

Paper Topics: Kant's Transcendental Philosophy

The paper should be 10 pages long, 12 point type, double-spaced, on 1" margins.

The quality of your analysis and critical assessment of Kant's texts, as well as the consideration of possible objections and responses, will be the deciding criteria in the grading. Choose one of the following (the complexity of the questions should be viewed as a guide to answering them, not as a check-list) or consult with me about a topic of your own choosing:

1. What is transcendental idealism? In what sense is it the gateway into Kant's system? Explain why he thinks it is necessarily coupled with empirical realism, while its opposite, transcendental realism, is inseparable from empirical idealism. Is the *Critique of Pure Reason* premised on transcendental idealism, so that only the transcendental idealist can raise and address the questions addressed in it? Or are these issues more general in scope?
2. Analyze the Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories (A66-80/B91-105). What is its purpose? What is the idea (= principle of systematic completeness) on which it is based? Why does Kant say that "pure synthesis, represented universally, yields the pure concept of the understanding" (A78/B104)? Are categories innate? How might Hume have reacted to Kant's account of their origin? What is proved by this Deduction and what remains to be proved by the Transcendental Deduction?
3. What is a transcendental deduction? Why is a transcendental deduction of the categories necessary and how it is possible? How is it like and how does it differ from a psychological analysis, such as one finds in Hume (association)? Looking at both the A and B edition attempts, what constitutes success in the enterprise of furnishing the categories with a transcendental deduction? What results does it secure for us with and what still remains to be shown?
4. What does Kant mean by the claim "the I think must be able to accompany all my representations" (B131)? How could it fail to do so? Why, if it did fail to, would such a representation not be impossible, but only "nothing to me" (B131)? Examine the difference and relation between the synthetic unity of apperception and the analytic unity of apperception.
5. Explicate Kant's equation of "object of intuition" with "the concept of something wherein they [appearances] are necessarily interconnected" (A108) [also in B: "an object is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united," B137]. What kind of object is this and why is apperception its basis? Bearing in mind that it is the synthesis of a manifold, not the manifold per se, that is represented by a concept, explain how it is that Kant comes to define an object through its concept rather than vice versa.
6. What is a synthetic a priori proposition? When is it a principle of pure understanding? Discuss Kant's conception of the faculty of judgment and his account of the highest principle of all synthetic judgments (A154-158/B193-197). Relate it to the claims in the Transcendental Deduction to the effect that the understanding is the author of nature itself and everything in it (e.g. A113-14, A124-28, B164-65). Given that Kant meant it as he said it, how is it possible for such claims not to collapse into hyperbole?