

PAR 393-01 **Topics in Philosophy: Kant**

Seminar Mentor: Daryl L. Hale

Office Hours: MW 12-2:50; TR 2:00-3:00

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List of Daily Reading Assignments

- August 24 -- Kant's Copernican Revolution in Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Education, and Theology [Lewis White Beck, "Kant's Thought", in Beck, ed., *Kant: Selections*, 1-23]
- I. Pre-Critical Works**
- 29 -- Kant's Prize Essay of 1764 ["Inquiry concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morals", *Cambridge Edition of Kant's Works*, 247-286]; *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770
- II. Critique of Pure Reason; 1781 (1st or A edition), 1787 (2nd or B edition)**
- 31 -- *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st and 2nd ed. Prefaces, Introduction [Pluhar, 1-24]
- A. Doctrine of Elements**
- 7 -- Transcendental Aesthetic: Space & Time as Pure Intuitions [P 25-38]
- 12 -- Transcendental Logic: Analytic of Concepts [P 39-50]
- 14 -- Trans. Deduction of Categories, §§ 13-17 [P 51-63]
- 19 -- All Sensible Intuitions Subject to Categories [P 64-77]
- 21 -- Analytic of Principles: Schematism, Principles of Understanding -- Axioms of Intuition, Anticipations of Perception [P 78-99]
- 26 -- Analogies of Experience; Refutation of Idealism [P 100-127]
- 28 -- Transcendental Dialectic: Paralogisms, Antinomy of Reason [P 128-139]
- October 3 -- First, Second, Third Antinomy of Reason [P140-161]
- 5,10 -- Cosmological Idea of Totality [P 162-195]
- 17 -- Ideal of Pure Reason, Impossibility of Ontological Proof of God's Existence [P 196-203]
- B. Doctrine of Method**
- 19 -- Canon of Pure Reason, Ideal of Highest Good; Opinion, Knowledge, Faith [P 204-224]
- III. Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (1785)**
- 24 -- Preface, First Section: From Ordinary Moral Knowledge to Philosophical, *Grounding* (Ellington, Ak. 393-405)
- 26,31 -- Second Section: From Popular Moral Philosophy to Metaphysics of Morals [E, Ak. 406-445]
- November 2 -- Third Section: From Metaphysics of Morals to Critique of Pure Practical Reason [E, Ak. 446- 463]
- IV. The Metaphysics of Morals (1797)**
- 7 -- Preface, Introduction, *Metaphysical Principles of Justice* [E, Ak. 205-228]
- 9,14 -- Preface, Introduction, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*: One's Own Perfection & Happiness of Others as Ends [E, Ak. 375-412]
- 16 -- *Virtue*, Duty to Oneself as Animal Being [E, Ak. 417-428]
- 21 -- *Virtue*, Duty to Oneself as Moral Being: Lying, Avarice, Servility [E, Ak. 429-447]; "Supposed Right to Lie" [E, Supplement, Ak. 425-430]
- 28,30 -- *Virtue*, Ethical Duties to Others [E, Ak. 448-474]
- December 5 -- *Virtue*, Methodology of Ethics [E, Ak. 477-491]
- 7 -- Concluding Comments on Kant's Importance as Moral & Religious Philosopher

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Every other Wednesday, beginning on Sept. 7, students must turn in a written summary of the main arguments of Kant's text that we have read for that week. This means that there should be a total of 7 essays submitted for the course. Though this requirement might seem like a burden some weeks, this requirement of re-translating Kant into your own language will be the most helpful way of learning one of the most pivotal thinkers in the history of Western thought. Kant's vocabulary is dense, his arguments are compressed, and his prose is, at times, less than compelling, but here's the payoff – his thought is profound and revolutionary. Don't worry if your early (or, later) pieces seem like mere re-hashings of Kant's words; some weeks that will be the best that you, or I for that matter, can do in wrestling with Kant's terminology and argumentation. But keep your eye on the prize – this exercise will do more to help you learn Kant's dense vocabulary, cumbersome preference for scholastic "architectonics" (scientific systematizing of human thought), and subtle but highly compressed lines of argument; in so doing, you will become a better critical reasoner yourself.
2. A short paper (5 pages or so) that analyzes the impact of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Right after its first publication (1781), several reviewers accused Kant of being too idealistic, almost like Berkeley, by reducing all objects to "mere illusions". One response of Kant to this line of criticism was to include in the 2nd edition (1787) a "Refutation of Idealism" (another reply was to simplify the *Critique* and make it less cumbersome and lengthy; hence the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* of 1783). Analyze this objection, Kant's response to it, especially in light of his Refutation of Idealism. Does Kant's reply to critics seem compelling as a philosophical defense of his own transcendental (or, critical) idealism? Why so or why not? Due Oct. 19.
3. Final Exam, Part A. Kant's moral theory has a long history of misrepresentation (it's too rigorous – demands too much of humans, requiring us to neglect human inclinations; too formal – has no content to it, so doesn't tell us exactly what to do morally in various examples of moral conflict; it's too individualistic – leaves no room for concern with others or acting virtuously; it's unoriginal – merely restates the Golden Rule ethic; or it's too absolutist – demands that we make no exceptions in cases of lying, avarice, and servility). If I am successful in the reading order of his ethical works and the ways we might charitably read those works in the latter part of the course, then you should be well-informed as to how to address one of these misrepresentations, though you are free to agree with one of Kant's critics. At any rate, you need to sort through what Kant's moral theory actually commits him to (as opposed to what unsympathetic critics might claim he holds). In your essay, address especially the concept of moral virtue –how does Kant relate this concept to his moral theory in general? Final Exam, Part B. One standard objection to Kant's moral theory is that it requires us to say or do some morally counter-intuitive things (contrary to what our commonsense moral convictions tell us to do). For instance, since Kant holds that we are always morally obligated to tell the truth, this means that at times we would have to act immorally (in conceding that we are hiding a friend or Jew from a murderer or Nazi storm trooper; thus permitting a greater evil to be perpetrated against the friend or Jew). Analyze what Kant says on this matter of lying, in the various pieces that we have read (and there are more passages in Kant's *Lectures on Ethics*), and decide whether Kant has taken a defensible or indefensible moral stand on the role of this vice in human life.

Required Texts:

1. Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, Abridged and trans. Werner Pluhar. You will be grateful I chose this – the fully unabridged edition by the same translator is over 1000 pages. This one gets at the heart of what Kant is doing in the 1st *Critique* without sacrificing anything in way of accuracy of translation or rigor of thought.
2. Immanuel Kant: *Ethical Philosophy*, trans. James W. Ellington. Of course, Kant never wrote any book with this title; this is simply the translator's way of combining 2 very central parts of Kant's moral theory. First, he uses the standard work of 1785, *Groundwork* (or, as Ellington prefers it, *Grounding*) of the *Metaphysics of Morals*). Now as Ellington tells us, scholars for far too long used this work as an introduction to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, and that is the way that Kant scholarship proceeded, and the way he was taught for years in graduate schools (and still is so taught by many ethicists). However, the problem is that the 2nd *Critique* is even denser and more abstract than the 1st *Critique*, and this runs contrary to Kant's own historical intentions and to his own teaching practices. So, Ellington decided, and recent Kant scholarship has decidedly moved away from the older method, not to use *Groundwork* to introduce the 2nd *Critique*, but to introduce Kant's more concrete moral theory as presented in a later work, *The Metaphysics of Morals*. If we just think about the 2 titles, it logically makes more sense that Kant's *Groundwork* should be the opening for the work entitled *Metaphysics of Morals*, not to forget the fact that Kant says in several letters to contemporaries that this was exactly his intention. So this sequence makes more historical and logical sense.

The secondary literature on Kant is almost overwhelming. But for first-time readers of Kant, there are several helpful pieces.

- Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction* ; Oxford, 1982, 2001.
S. Körner, *Kant*; Pelican, 1955
Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*; Yale U Press, English, 1981.
John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, Harvard U Press, 2000.
Ralph C. S. Walker, *Kant: The Arguments of the Philosophers*; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics*; U of Chicago Press, 1975.
W. H. Werkmeister, *Kant: The Architectonic and Development of his Philosophy*; Open Court, 1980.
Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*; Peter Smith, 1973.
Gottfried Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science*; Greenwood Press, English trans. 1974.
Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*; Clarendon Press, 1982.
Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*; Yale U Press, 1983.
P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*; Methuen, 1966.