



# IMMANUEL KANT'S CONTRIBUTION TO EPISTEMOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

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## Abstract

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the central figure of Modern Philosophy, synthesized early modern rationalism and empiricism and established many facets of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy, which still have a major influence today on "metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political philosophy, aesthetics, and other fields. He emphasized that human understanding is the source of the general natural laws that shape our entire experience of scientific knowledge, morality and religious beliefs that are intertwined in mutual compatibility. Kant attempts to situate his philosophical theories within the ambit of theoretical and realist paradigms. Immanuel Kant's philosophy can be divided into two principal parts. The metaphysical and philosophical theory is rooted in the abstract understanding of the essence of creation. The second ethical philosophy and political theory is based on the equality principle. These two branches were highly influential in the growth of philosophy. In the present study, an attempt has been made to present an overview of Kant's philosophy of epistemology concerning his critique of pure reason by analyzing the data related to the above theme.

## 1. Introduction

Immanuel Kant, one of the greatest Western philosophers occupies a unique position in the history of philosophy through his contribution towards the field of knowledge. Kant established his reputation by resolving the long-term issue of the possibility of knowledge between rationalists and empiricists. He agrees with both of these schools of thoughts that universal and necessary truth cannot be derived from experience. According to him, the contents of our knowledge are derived from experience, but the mind conceives them in rational ways. However, he does not claim that in the end all human consciousness is reduced to personal experiences. Kant draws general conclusions about the sensitive environment by explaining how human perception shapes the whole experience. Kant compares his philosophical ideas to those of "Copernicus," who by understanding the existence of the celestial observations, have revolutionized astronomy. "Likewise, Kant aims to revolutionize metaphysics by taking into account the structure of perception representing life. Perry (1912), states that Kant's contribution to epistemology is his discovery of categories and thoughts as the universal prerequisites of knowledge. Kant claims that the critical area has certain characteristics that can be defined a priori, a moral philosophy, not because they are properties of the object itself but because they are characteristics of human understanding. We know in advance that all things exist in space and time because they are the embodiments of our imagination, without which we cannot even imagine a thing. The concepts of comprehension, such as meaning and causality, describe each experience equally. Bolzano (1912), comments that Kant's theory of knowledge seems to promise us his discovery of a definite and characteristic difference between two main classes of all human a priori knowledge i.e., Philosophy and mathematics. Thinkers had concerned themselves with the objects of knowledge, not with the mind that knows, while Kant tries to transfer contemplation from the objects that engage the mind to the mind itself, and thus start philosophy on a new idea.

## 2. Immanuel Kant's Epistemology

Immanuel Kant's theories, concepts, and assertions form distinct references to philosophical studies throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Large literary bodies, for example, are primarily devoted to Kant's distinction between empirical and synthetic judgments, his category definition and his claim that nature is not a predicate. In contemporary philosophy, particularly in epistemology, the explanation and use of isolated Kantian ideas greatly changed many theories and showed Kant's enormous debt to modern thinkers. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that after "Plato and Aristotle" Kant's impact on the development of philosophy is as profound as that of any philosopher. Kant's contributions to philosophical thought should not be confined to the ambit of his theories. In the critique of "Pure Reason," Kant elucidated that a systematic



account of human understanding deserves praise and criticism of itself. Kant formed a philosophical discourse from ideas unprecedented in the history of philosophy which both claim to establish the validity of scientific knowledge in the sensitive world and to refute just as conclusively that reason can provide information about objects beyond the boundaries of the possible experience. The failure of Kant to achieve this outcome is neither surprising nor damaging to the value of his philosophical system. It establishes a fresh and innovative approach to human understanding and brings proximity to problem-solving. "It's best to consider Kant's philosophy of reconciliation between British empiricism and continental rationalism i.e., Locke and Hume with Descartes and Leibniz<sup>1</sup>.

In line with Descartes' views, the rationalist thinkers believed that all essential propositions that God exists or that the soul is eternal can be destroyed without any relation to sensory experience through the use of rationality. According to rationalists, such theories are or are derived from intrinsic ideas or concepts, and on these basic premises, many rationalist philosophers construct complex, a priori, deductive philosophical frameworks. The empirical school, whose philosophy was most associated with Kant's oldest contemporary Hume, argues that all knowledge derives from observations of meaning, that in Locke's terms, the mind without experience is a "tabula rasa," without comprehension. Kant acknowledges basic issues in both rationalist and empirical accounts of experience. The empirical research seems to be ignorant about corresponding meaning perceptions. While the problem of rationalism is almost contrasting; philosophers who supposed they knew have made so different and often contradictory statements about the content of that knowledge that any prior demand for knowledge has to be met with skepticism.

While Kant is sympathetic to many elements of empiricism, he is dissatisfied with presupposed propositions put forward by them, Hume's theory is not structured to prove he understands, but rather to clarify how knowledge can be understood. However, Kant limits the scope of what is known and of what can be known to proposals related to experience, denies the rationalistic thesis that only reason can gain knowledge of things that cannot possibly be experienced, and claims that all the arguments which claim to establish such information, by using reason unassisted by experience, involve basic principles. In stating that a small number of abstract propositions can a priori be known, however, such hypotheses cannot be known without regard to experience. Kant avoids the scepticism of empiricism and the errors of rationalism.

The existence and essence of human experience verify the validity of other world propositions. Kant's notion that all human beings have such ideas. a priori that they both apply to reality and make it possible is a panoptic proposition in philosophical history. It is an admirable, if not entirely successful, effort to distil and combine the essential features of both rationalization and empiricism into a theory of knowledge that has no unpredictable or unsatisfactory consequence. To make sense of his theory, Kant presented a comprehensive and lengthy exhibit in the Critique which explains how human beings require a specific perceptual and conceptual apparatus, which derives knowledge from a priori.

According to Kant, human beings do, interpret and conceive of the world through particular nodes that shape the subjectivity through experience, and there would be no material, or at least no known information, without these types. Kant argues that these kinds of experiences are organized by a faculty spatially and temporally, which he calls "pure intuition," and that concepts are classified by the faculty of "pure understanding" according to fundamental concepts derived from the laws of logic.

In Kant's esthetic argument for the ideality of time and space, maintaining that space and time do not exist, Kant makes a strong distinction between the faculty of perception and the faculty of intellect, and this distinction serves as the basis for his division into a transcendental esthetic and the Transcendental analytic of the essential. Space and time are "pure intuitions" which, according to Kant, are intentionally translated into nature as subjective aspects of all appearances contributed by the perceiver, He advocates a perception theory that varies dramatically from the conventional theories that see perception as the passive processing by mind of the effects on the senses of external subjects. Kant does not recognize nor impose the modes of perception, space and time. Space and time, therefore, exist only in the perceptual apparatus of human beings. Kant introduces two types of theories, "metaphysical," and "transcendental," to show that space and time are subjective constructs<sup>2</sup>.

The philosophical arguments are focused on the existence of space and time and the transcendental, epistemologically characteristic arguments are centred on the probability of a priori math. The claims about time and space complement each other are fundamentally similar. The principle of Kant is that space should

<sup>1</sup> Masih, 1971. p.78

<sup>2</sup> Allison, 1983. P,231.



be a concept based on a priori intuition because it cannot be extracted from experience. Kant argues that space is not an a priori feature of experience but a prerequisite for experiential ability. The goal of the philosophical arguments is to demonstrate that perception is only possible in space and time, but these claims do not prove that time and space are subjective. Kant uses transcendental reasoning to show that space and time are mere perceptions, a priori perceptive structures placed on reality by the perceiver. In the segment of the Critique "The Transcendental Description of the Space Theory," Kant argues that space must be subjective because this is the only way that Euclidean geometry must be necessitated and purely universal.

The assumption of Kant that human beings impose a spatial and temporal structure on the universe by nature has some significant consequences for the nature of the sensible world. Kant separates the real universe, the universe of manifestations in space and time from the material, which, however, is inherently unknowable because it is not capable of subsuming under the logical and perceptive apparatus of the human mind.

In Kant's view, the area of potential awareness universe is outside of time and space, it cannot be felt or understood. Therefore, Kant may be considered an idealist. In his view artefacts of perception do not exist without being viewed, as artefacts acquire spatial and temporal characteristics only by perception. Yet he thinks his idealism is very different from that of his predecessors. Kant says he is not a "transcendental idealist" since he is also a practical empiricist:

"We, therefore, affirm empirical space (and time), as far as anything is conceivable is concerned Experience; but we also affirm (their) transcendental ideality". By this seemingly paradoxical assertion, Kant means separating his view from other idealisms like Berkeley, who, according to Kant, "considers objects in space merely as abstract entities<sup>3</sup>".

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Kant has laid the foundations for creating and advancing a theory of human experience in the "transcendental aesthetics" that removes empirical scepticism and shows that rationalists' claims to understanding are impractical beyond the limits of possible experience. By idealizing space and time as subjective objects, Kant draws some important ideas, e.g., the concepts of Euclidean geometry, which through the problem of inference are prevented from being accepted as facts by empirical realists.

### 3. A view of Kant's concept

According to Kant, "Intuition and concepts constitute the foundations of all our understanding, so that no ideas, without any intuition, can generate knowledge in any way". Kant revealed the perceptual part of his account of human experience in "Transcendental Aesthetic," where he clarifies the connection between the conceptual and the perceptual form in which knowledge is derived. Kant insists just as pure intuitions are essential for the perception of the human being, there must also be basic "pure concepts" for human comprehension that provide a form of all experience and without which no experience or knowledge could exist, although they are divorced from all empirical contents. To the exploration and explanation of these concepts Kant dedicated the critics' section "Analytic of Concepts." In Aristotelian philosophy, Kant provides a "clue" for the exploration of these concepts, which was considered to be a definitive and almost total theory of understanding.

For Kant, a definition is a "general representation," applicable to some specifics and linked to one another. Concepts are central to judgments, and subjects of logical interpretation since judgment involves awareness of the application of a concept to a particular concept. Kant's belief that the metaphysical forms of experience are related to or decided by the cognitive forms of judgments is based on his interpretation of transcendental philosophy.

Kant after Aristotle called the mere definitions "Categories," maintaining that the categories, like the subjective perceptual aspects of time and space, constitute the modes by which man conceives his world. Firstly, while he may prove the validity of deriving the categories from logical reasoning, his list of pure comprehension principles would be insufficient as the science of logic has advanced since Kant's time.

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, 1987. P. 102-103.



However, some philosophers argue that the number of these types is definitive, which, considering Kant's conviction, would also suggest a limiting number of categories.

Furthermore, the category list of Kant can be criticized for being too static. It seems at least that the intellectual human structure will develop and accept pure new concepts and reject others, but Kant does not allow this choice. Nevertheless, the crucial role played by Categories in critical philosophy is more important than the inflexibility of the categories and their connection to the laws of logic: why their use is essential for future human experience, and how an understanding of them exposes the fundamental errors of both rationalism and empiricism. The categories are usually, according to Kant, 'concepts of an object in which the rationality of an object is considered to be defined as regards one of the logical functions of judgment.' The categories, not only refer to all objects of perceptual experience but also organize and separate these objects. For example, IN Kant's view the world is governed by cause and effect; it is an important truth determined by human intellectual devices, in particular the concept of causality.

#### 4. The Synthesis of Apprehension

The first step, "the synthesis of apprehension," involves the arrangement of an idea "in a single moment." Because each intuition contains a multitude of phenomenal data, Kant says it is essential that insofar as intuition is to be seen as a single unified object, the intuition, "first must move and be kept together," must be expressed with synthetic unity. According to Kant, intuitions are linked together, besides being separately synthesized in specific moments, by imitating intuitions of past moments; To use Kant's example, one must be able to imitate the preceding in the imagination.

Under Kant's view, coherence and consistency of perception can only be accomplished by the replication of previous intuitions by the imagination. The synthesis of apprehension in intuition, the synthesis of replication in imagination, and the synthesis of understanding in a concept are not merely empirical, that is, they do not simply order phenomenal data obtained by the senses, but have a complete a priori use since the three stages of synthesis have pure (non-empirical) evidence.

According to Kant, the consciousness involved in the synthesis of recognition requires a unity of the conscious self, and identifiable synthesis actions must come from the same self from which recognition emanates. If a priori recognition is a fusion of the multitude of pure intuition into the concepts of space and time, the concepts used to construct a synthetic union, as recognized in the information, must be a priori and not derived from experience, since the experience from which all concepts subsequently extracted may fall within the limits of the present. Nor is the consciousness of the self as a unitary being based upon the empirical examination by which one senses one's inner thoughts and feelings. Kant claims that the perception of time is a formal requirement for this introspection. Kant calls it the "transcendental experience" units of consciousness necessary for the Integration of the manifold of pure intuition, and it is a metaphysical state that can tell us nothing about the self in advance but that it is single and unified.

Apperception is logically important for truth. Nevertheless, the transcendental deduction will demonstrate that experience needs a unitary consciousness, that a unitary consciousness needs those diverse intuitions to be associated with concepts, and that, as an original or an initial relation of intuitions requires concepts by which the relation is achieved. In reality, the deduction indicates that ideas central to human knowledge are there without which experience is impossible. Kant has significantly attempted to integrate the ideals of rationalism and empiricism into an epistemology that maintains the strengths of both schools and which has several troubling implications. Kant agrees with the rationalists about the legitimacy of a priori concepts because he maintains, certain concepts must be presupposed for the experience.

But unlike the rationalists, Kant maintains that these principles only have legitimate applications within those limits in defining the boundaries of potential experience and that any use of these principles for knowledge transcending the limits of i) possible experience is wrong. In addition, Kant dedicates more than one-third of the Critique to showing the fallacies of applying the categories to objects outside the possible experience, in the section entitled 'Transcendental Dialectic,' criticizing conventional reasons for the existence of God, for instance, according to invalid category uses. For Kant, tension, experience and therefore knowledge requires both an element of interpretation and a concept, and any claim to knowledge that does not value any of these two elements is a disappointment.

According to Kant, our pure principles of knowledge as well as our pure intuitions are just objects of the experience and, as soon as we leave this world, they have no meaning whatsoever. 'By confining the field of science to 'sensual things,' Kant reveals his connection to the empirical school and his belief in building strong foundations for the empirical study of the phenomenal world. Kant recognizes that all metaphysical



assumptions must be made to be empirically observable, to obtain some understanding of the outside world. Kant's efforts in the criticism of pure reason can be seen as an attempt to prove that the a priori premises of science are true, and this he does by demonstrating that there can be no experiment empirically to test without the subjective forms of mere experience, space and time and without the basic principles of intelligence, category. In taking the potential of experience into account, Kant sets the concepts by which experience can be understood.

It is believed, Kant is an empiricist who recognizes that even a certain amount of rationalism in empiricism is untenable. The categories are the ways in which people interpret the universe, but they are abstracts of the utmost generality, without any specific material, and are totally removed from any perceptive instances to which they refer. Kant believes it is important to establish a relationship between these pure abstractions and the phenomena of meaning in order to take into account the potential of understanding, and to determine the scope and essence of each reference category. For Kant, knowledge requires making true judgments and, in order to make a true judgment, it must be remembered that one needs to apply a specific definition correctly. There is a little theoretical problem with applying an empirical concept to a single phenomenal phenomenon since the rules of reference of the empirical concept are determined by the phenomena from which it is abstracted. However, Kant sees a problem in defining the objects to which categorical concepts apply, because the Categories, as opposed to empirical definitions, are a priori and original, they are not derived from a body of knowledge which could delineate the kinds of things it includes.

### 5. The context of "Schematism"

In trying to explain how the various meanings can apply to the facets of the phenomenal universe, Kant discusses "Schematism." Recognizing that the "pure principles of understanding are (will be) very heterogeneous from empirical observations," Kant explained that something similar to the two must be interposed between categories and intuition so that the categories have "significance" knowledge of perception. This mediating interpretation must be pure and unempirical, and yet at the same time it must be analytical in one way, yet reactive in another<sup>4</sup>. The transcendental schema is such a representation. Therefore, the transcendental scheme provides the means through which abstract principles of knowledge are related to experience, giving access to categories and functional meaning in this sensitive universe. Kant argues that 'a category applied to appearances becomes possible through a transcendental time determination', i.e., a synthesis of the multitude of pure intuition in the concept of time.

This conclusion is "homogeneous to the group" because of its reliance on the synthetic unity group and, at that time, "homogeneous with presence," in all empirical representations of the multiplicity ". For Kant, time is an essential element of the schematic relation between categories and perception, because it depends on the coherence of categories as a concept and because it is a concept to order the manifold of intuition. In providing this connection and thus ensuring an intuitive reference to pure concepts, the transcendental determination of time imposes an infinite limit on the meaningful application of the categories.

Given its specific significance in time, the concepts can only be applied meaningfully in time and thus contribute to obtaining knowledge in the phenomenal world alone, and cannot contribute to understanding the noumenal universe, beyond the subjectively imposed forms of time and space. Yet a transcendental scheme is more important than the time theory, for while the heterogeneous offspring of comprehension and intuition are connected through it; time itself does not offer the specific sense of individual categories. Kant calls on the Faculty of Imagination to pose the relation of each group in its individuality, and here he is most obscure. Kant maintains that for each group, the imagination creates a "function concealed in the depths of the human soul".

In his "Schematism study," Kant correctly recognizes the difficulty in fixing a significant application in the phenomenal world for the categories because it is not easy to see how pure concepts generated by the mind derived or dependent on senses can relate to a certain form of phenomenon. Kant is also right in understanding that such a requirement must be put out to help the categories gain world information in the form of decisions. But, apart from the vague notion that a scheme "mediates" between category and perception, Kant clarified the formal characteristics of the phenomenal world in the "Transcendental Aesthetics," demonstrated strictly a priori nature of concepts in the Transcendental Deduction, and related these concepts to the phenomenal world, by showing the "responsive state which alone is able to employ pure concepts of comprehension."

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<sup>4</sup> Ayer, 1948. P, 128.



Kant thus extracts nine synthetics from the thematized categories, which he calls 'the concepts of pure comprehension,' which are classified in parts of the critique as "Axioms of intuitions," "Anti-sensitive thoughts," "Analogies of observations," "Postulates of empirical thinking." Kant's drawing up of the concepts of pure comprehension goes beyond the reach of this article. Just as basic concepts of comprehension are needed to be learned, so the values are required to be able to learn this knowledge. Kant argues that his philosophy gives a specific insight into the theory of information in order to compensate for the probability of making some logical decision because "they contain in themselves the reasons for other judgments."

Kant thus approaches the philosophy of science from a far different viewpoint than the viewpoints of rationalist empiricists. Yet the consequence of the approach of Kant may be intertwined between the two doctrines. Kant is able to maintain with the empiricist that "all our knowledge starts, by positing space and time as subjective types of intuition, instead of empirical characteristics of the outer world, by creating a human understanding of the required possession of the priori concepts and by drawing from showing the application of a priori ideas to the world of space and time, Kant's approach to knowledge theory is in line with common conceptions of the sort of things that can be known and the kinds of things that can be learned

To ensure the validity of knowledge derived from scientific research—a validity that Kant felt was seriously threatened by David Hume's philosophy—the Critic Philosophy supports the intellectual base upon which Western reasoning rests. In challenging the validity of knowledge that transcends experience, for example, Kant retains the view of those who pose questions about knowledge. It is observed that the idealism of Kant is not as clear. Nevertheless, noumena's critical importance for his method is a more serious issue than the status of unnoticed artefacts. Space and time and divisions, according to Kant, cover only the modes of knowledge. We arrange the many intuitions in a manner accessible to human understanding, but they do not make up for the others.

## 6. Conclusion

For Kant, the subjective nature of the human mind is not responsible for the multitude of knowledge, and while, to make good sense, it is clear that Kant thinks the substance of appearances is induced by noumena. However, without suggesting that the multiple intuitions are uncaused, Kant has no alternative but to ascribe a causal function to noumena. When the nature of the plurality of intuition does not emerge from the human mind, then what emerges from it must exist independently of the forms which the mind has placed on the universe, irrespective of the concepts and space and times - in short, it must be noumenal.

But Kant contradicts his basic principle that the Categories apply exclusively to physics when he attributes existence and causality to noumenal objects. It is only in that he attributes life to the noumenal causes of apparitions irrespective of the interpretation of such apparitions, an attribute which infringes one of the most basic principles of Critical Philosophy by extending the concept of life to anything beyond the physical universe, that Kant can distinguish its idealism from Berkeley's dictum.

The presence of a noumenal universe is therefore essential to Kant's perspective on God's problems, equality and immortality, which are the most important problems facing philosophy for Kant. For example -it is Kant's conviction that man is a free moral agent, but it is also his conviction that freedom from man and common cause are mutually exclusive. As the principle of the universal cause in the phenomenal world is true, Kant's reasons follow that freedom is impossible unless some human acts are axed by the noumenal self, the unknown self beyond space and time, and the ego that is not bound by the universal causation. Kant also uses the noumena definition to explain his belief in God and the soul's immortality. While Kant's use of the noumena concept contradicts his own beliefs, without such a use his views would have proved unlikely on important philosophical matters, perhaps even knowledge theory posed in the 'Critique of Pure Reason'.

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