

Kant & Transcendental Idealism

H2T4U1 - Mr. Wittmann - Unit 3 - Lecture 4



Immanuel Kant



Empiricists and rationalists alike are dupes of the same illusion. Both take partial notions for real parts.

-Henri Bergson

Enlightenment is man's release from his self-imposed tutelage.

-Immanuel Kant

Does the Knowing Mind Shape the World?

- ❖ German philosopher **Immanuel Kant** (1724–1804) sensed that philosophy had reached a pivotal point.
- ❖ Kant agreed with empiricists, that our knowledge begins with the senses.
- ❖ But also agreed with rationalists , that the mind is a source of knowledge of universal laws.
- ❖ Kant developed a new view of knowledge that claims that both reason and the senses contribute to our knowledge of the world.

Transcendental Idealism

- ❖ Our mind constructs the perceived reality by arranging the sensations into whatever structures or patterns the mind innately provides
- ❖ The mind arranges sense data into the world we experience based on the nature and structure of how the mind evolved.
- ❖ Thus, the form of our knowledge of reality, derives from reason, but its content comes from our senses.

Transcendental Idealism

(continued)

- ❖ The mind arranges everything we perceive according to its own rational rules or laws, thus, the mind recognizes these laws that govern everything we perceive.
- ❖ Kant argued that when the mind organizes its sense impressions into the world we know and inserts innate rational structures (universal laws) into this world.
- ❖ The mind is the source of our knowledge of how the real objects are related to each other based on space-time, causality, etc.

Transcendental Idealism

(continued)

- ❖ Hume argued that scientists cannot really conclude that observed causality is true.
- ❖ But, Kant wanted to show that we do have real knowledge of scientific conclusions...
- ❖ **a priori knowledge** (from earlier)
 - ❖ deduced logically without experience; rational insight (i.e. mathematics)
- ❖ **a posteriori knowledge** (from later)
 - ❖ inducted observationally from experience; empirically verifiable (i.e. natural sciences)

Space, Time, and Mathematics

- ❖ Kant agreed with Hume that our senses bring us a chaotic multitude of ever-changing sensations (colours, smells, sounds, etc.).
- ❖ But Kant argued that the mind organizes these constantly changing sensations by arranging them into objects that we experience as located in space and time.
- ❖ Thus our knowledge of space and time does not come from experience, but from how our minds developed.

Space, Time, and Mathematics

(continued)

- ❖ Space-time, Kant claimed, are structures in the mind that we use to organize our many sensations.
- ❖ So, by reasoning about the space-time structures of our minds, we can have real knowledge of the *a priori* universal laws of mathematics, geometry and arithmetic.
- ❖ Thus, reason tells us how all things relate to and causally effect each other.

Causality and the Unity of the Mind

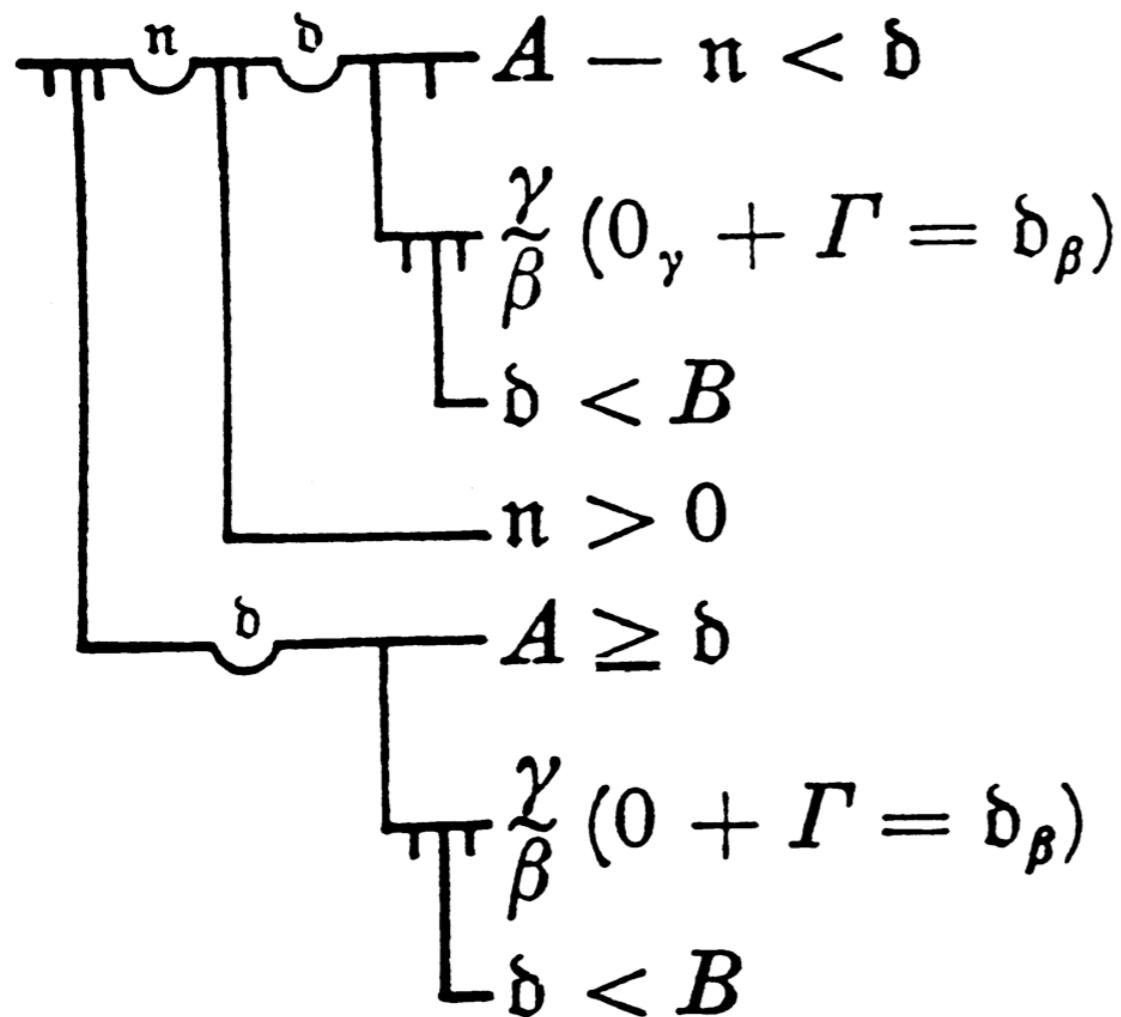
- ❖ To perceive a changing object and events (over time), the mind has to collect and remember sensations, and be aware these sensations belong to the same object at different times.
- ❖ But to collect, remember, and be aware of sensations in this way, the mind must be a unified awareness that endures through time.
- ❖ Because the mind is a unified awareness, it can know the many sensations it receives, only if it connects them all into a unified world of interrelated objects (space-time).

Transcendental Unity of Apperception

- ❖ Kant called unified awareness the **transcendental unity of apperception**.
- ❖ Because the mind is a single awareness, it can know several sensations only if they are all brought together into its single awareness of space-time.
- ❖ There many concepts, categories, & relationships that the mind uses when it connects its many sensations into a single unified world of interrelated objects (cause and effect, spacial location, temporal location, etc.) for cognitive experience.

Phenomenalism

- ❖ But perhaps the world, is not like the world we humans experience it.



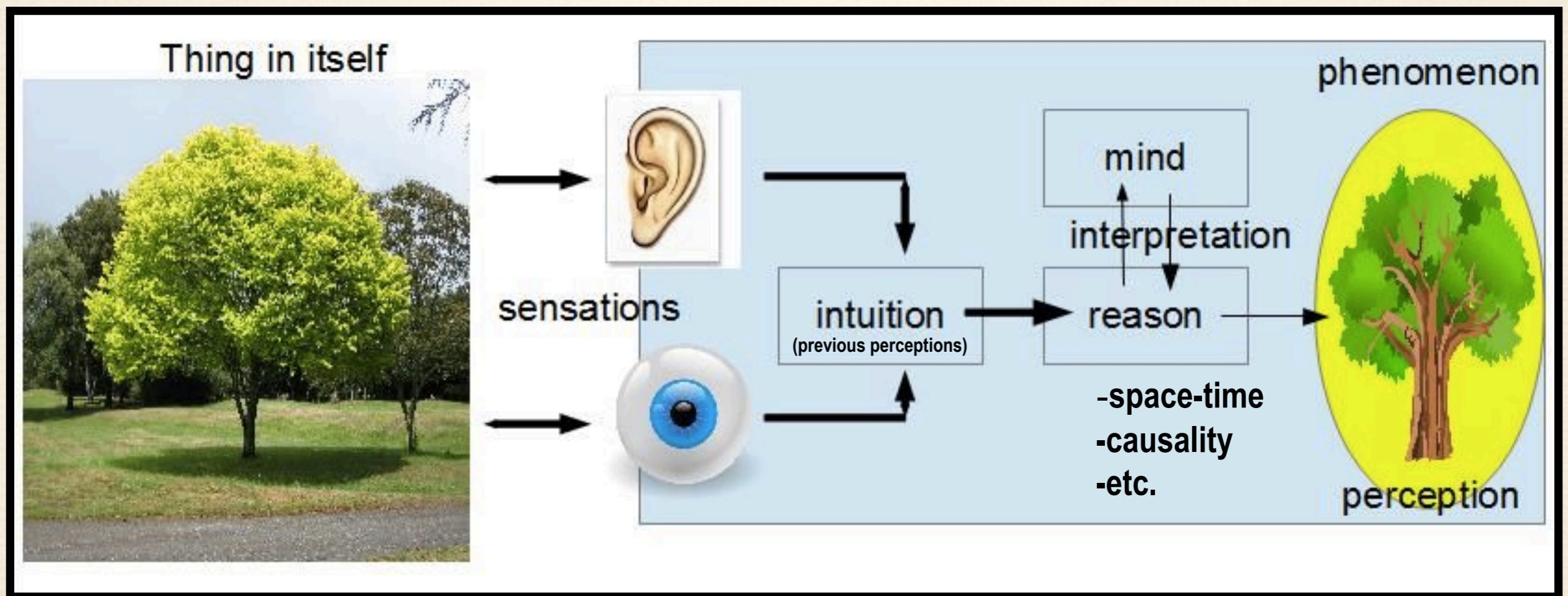
- ❖ Kant's notation
- ❖ We can know only appearances (**phenomena**)
- ❖ We can never know what is ultimately real (**noumena**)

Phenomenalism (continued)

noumena world



phenomenon world



Kant's Influence

- ❖ Kant proposed truly revolutionized philosophy and many other philosophers who followed Kant adopted his central idea and developed it in new and excitingly different directions. For example...
- ❖ **Alexander von Humboldt** who agreed that the mind constructs reality, but according to its historical, cultural, and linguistic experience.
- ❖ Kant's work led to the development of anthropology, sociology, psychology & linguistics.

Immanuel Kant Video

S PETER DAVIS
PRESENTS

THE END