

## Grad Colloquium IV Abstracts

Christopher Jordan-Stevens:

Kant grounds the possibility of a priori knowledge by reversing the traditional model of cognition. For him, a priori knowledge is possible if, and only if, objects conform to cognition; he “does not see how we can know anything a priori [about objects]” except if “objects conform to cognition”. Kant’s idealism (at least ‘in a nutshell’) consists in this tracing of objectivity back to functions that are, in fact, subjective. This idealism comes at a cost, however. For if we assume that objects conform to our cognition, then we are faced with the ‘thing in itself’, which is the unknowable, *wahres Korrelatum* (true correlate) of what appears. All kinds of metaphysically heavy problems follow from the introduction of this elusive, utterly transcendent entity. Instead of arguing that objects conform to cognition, I will claim that (at the formal level) cognition and its object are the same. They are not, as it were, in need of reconciliation at all. On my ‘non-reconciliatory’ approach, the ideality of a priori forms does not entail the need to reduce the object to the mind, since the mind and object are identical terms in an act of, what I will call, ‘nature’s self-consciousness’, where mind is the act (i.e. the consciousness) and nature – at least in its formality – is the object (i.e. the self). In one way, I am in agreement with Kant: we know this form of nature a priori because it resides in the mind. Unlike Kant, however, the objectivity of these forms – i.e. their validity with respect to the empirical world – does not result from ‘subjectification’, or the constitution of objects by mind. Instead, these forms are objective because being a priori in mind and being ontologically prior in nature amount to the same thing. In this talk, I will offer some of the groundwork for this project.

Casey Ford, “The Limits of the Concept in Kant and Deleuze”:

What is a concept and what does it do? This talk will consider the role of the concept in Kant’s speculative philosophy (\*Critique of Pure Reason\*). In doing so, we will ask the same questions of the \*Critique\* itself: how is the text structured, what does it aim to do, and how does it function? We will be specifically concerned with what we call the \*limits of the concept\*. This limit, like all limits, has (at least) two components: it is at once the point at which the concept maximally expands its scope of application, the zone in which it exhausts its power; further, the limit concerns what cannot be included within this sphere. Thus, to elucidate the concept, we will be asking after what the concept cannot by itself elucidate. This excess or beyond of the concept is given many names, but we will be concerned with one: “the world.” For Kant, we propose that the world is at once given meaning through conceptual thought as much as the former forms the non-conceptual ground of thought itself. Kant’s \*Critique\* presents us with a choice in this regard: the course of \*idealism\* on the one hand, and \*metaphysics\* on the other. To complicate the story of Kant’s purportedly round-trip ticket on the former route, we will consider Deleuze’s critique of the concept in \*Difference and Repetition\*. With Deleuze, the thought of the a-conceptual becomes the thought of the condition or ground of thinking. Thought of necessity becomes metaphysical. In thinking beyond the form of identity in the concept, this “ground” will become the thought of difference. In short: What is difference without a concept? This is, for Deleuze, the question lurking at the limits of the \*Critique\*.