

Self-Constitution: Action, Identity, and Integrity
Lecture Four: The Transition to Humanity
Christine M. Korsgaard

I. Kant's Moral Psychology (from Lecture Three)

Incentive: motivationally loaded representation of an object

Principle: description of an agent's response to an incentive (the agent's "contribution"), the treatment of the incentive as a ground for doing a certain action

Principles for human beings: rational principles telling us whether to treat the incentive as a reason for doing a certain action

Principles for animals: instincts telling the animal to treat the incentive as occasion for taking a certain action

Two senses of Autonomy:

Acting in accordance with the laws of your own causality

Spontaneity: choosing the laws of your own causality

II. Instinct, Intelligence, and Reason

1. The world viewed "through" an animal's instincts is organized teleologically around the animal's interests.

Instinct=established connection between incentive and response, an action sensed as called for or appropriate by the incentive (normatively loaded representation)

- How my use is narrower than usual: insofar as one can make the distinction, I am not talking about wholly automatic response, but response experienced as called for

- How my use is broader than usual: I am not contrasting instinctive response to learned response

Intelligence= capacity to increase one's stock of established connections through learning; adds to range of objects perceived as to be avoided, to be sought, etc.

Instrumental intelligence = capacity to learn about the practical significance of the properties of objects

Intelligence and instinct: intelligence ramifies instinct and increases its range

The world viewed "through" intelligence is still teleological – a world of means and ends

Self-consciousness: ability to turn your attention on your own inner states

Why self-consciousness leads to reason

Ability to turn your attention on to your incentives is an ability to question them

Questioning them is asking whether they provide reasons

Answering that question is adopting rational principles

III. Results of the development of self-consciousness/reason

1. liberation from the control of instinct (freedom)

2. proliferation in the possible ends we can choose, and with it, capacity to choose *actions*
(Kant: "Conjectures on the Beginnings of Human History")

3. division of the soul into parts

IV. How the soul is divided into parts by self-consciousness:

1. Reason (principle determining your response to an incentive) is separated from the incentive

2. Consciousness of the incentive turns it into an inclination

“I have an inclination” = “I am aware of the workings of an incentive on me”

Note: incentives are at bottom, inarticulate: the awareness of a basic suitability-to-me

“it is pleasant” = “some form of this basic suitability-to-me is in place”

i.e. *pleasure* is a dummy word

The pleasure is not the object of the inclination, but what makes you like the object

2A. A current debate: do inclinations provide us with reasons?

Realist position: inclination is a response to the good-making properties of an object; it is those properties, not the inclination itself, that provide reasons

Kantian position: inclination is a response to an incentive, a form of suitability-to-me. It is that suitability, together with an affirmation of my own value, that makes the object valuable and reason-providing. My awareness of that (=the fact that I have an inclination for something) can give me a reason (provided it makes some action worth taking). It does not follow that when you tell someone your reason, you say “I want it.”

3. When the soul is divided into parts, practical deliberation becomes necessary. Therefore the work of deliberation is re-unification (*More on that in Lecture Five...*).

V. The Origin of Practical Identity

Adopting principles of reason = adopting the laws of your own causality = adopting your own form

Aristotle's three kinds of life

Vegetative: capacity for nutrition and reproduction (basic self-constitution)

Animal: capacity for representation and action

Transforms the way the animal carries on vegetative activities

Adds new activities: e.g. love, play

Adds a new form of identity: being a someone, a subject

In virtue of that, appropriate object of some reactive attitudes/indirect passions

Rational: capacity for choice of one's principles

Transforms the way a person carries on animal activities

Adds new activities: e.g., science, philosophy

Adds a new, more individual, form of identity: practical identity

In virtue of that, a responsible (answerable) agent

VI. Normativity of the Categorical and Hypothetical Imperatives

Why the categorical and hypothetical imperatives are normative for self-conscious agents: because for such agents, construction of the will is a *task*.

Deliberating = choosing the laws of your own causality

Hypothetical imperative governs you insofar as they are the laws of your *causality*

Categorical imperative governs you insofar as they laws of *your* causality