

KANT'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND HEGEL'S CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

Kant inquires into the possibility, sources, conditions and limits of knowledge in the tradition of modern philosophy. Before knowing God, being and reality, Kant, who aims to question what knowledge is, explains the content of pure reason. He formalates a theory of knowledge but his theory is neither a rationalist nor an empiricist theory of knowledge. He investigates the structure of knowledge, the possible conditions of experience and a priori concepts and categories of pure reason; so he makes a revolution like that of Copernicus .

Hegel, who is one of proponents of the German idealism, criticizes the Kantian theory of knowledge for “wanting to know before one knows”. For Hegel, Kant’s a priori concepts and categories are meaningless and empty. He claims that the unity of subject and object has been explained in that of the “Absolute”. Therefore, the theory of knowledge goes beyond the dogmatism of the “thing-in-itself” and the foundations of mathematics and natural sciences; and reaches the domain of absolute knowledge. Hegel’s criticism of Kantian theory of knowledge opens new possibilities for the theory of knowledge in our age.

ÖZET

Kant’ın Bilgi Kuramı ve Hegel’in Eleştirisi

Modern felsefe geleneği çerçevesinde Kant, bilginin imkânını, kaynağını, kapsamını ve ölçütlerini ele alarak, doğru bilginin sınırlarını irdelemiştir. Tanrı’yı, varlığı ve gerçekliği bilmeden önce, bilginin neliğini sorgulamayı kendine amaç edinen Kant, saf aklın içeriğini incelemiştir. Saf aklın a priori kavram ve kategorilerini, deneyin görüşünü ve bilgi yapısını veren, fakat ne usçu ne de deneyci

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olan bir kuramı ileri süren Kant, bilgi de bir tür Kopernik devrimi gerçekleştirmişdir.

Alman idealizminin diğer bir temsilcisi olan Hegel, Kant'ın bilgi kuramını "bilgiyi bilmeden önce bilgiyi bilme arzusu" olarak eleştirir. Çünkü Kant'ın a priori kavram ve kategorilerinin anlamsız ve içeriksiz olduğunu ileri süren Hegel'e göre, bilginin kaynağındaki özne-nesne ikilemini "mutlak" olanın birliğinde irdelemek gerekir. Böylece bilgi kuramını, matematiğe ve doğa bilimlerine temellendirme ve "kendinde-şeylerin" varlığı dogmatikinden kurtararak, mutlak bilginin önünü açar Hegel'in Kant'ın bilgi kuramı eleştirisi, bilgi felsefesinin önünü açarak çağımızdaki değişik bilgi kuramlarının ortaya çıkmasını da sağlamıştır.

Kant and previous philosophers in the modern philosophy have inquired into the limit of human knowledge, so the limitation of knowledge is the result of a basic view of the Critical philosophy. According to most of the modern philosophers, before one wants to attempt to know God, the essence of being, etc., he or she must first investigate the capacity of knowledge itself in order to see whether it is able to accomplish such an attempt.

Hegel criticizes this view in the *Encyclopedia*, section 10. He claims that the task to examine knowledge before using it is based on a false analogy with tools. If one does not want to fool oneself with words, it is easy to see that other instruments can be investigated and criticized without using them in the particular work for which they were designed. But the investigation of knowledge can only be performed by an act of knowledge.¹ The same idea can be seen in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. "One must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers".²

Hegel rejects both the task to examine knowledge before using it and the tool as a metaphor, since knowledge must be used to examine knowledge, and the task to examine knowledge before using it is paradoxical. It is like "wanting to know before one knows" and "an attempt to swim without going in the water" or "wanting to learn to swim before venturing into the water".³ For Hegel, knowledge can be examined only in use. He denies only the possibility of a preliminary examination. The

¹ Hegel, G. W. F., *Encyclopedia*, translated by William Wallace, Oxford, Second Edition Clarendon Press, 1975, section 10.

² Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, paragraf 73.

³ Hegel, G. W. F., *Encyclopedia*, section 10.

analysis and criticism of certain concepts must not precede their use; however, they must accompany it.

I

In order to understand Hegel's criticism of Kant's theory of knowledge, I think it is necessary to point out the basic features of Kant's theory of knowledge. Kant's entire epistemology is based on (1) How the transcendental approach considers the condition of the possibility of science, (2) what science can know and what it cannot know, and (3) that philosophy deals with synthetic *a priori* propositions that are indubitably true.

Therefore, his purpose is to inquire into the original, certainty, and the extent of human knowledge. In other words, his purpose is to inquire into the nature of the understanding. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant investigates how far can reason go without the material presented and the aid furnished by experience. That is, reason should examine its own nature, and whether it is capable of attaining knowledge without the aid of experience. The task both Kant and Locke set for themselves resembled that of investigating a telescope, before turning it upon the stars, to determine its competence for the work.

The rationalist theory of knowledge has its basis on reason. For the rationalists Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, knowing is independent from knower, i.e., object and subject are two different things. For them, the truth of reason is the certain truth. For example, Quine says that, "for Leibniz the truths of reason are true in all possible world".⁴ The main idea of the rationalist is that one can be sure only of truth in reason. In other words, the certainty of truth lies in *a priori* and analytic statements. For Leibniz, both mathematics and metaphysics are *a priori*, and all *a priori* propositions are analytic. In rationalism the problem is to explain the knowledge of the material world if the certainty of truth belongs to reason.

On the other hand, empiricism accepts that all our knowledge comes from experience; therefore, knowledge is not analytic but synthetic. All logical truths and the principles of thought are based on experience. Locke believes that reason is a tabula-rasa at the beginning. In other words, we do not have any *a priori* and analytic knowledge. This idea can be shown in Hume's critique of the concept of cause and metaphysics. For Hume, causation is impossible for reason to think *a priori* because the law of causation is not an *a priori* concept, and in the relation of cause and effect,

⁴ Quine, W. V., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *Philosophical Review*, volume 60, pp. 20-43, January, 1951, p. 20.

there is no necessary consequence of one thing to another. So Hume rejects the law of causation with regard to an *a priori* concept and a necessary combination of two events in nature. As a result of his criticism, metaphysics becomes impossible and also science becomes untrustworthy knowledge because “our knowledge of nature is not acquired by voluntary acts of cognitive judgment, but by the involuntary growth of cognitive feelings”.⁵

With Hume’s attack on the law of causation, Kant says that I woke up from my dogmatic slumbers. Kant sees that Hume touches only one particular case of a fundamental general problem. Kant puts the general problem in the form “how is *synthetical a priori* knowledge possible?”

“There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience.... But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience”.⁶ Although Kant starts with experience, he immediately thinks that experience is not enough for having knowledge, so he does not accept either rationalism or empiricism. In the next step, he looks at the possible kinds of judgments and knowledge in order to define how they exist in reason.

For Kant, there are four kinds of knowledge in order to establish the possible kinds of judgment: *A priori*, *a posteriori*, analytic, and synthetic. Before going into the possibility of judgments, I would like to explain these four concepts in accordance with what Kant means by them. By *a priori*, Kant means that “we do not derive it immediately from experience, but from a universal rule—a rule which is itself, however, borrowed by us from experience”.⁷ Kant gives an example for this kind of knowledge: If a man undermines the foundations of his house, he may know *a priori* that the house will fall. He cannot know this completely *a priori*, but when he gets it through experience, at that time, he understood that all bodies are heavy, and that they need supports. Therefore, we can learn that *a priori* knowledge is absolutely independent of all experience.⁸

In addition to *a priori* knowledge, Kant accepts that there are some *a priori* concepts and perceptions which do not come from experience. According to Kant, the notion of cause and substance are *a priori* concepts, and space and time are also *a priori*, and they are perceptual but not conceptual.

⁵ Cohen, L. J., *An Essay On Belief and Acceptance*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 2.

⁶ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman K. Smith, New York, St Martin’s Press, 1965, B1, p. 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, B2, p. 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*, B2-B3, p. 43.

For Kant, if a proposition is thought as necessary and universal, it is also an *a priori* judgment. Consequently, *a priori* judgments are necessary and universal judgments which are not derived from experience. The opposite of *a priori* judgments are *a posteriori* judgments. According to Kant, they are contingent and are not universal judgments which are derived from experience. Therefore, *a posteriori* knowledge is empirical knowledge.

According to Kant, “whatever be their origin or their logical form, there is a distinction in judgments, as to their content, according to which they are either merely *explicative*, adding nothing to the content of knowledge, or *expansive*, increasing the given knowledge. The former may be called analytical, the latter synthetical judgments”.⁹ Kant understands this distinction as a possible relation of subject to the predicate in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. He says that “either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as something which is contained in this concept A, or B lies outside the concept A”.¹⁰ As it is understood from Kant’s definition of analytical judgment, one may define it as one follows analytical judgment, and it adds nothing through the predicate to the concept of the subject; in other words, the predicate does not say anything more than the content of the subject in that proposition. Here, I will take Kant’s example: “All bodies are extended”.¹¹ According to Kant, this judgment is analytical because the extension is thought to belong to the body, or the body and the extension are understood as identical, so the predicate of this proposition is identical to its subject.

Furthermore, Kant accepts that all analytical judgments are based on the law of contradiction, and they are *a priori* by virtue of their nature. In the analytical judgment, the subject contains its predicate in itself, so without contradiction, the analytical judgment cannot be denied. In every case, all analytical judgments are *a priori* since one needs only to analyze it without looking beyond it.

I think that Kant’s example of the analytical judgment is not a good example because in this example, Kant accepts the Cartesian view of “*res extensa*”. Here, Descartes equates body with extension, and Kant believes that Descartes is right. However, one can say that the extension is the main characteristics of the body or the essence of the body, but the body is not just extension. I will take Quine’s example of analytical judgment as the best example: “All and only bachelors are unmarried men”.¹² This example tells

⁹ Kant, I., *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, translated by Lewis W. Beck, New York, MacMillan Publ. Comp., 1989, paragraf 2, p. 14.

¹⁰ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, B11, p. 48.

¹¹ Kant, I., *Prolegomena*, p. 14.

¹² Quine, W.V., “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, p. 24.

us that the bachelor and the unmarried man are identical by virtue of their meaning and definitions. Although Quine denies that there are no such analytical judgments, I believe that there is such analytical judgment because we know some judgments that they are self-evidence of themselves, such as Quine's example.

Unlike the analytical judgment, Kant believes that there is a synthetical judgment which its predicative tells something more than its subject. Let's take again Kant's example: "All bodies have weight".¹³ For Kant, the weight is not the essence of body in the main characteristics of the body, so this judgment adds and amplifies something to its subject.

Contrary to analytical judgment, synthetic judgment is not wholly based on the law of contradiction because synthetical judgments can be *a posteriori* or *a priori*. Kant maintains that *synthetical a posteriori* judgments are based on empirical experience. On the other hand, some synthetical judgment is not based on experience but on *a priori* judgment.

Generally speaking, there are three possible relations of subject and object in order to make a proposition or judgment: Analytic judgment; *synthetical a posteriori* judgment, and *synthetical a priori* judgment; and, for Kant, *synthetical a priori* judgments can be judgments of science and philosophy because they are both synthetic (predicate more than subject) and *a priori* (necessary and universal). Therefore, the aim here is to show how this kind of judgment is possible. If Kant can show the possibility of them, then science and philosophy became possible. For this reason, Kant shows that all mathematical judgments are *synthetical a priori* judgments.

Kant says that all mathematical judgments are *a priori* not empirical; "because they carry with them necessity, which cannot be derived from experience".¹⁴ Kant gives an example of mathematical judgment: "7+5=12". At the first step, one can think that it is analytical judgment. However, Kant suggests to us that we should look more closely. They are two different intuitions. Kant says that when we added 5 to 7, we have all ready thought in the concept of a sum 7+5, but not that this sum is equivalent to the number 12. Therefore, all mathematical judgments are synthetical.

Kant accepts that natural science contains *a priori* synthetical judgments as principles. Kant believes that Newton's law (action and reaction are always equal in all communication of motion) is *synthetical a priori*, and it is also synthetic.¹⁵ Furthermore, Kant accepts that metaphysical judgments are *synthetical a priori* judgments.

¹³ Kant, I., *Prolegomena*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, B15, p. 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, B18, p. 54.

Up to the present, I have tried to show the distinction and the possible combination between analytical and synthetical judgments. It is already said that analytical judgment is possible by virtue of the law of contradiction and *synthetical a posteriori* judgment is possible by virtue of experience, but how about *synthetical a priori* judgment? What makes it possible? How is it possible.

Since Hume shows that *a priori* knowledge is nothing but a long habit of believing something as true. Therefore, metaphysics is impossible and also other sciences. Kant thinks that in order to answer how synthetic *a priori* judgment is possible, one must answer the following question because the possibility of these questions makes *synthetical a priori* judgment possible:

1. How is pure mathematics possible?
2. How is pure natural science possible?
3. How is metaphysics in general possible?
4. How is metaphysics as a science possible?¹⁶

Kant maintains that pure mathematics is possible because pure intuition is not empirical, but *a priori*. Without intuition, mathematics cannot take any single step. Geometry is based on the pure intuition of space; therefore, geometry is possible. Namely, mathematics and geometry are possible as synthetic *a priori* subjects.

According to Kant, pure science of nature is possible if and only if we have knowledge which comes from the laws of nature because the laws of nature can be only known by means of experience, but conformity to law in the connection of appearance, because experience itself requires laws which are *a priori*, necessary, and universal. Consequently, Kant says pure science of nature is possible by virtue of universally necessary laws of nature.¹⁷

Metaphysics is possible in general because Kant maintains that reason is concerned with what lies beyond experience. Unlike understanding, reason is analytic, and it can take itself as an object. Although reason wants to learn what there is beyond experience, pure reason is bounded by experience. We can just hope to know what lies beyond experience, but we cannot know them. Therefore, metaphysics is a theory of development of reason which can know just possible experience. How is metaphysics possible? More specifically, the question is how we can have a scientific

¹⁶ Kant, I., *Prolegomena*, p. 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

metaphysics.¹⁸ In metaphysics we can make no synthetic *a priori* judgment, since metaphysics is a transcendental illusion as a science.

Consequently, after answering these four questions, Kant believes that *synthetical a priori* judgments are possible because they exist in these sciences which we already proved that they exist. Therefore, the possibility of *synthetical a priori* judgments lie in the possibility of these four questions in which they exist. Furthermore, for Kant, knowledge is a combination of something from experience and something from categories which are *a priori*. In other words, knowledge is an outcoming of sense intuition and categories of understanding. Therefore, knowledge must be universally necessary by virtue of the categories of understanding which do not come from experience. On the other hand, two *a priori* concepts-space and time-make sense intuition possible.

Kant goes further in explanation than how we get the knowledge of something. First of all, he examines the rationalistic and empirical aspects of knowledge. He sees some deficiency in both aspects. He maintains that in order to have knowledge, there must be a combination of sensory intuition and categories.

Knowledge = Sensory Intuition (with space and time) + Categories

According to Kant, there are twelve pure concepts of understanding. These concepts of understanding unite the contents of intuition, and they serve to unite the multiplicity of the intuition. Sensory intuitions are given in spatial-temporal forms which are space and time.

I would like to explain what Kant means by “space” and “time”. Space is not an empirical concept derived from external experience. Space is a necessary, *a priori* representation that underlies all outer intuitions. Space is not a discursive concept but a pure (i.e., *a priori*) intuition, and space is not a concept but an *a priori* intuition.¹⁹ Geometry, for Kant, is a synthetic *a priori* determination of the proportion of space, for it is a science in which we are in a position to make synthetic *a priori* judgments about just such spatial concepts as straight lines and shortest distances. The condition of making such judgments is that space is *a priori*, otherwise judgments about the proportion of space could not be *a priori*.

Time is not empirical concept we do not get the concept ‘time’ by abstracting from experience. On the contrary, we cannot experience anything without presupposing time. Time, for Kant, is a necessary concept. Time is

¹⁸ Morris, M., *The Good and The True*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 21.

¹⁹ Williams, C. J. F., *Being Identity and Truth*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 171.

not a discursive concept, but an *a priori* intuition.²⁰ Time is not constituted by the sum of discrete temporal units, for to add units of time together would mean that one unit of time follows after another; but in the concept ‘follow after’ time is already presupposed. For Kant, time is not an empirical concept, but an *a priori* intuition.

Consequently, space and time are *a priori* form of intuition. As *a priori* forms of intuition, space is a necessary condition for all outer intuition and time is a necessary condition for all outer and inner intuition. As *a priori* forms of intuition space and time are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the synthetic *a priori* judgments we are able to make. Therefore, space and time are super categories and *a priori*. Space and time are condition for the possibility of experience whatever. Temporality and spatiality do not belong to the object, they belong to the condition of experiencing the object. Space and time are ideal. The objects are not in space and time.

Categories are rules for working up an object on the basis of sensual intuition, i.e. judgment of experience. Thinking is the same as judging that is uniting representations in consciousness. The object is constituted in such a way that it has universality and necessity; these latter come from us, i.e., the categories of understanding. All objects of experience reflect the objective criteria (causality, the categories, etc.). They are in the object because we put them there. Critical philosophy is an attempt to understand the condition for the possibility of knowing.

The other point in Kantian epistemology I think is the separation of phenomena from the noumena. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant emphasizes that the categories are only applicable to what is given in space and time. The categories have empirical but not transcendent applicability. We cannot, therefore, understand something as a transcendent object, i.e. an object that does not appear in space and time. We call what is intuited in space and time ‘phenomena’, and Kant calls ‘*noumenon*’ which is not phenomenon but thing in-itself. The concept *noumenon* has two meanings: **1.** Negative meaning: the concept ‘*noumenon*’ is not an object of intuition. **2.** Positive meaning: The concept ‘*noumenon*’ means an object that can be intuited through a special kind of non-sensory intuition Kant does not accept the positive meaning of the concept of ‘*noumenon*’ since it is meaningless. Therefore, Kant acknowledge only the negative meaning. The concept is not a concept of some sensible object or other, but is a concept of something that is not an object that can be perceived by the senses.²¹

Kant believes that there are categories and that the categories are a necessary condition of knowledge; also that they are only applicable to what

²⁰ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 46-A31, p. 74-75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

is given in intuition. Kant believes that we have knowledge about appearance but not about noumena. Noumena, which is the thing-in-itself, is unknown to us. We do not know what the thing-in-itself is, since *noumenon* cannot be intuited in time and space.

Kant, hitherto, maintains that it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. We must try to know whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.²² In the transcendental Dialectic, Kant argues that it is the nature of reason to employ the categories beyond that which is given in space and time. However, for Kant, categories can only be applied to what is intuited, and an offence against this rule results in what Kant calls a transcendental illusion. This is unavoidable since the transcendental illusion has its roots in the essence of reason. For this remain, Kant distinguishes between reason and understanding. For Kant, to think an object, i.e., make a judgment about what is given in space and time so that by means of categories it becomes a judgments about an object, is an activity of understanding. As it is said before, reason wants go beyond experience, but reason is bounded up with experience. Reason hopes to know what lies beyond experience, i.e., reason tries to know metaphysical propositions such as immortality of the soul, the existence of God etc.

Transcendental philosophy deals not with objects but with the *a priori* conditions for knowing the objects. Empirical idealism is what we experience as ideas of representations, that is, representations come first in the order of experience and objects later. However, Kant calls himself an empirical realist and which means that for him things come first in the order of experience. Kant is empirically object directed (or a realist). However, what he is proposing to do-is to tell how objects are possible and that begins with representations.

II

Hegel's critique of Kant's theory of knowledge can be examined in five steps:

- (1) The knowing before you know issue.
- (2) The criticism and the knowing must be part of the same system of thought development.
- (3) The analysis of Kant's theory of knowledge is based on the destination between understanding and reason.

²² *Ibid.*, B XV-XVI, pp. 21-22.

(4) Hegel's criticism of the "thing in itself" doctrine and the consequent charge of 'subjectivism'.

(5) The relation between experience and transcendental ideas. On what ground did Kant consider the priority of understanding over reason?

Is knowledge a subject of critical analysis (Kant) or is critical analysis an aspect of knowledge? (Hegel). Hegel says that Kant "demanded a criticism of the faculty of cognition as preliminary to its exercise".²³ For Hegel this amounts to knowing before you know, since the faculty of cognition and the analysis of knowledge are both part of "knowing".

For Kant, critical philosophy marks out the necessary conditions for the possibility of experience. It endeavors to specify the conditions for the possibility of experience. It endeavors to specify the conditions that are necessary for the possibility of knowing. Hegel insists that the examination of knowledge is itself part of knowledge. Hegel objects to the separation of the activity of criticism from the subject of criticism. Kant's analysis of judgment and the table of categories derived from it are abstract and separated from their use in the actual process of knowing.

For Hegel, the process of inquiry has to include "the action of the forms of thought with a criticism of them".²⁴ The forms of thought must be investigated and studied in their nature and application. The forms of thought must be "the object of research and the action of the object".²⁵ We can examine their limits and point to their defects as we examine them in their actual performance. Hegel points to his dialectic as a process whereby the examination of knowledge is immanent in the act of knowing and vice versa.

Hegel criticizes Kant for using the categories as ground for objectivity of knowledge and for analyzing them as prior conditions for the possibility of knowledge, rather than in their actual functioning in the process of knowing. For Kant, we must know what it means to know (criteria that establish the conditions for the possibility of knowing an object) in order to enable us to have the actual experience of knowing.

The above means that in order to arrive at objectivity, i.e. to have a judgment of experience we must subject the representations to a rule and connect them in a specific manner. And "only in so far as our representations

²³ Hegel, G. W. F., *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, translated by A. V. Miller, foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 429.

²⁴ Hegel, G. W. F., *Encyclopedia*, 41, p. 84-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41, pp. 84-86.

are necessitated in a certain order as regards their time relations do they acquire objective meaning”.²⁶

Kant argues for the necessity of a critical examination of our fundamental categories before we engage in the task of doing philosophy. The Hegelian approach is to proceed directly to the actual philosophical problem and knowledge will result in the process of our actual engagement (activity) in dealing with the particular problem at hand.

Kant defines knowledge in terms of the necessary *a priori* synthetic judgments (concepts of understanding) which make experience possible, or without which, experience would not be possible. There is no simple separation between the empirical and the logical since experience requires a necessary (*a priori*) logical structure in order for it to be possible. Kant’s transcendental approach marks out the necessary conditions for the possibility of experiencing an object as an object of knowledge. The necessary conditions are transcendental, which means that they are neither purely logical in terms of formal logic, i.e. the law of contradiction, etc., nor purely empirical in terms of sensuous input. This is so, since the analysis of being an object, i.e. what it means to be an object is part and parcel of the definition of the general shape of experience. For Kant, the conditions for the appearance (of the object) are subject to the universal and necessary rules and its apprehending (the judging) will have to be in accordance with the necessary rules.

Hegel’s main criticism pertains to Kant’s doctrine of appearance and the “thing in itself”. Hegel accuses Kant of subjectivism by his (Kant’s) limiting all knowledge to the sphere of appearances, and by his refusal to include in knowledge the things themselves, as they are constituted in the world. For Hegel, to know is to know the things themselves, their properties and relations, then internal and external determinations. Knowledge is knowledge of the real, and the real is what we comprehend. In Aristotelian terms, the thing is a “this” and “a such”. It is substance and accident. Hegel following Aristotle, is a realist in terms of the meaning of what it is to know an object. He considers Kant’s domain of “appearance” as subjective and insubstantial. Kant’s philosophy is a philosophy of subjectivity, “since thought is subjective, the capacity of knowing the absolute is denied to it”.²⁷

Hegel further says that for Kant to know an object is to produce the object in consciousness. This makes the consciousness assume that the properties of the thing and the thing in itself (its unity) is reduced to a mere abstraction. Kant’s subject judges the object in accordance with the *a priori* categories of understanding. The unity, identity and objectivity of the object

²⁶ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 197 B 242-3, pp. 224-225.

²⁷ Hegel, G. W. F., *Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 423.

are derived through the transcendental unity of apperception. The subject thinks about (judges) the object. The object is thought (judged) by the subject. However, for Hegel, it is more reasonable to consider self-consciousness (or the “I”) as a self-reflected unity which in trying to apprehend the thing is indifferent to what it cognates, rather than to postulate the latter on the part of the thing and its properties only.²⁸

While it is true that the object does not think the subject, it is nevertheless true that the subject apprehends itself as a unified thinking subject capable of exercising the *a priori* synthetic judgments (categories of understanding) only in the process of thinking the object. The subject grasps his own subjectivity only as reflected in the transcendental process of the subject thinking of an object. Thus, for Hegel, there is a reciprocal relation between subject and object. Kant’s subject-object relation is one-sided, since the unity of the object is chiefly derived from the transcendental unity of apperception by the subject. In other words, for Kant, it is the thinking subject that bestows its unity on the object. For Hegel, the subject’s unity is a reflected unity apprehended solely through the transcendental analysis of the object. This means that for Hegel, the subject depends as much on the object as the object on the subject.²⁹

The spontaneous activity of the subject is counterbalanced by an understanding of the importance of the object in bringing to light the reflected unity of self-consciousness. If Kant would have followed this route, he would have been better able to appreciate the things in themselves, in their relation to each other and in the manifestation of their unity and properties.

Hegel maintains that Kant’s categories are meaningless and empty when taken apart from the sensible manifold to which they apply. The categories belong to thought and they acquire content only when filled with the sensible intuitions. They acquire meaning only in combination with the sensory input. Taken by themselves, they are empty. This is a too strong criticism of Kant’s transcendental categories. Kant draws a clear distinction between the judgment of perception and the judgment of experience. He differentiates between the actual and the possible. Whatever agrees with the “formal conditions of experience” is possible, but for the possible to be

²⁸ Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraf 80, p. 51. Also see, Inwood, M., “Hegel”, *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, ed. by Nicholas Bunnin and E. P. Jsu-James, Oxford, Blackwell Publ. Ltd., 1998.

²⁹ Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraf 60, pp. 36-38, and Hegel, G. W. F., *Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller, foreword by J. N. Findlay, Humanities Paperback Library, Atlantic Highlands, 1990, pp. 176-184.

actual, a connection with perception is necessary.³⁰ Obviously, one cannot say that the *a priori* conditions of experiencing an object are only meaningful in the process of their actual application. The latter is what Hegel implies but it is not what Kant would maintain.

Hegel's fundamental criticism of Kant concerns the relation between the transcendental idea and experience. Kant himself questions whether the idea is appropriate (being too large or too small) and "is to that to which it is directed, namely, possible experience".³¹ Possible experience is that which alone gives reality to our concepts. The idea has to adapt itself to empirical knowledge. In the example of the ball and the hole, no priority is established. But in the other example of the man with the coat, it is obvious that the coat is for the man rather than the man for the coat. The transcendental idea represents reason and the empirical knowledge represents understanding. Having established that the priority of understanding vis a vis reason, Kant asks whether the fault lies with the idea (Reason) as being too large for what the understanding can provide. This comes down to the essence of Hegel's criticism, who questions Kant's dogmatic preference for understanding (empirical knowledge) relative to reason (the idea). In Kant, reason is reduced to a regulative function and is subordinate to understanding. He acknowledged the necessity of reason (in uniting the possible with the actual) but put it aside in favour of understanding of the phenomenal realm where actuality and possibility can be separated. Hegel's claim is that Kant's doctrine of possible experience confines knowledge to mathematics and natural science. Thus it absolutizes understanding relative to reason, and in and doing that, critical philosophy takes a dogmatic stand.

III

Hegel points out that Kantian epistemology is bound up with a preliminary examination of the faculties of cognition. In Kant's theory, cognition can examine its rule and its faculties without going outside of itself. Hegel completely rejects this idea, since he thinks that if knowledge is bound up with its use or its performance, then with an examination of the faculties of cognition as a preliminary to their use, it is impossible. I think that this could be the basic difference between Kant and Hegel. With this criticism, I think that Hegel is right because without exercise, performance and use, the theory of knowledge is one-sided. Here, the analogy which is an attempt to swim without going in the water is very clear. In order to have

³⁰ Kant, I., *Prolegomena*, pp. 48-49.

³¹ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 517-18, p. 276.

knowledge of an object, I believe, knowledge must accompany both with the faculties of cognition and performance. So I agree with Hegel at this point.

As Hegel did, I also do not believe that there is a thing-in-itself; the question is how I know that there is a thing-in-itself; the question is how I know there is a thing-in-itself" if I cannot have any knowledge of it. I think here there is a logical paradox which tells us that there is a noumena, but that we cannot know it. This is an absurd proposition in terms of knowing something without knowing it.

Kant limits our knowledge with appearance. After denying that there is no noumena, I think that there is no limit for the knowledge of the objects; everything can be known since there is no unknown noumena. Although Kant limits our categories to twelve, I think that there can be more or less than this number. I mean that they can be categorized differently as Kant and Aristotle did. According to my understanding of categories, space and time are not super categories or in me, but they are in the object. Objects are in space and time. Space and time are not merely subjective forms imposed by us on the material of sense experience: They are out there as the objects and are imposed on them by the elementary action of the Idea

Consequently, I think that Hegel's criticism of Kant's theory of knowledge is right, but I do not think there is an absolute spirit as Hegel maintains in his philosophy. At this point, I disagree with Hegel. Absolute spirit is good only in abstract thinking, and it does not exist or exercise anywhere.