion are the mode of existence of matter, and can be conceived of in no other way. All ideas are ultimately derived from reality, even the axioms of mathematics. It is true that, if we leave aside all the material qualities of a thing, all that is left is space and time. However, these are now empty abstractions. They cannot stand on their own, any more than there can be fruit, without apples, pears, oranges etc. The only difference is that the idea of fruit, or humanity, are abstractions of a particular kind of matter, whereas time and space are the most general features, or, more correctly, the mode of existence, of matter in general.