

# FROM THE DISCOVERING OF REALITY TO CREATING MULTIPLE REALITIES: THE ARISTOTELIAN ROOTS OF MODERN ANTHROPOCENTRICISM

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**ABSTRACT.** *The Kantian derivation of the categories of reason from Aristotelian logical form of judgment is one of the most remarkable shifts in Enlightenment epistemological discourse and consequently has substantive ontological implications that have radicalized the discourse over anthropocentricity.*

*Kantian transcendental deduction of categories of reason provides an understanding of the human mind which can transcend history, culture, traditions and the matrix in which it has been situated. This implies that the human mind not only has the capacity to have absolute, certain and universal knowledge rather it implies that fixed categories of reason also provide the rational foundation of categorical imperative and its universal application. Thus it provides an anthropocentric foundation of universal values and rational civilization. Secondly and most importantly, Kant's claim that it is the structure of the mind which gives structure to the reality rather than vice versa, has radically changed the theoretical dynamics of knowledge about reality. This new role of the human mind has turned the discovery of reality into a meaningless pursuit because there is no structure outside the mind. The intelligible reality is the result of the imposition of the structure of the human mind, over reality. Thus the only option left is to create reality rather than discover reality. This emancipatory and anthropocentric tendency of Enlightenment thought is the result of Kantian-Copernican Revolution which cannot be possible without Aristotle.*

*In this paper it will be argued that the contemporary search of scientific investigation is not a search to discover reality; rather a quest to create reality and it is the result of the Aristotelian roots of modern anthropocentricism*

**KEYWORDS:** *Aristotle, Kant, Anthropocentrism, Enlightenment*

## Contents

1. From the Priority of Ontology over Epistemology to that of Epistemology over Ontology
2. Kantian Transcendental Rationality and Aristotelian Root of Modern Anthropocentricity
3. The Science of Self and the Creation of reality

## 1. From the Priority of Ontology over Epistemology to that of Epistemology over Ontology

The history of ideas reveals a continuous struggle to seek legitimation of one's knowledge claim. Sometimes, the epistemological legitimacy of the "subject of knowledge" i.e. the knower is under question; sometimes the ontological existence of the "object of knowledge" i.e. the "known" or external world or anything other than

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the subject is under question. Most of the time, the relation between the “knower and the known” is also under scrutiny. In the context of this process of legitimation, it is very difficult to segregate one’s ontological underpinning from its corresponding epistemological assertions, or vice versa. Secondly, the prioritization of epistemological question over ontological question; or the precedence of ontology over epistemology, is also one of the most important rather most controversial aspects of the history of ideas.

Classical philosophers usually begin with the resolution of the ontological question first and their epistemological position is derived from its corresponding metaphysical foundations. This pattern is consistent with the philosophical attitude of classical thinkers generally and Post- Socratic philosophers in particular i.e. Plato and Aristotle. Interestingly, the same philosophical pattern is followed by Christian and Muslim thinkers.

However, the modernist philosophical tradition has questioned the conventional pattern which presumes the precedence of ontology over epistemology i.e. the question concerning “what is the nature and origin of reality?” is prior to the question; “how do I know reality?” This traditional priority of metaphysics over epistemology has been delegitimized in Enlightenment epistemological discourse. The conventional hierarchy of the etiological questions and their corresponding responses has been reordered by modern thinkers. They assert the “priority of epistemology over ontology”.<sup>2</sup> The rationale of this prioritization was initially defended by Descartes and eventually it became one of the most important tendencies of Enlightenment intellectual tradition. This Cartesian precedence “characterizes philosophy after the scientific revolution from Descartes to Kant”.<sup>3</sup>

Descartes believes that one should determine the limit of his knowing capacities before indulging oneself to resolve the etiological questions concerning the nature, origin and order of reality. The most important implication of this shift is that the limit of human knowing capacity will now determine the limits of one’s knowable reality. And if the issue of the holding of knowledge is raised for instance what Confucius asserts; “when you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it: this is knowledge”.<sup>4</sup> Knowing the limits of one’s knowledge is in itself a state of awareness however most importantly, if something is unknowable then what will be the theoretical status of such ontological standing. Thus the modernist prioritization of epistemology over ontology has actually circumscribed one’s notion of reality, i.e. in the substantive sense; the limit of epistemology determines the limit of ontology. The distinction between knowable and unknowable reality, at first instance, has actually eliminated the unknowable reality from the discourse of metaphysics in general and ontology in particular.

<sup>2</sup> Floridi, Luciano. *The Ethics of Information*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Confucius. [http://www.braingquote.com/quote/a/confucius13402\\_8.html](http://www.braingquote.com/quote/a/confucius13402_8.html)

Later on in this epistemological discourse, both the “object of knowledge” and the “source of knowledge” directly question the theoretical legitimacy of the reciprocating ontological positions.

For instance, the intellectual antagonism between Continental Rationalism and British Empiricism begins with the prioritization of the ultimate source of knowledge, eventually it has trapped into the ontological possibility of the legitimate and illegitimate object of knowledge, in other words, knowable and unknowable objects of knowledge. This reveals that neither ontological nor epistemological discourses are specific to their respective parameters; either there is an ontologically-grounded epistemological approach and its corresponding source of knowledge, or there is an epistemologically-driven ontological position and its corresponding subject of knowledge. Cartesian Dualism, Leibniz’s Monadology, Spinoza’s Theory of Attributes, Lockean Dichotomy of Primary and Secondary qualities, Berkeley’s Subjective Idealism and Hume’s Skepticism; all are fundamentally metaphysical and ontological positions emerged from their specific epistemological positions and its corresponding source of knowledge.

The logical implications of a given epistemological position are not specific to the issue, “how do we know?” Rather it is also fundamentally linked with the issue of “who we are?” and “what actually it is?” that we want to know. So the epistemological search has never been transcended from the ontological search.

The early modern thinkers, particularly the Continental Rationalists believe that reason and only reason alone can answer all the questions raised by the human consciousness in order to make sense of one’s existence. “We hold that there can be no fact real or existing, no statement true, unless there is a sufficient reason why it should be so and not otherwise.”<sup>5</sup> This fundamental belief of rationalists regarding the non-contestable centrality of transcendental reason is rested upon the ontological assumptions of anthropocentric discourse of Enlightenment. There is no doubt that Cartesian “methodic doubt” is methodologically epistemological however its theoretical corollaries are intrinsically ontological.<sup>6</sup>

According to Descartes “I am, I exist – that is certain: but for how long? For as long as I am thinking...As he put it elsewhere, It is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not at the very time when it is thinking exists”<sup>7</sup>

This reveals that it is not just the mythological derivation of a particular kind of ontological conclusion. Rather it eventually creates lot of philosophical problems in Descartes’ system of thought. For instance as identified by Husserl, according to Descartes, due to the misapplication of his own epistemological method, he derives a substantive conclusion regarding the determination of the ontological status of “ego”. In Cartesian Meditation, Husserl claims that “Descartes introduced the apparently

<sup>5</sup> Leibniz, Gottfried, Discourse on Metaphysics, Modern Philosophy, An Anthology of primary sources. Edit. Day Roger Ariew, Eric Watkins, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009, p. 278.

<sup>6</sup> In Husserlian words the result of the assumptions of dualistic realism.

<sup>7</sup> See in Philosophical Writing of Descartes, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch, Vol.2 Cambridge: Cambridge university press 1985. Quoted in Descartes, J. Cottingham New York, Basil Blackwell Inc.1986. p.36.

insignificant but actually fateful change whereby the ego becomes a substantial cognitions; a separate human *mens sive animus* [mind or soul]<sup>8</sup>. This dualistic realism is theoretically prior, or at least imbedded, in the epistemological framework of Cartesian thought.

However right now we are not interested in the correct or incorrect application of Cartesian methodic doubt for the derivation of the realm of apodictic evidence. For now, we are just interested in identifying the organic link between epistemology and its possible ontological implications; and consequently the false presumptions about the derivation of one's ontological position as if it is grounded in apodictic evidence.

The ontological derivation from particular epistemological conditions is not specific to Continental Rationalism. This phenomenon has equally manifested itself in Locke's Representative Realism, Berkeley's Subjective Idealism and Hume's Skepticism. In short, the whole British Empiricist tradition is not able to emancipate itself from the realization of metaphysical impulse.

But unlike his Empiricist predecessors, Hume has actually questioned, on the one hand the epistemological possibility of ontology in itself, and on the other hand the certainties of one's epistemological claim itself. Thus he actually left us at the dead end of knowledge.

## 2. Kantian Transcendental Rationality and Aristotelian Root of Modern Anthropocentricity

What we can learn from Hume's analysis is that the prioritization of one specific source of knowledge for the derivation of certain knowledge will eventually collapse into a dead end of knowledge. This will consequently limit the scope of human knowledge by restricting the knowable reality for the subject of knowledge. This lacuna is the result of the prioritization of inappropriate source of knowledge. The Kantian transition from positivist dichotomy of judgment (*which was rested upon the traditional distinction between analytical and synthetic propositions*) towards the "trichotomy of (1) analytic a-priori, (2) synthetic a-posteriori and (3) synthetic a-priori judgment"<sup>9</sup> which is empirical and logically necessary to provide a theoretical and logically sound ground to resolve the epistemological deadlock between rationalism and empiricism.<sup>10</sup> This Kantian trichotomy<sup>11</sup> is central in his distinction

<sup>8</sup>See Husserl, E. Cartesian Meditations, trans. Dorian Cairns, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1977 quoted in Understanding Phenomenology by Michael Hammond, Howarth, RverelKeat, Oxford Basil Book Well Ltd. 1991. P. 31

<sup>9</sup> See Korner S. Kant, Penguin Books 1954 p.21-22.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that in this paper we are not interested to question and explore the validity of the Kantian trichotomy regarding the determination of legitimate epistemological claims about reality. Rather we are interested in his contribution in the overall history of ideas in general and the sustenance of modern epistemological tradition in particular. Secondly the Aristotelian roots in his derivation of the categories of reason.

<sup>11</sup> Kant did not explore the forth possibility of judgment i.e. *Analytic a-posteriori judgment* because logically speaking there can be no analytic a-posteriori judgment. Although it is beyond the scope of our article to critically evaluate the logical possibility of forth possibility of judgment however it is worth mentioning that lot of work have also been done in this regard for instance Saul Kripke and



between *judging* and *perceiving* which according to him represents two distinct faculties of mind i.e. sense and understanding. According to him, “by means of sense, objects are given to us and sense alone provides us with perceptions; by mean of understanding objects are thought and from it there arise concepts”<sup>12</sup>. The collaborating role of these faculties of mind makes knowledge possible. In this way, reason provides the form and sense experiences provide the content of knowledge. Although he acknowledges that, “directly or indirectly, all thinking must ultimately ... refer to perceptions”<sup>13</sup> which creates an illusion that he is essentially an empiricist, but he claims that perceptions are meaningless without being properly formalized. This implies that perceptions are not synonyms to knowledge. He claims that “perceptions without concepts are blind”.<sup>14</sup> The conceptualization cannot be possible without reason however in his framework, reason alone cannot function because sense experiences are the content of thought. “Thoughts without content, (that is to say concept which cannot be applied to anything perceivable) are empty”.<sup>15</sup> Thus the formalizing capacity of reason is central to make perceptions intelligible because the condition of being thinkable is equally important; rather it is necessary. This means that “no object of experience is possible if it be either unperceivable or unthinkable”<sup>16</sup>.

This implies that the formalizing capacity of the human mind in general and rational faculty in particular, not only make things understandable, it also makes perceptions thinkable.

The Kantian derivation of pure concept of understanding or categories of reason from logical form of judgment under the epistemological conditions set by Kant himself provide us with a theoretical justification to acknowledge the Aristotelian contribution in the resolution of the epistemological crisis faced by the Enlightenment epistemological tradition.<sup>17</sup> It is an acknowledged fact that Kant’s selection of the term “*categories*” to refer to the pure concept of understanding, is semantically derived from Aristotle; “the categories itself applies to any object whatsoever. Concepts which apply to any object whatsoever were called ‘categories’ by Aristotle, which explains Kant’s adoption of the term for the elementary concept of pure understanding.”<sup>18</sup> However it is also an acknowledged fact that Aristotle’s use of the term categories and its conceptual derivation are quite different from that of Kant’s.

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Stephen Palmquist, in a very important article *A Priori Knowledge in Perspective* – Palmquist tries to establish that proposition that is *synthetic a posteriori* in one context might be *analytic a priori* in another context. See The Review of Metaphysics 41:2 (December 1987), pp. 255–282. See also “A Priori Knowledge in Perspective: (I) Mathematics, Method and Pure Intuition”, The Review of Metaphysics 41:1 (September 1987), pp. 3–22.

<sup>12</sup> Kant I. *Critique of Pure Reason* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Konigsberg, 1787, p. 49, quoted in Korner S. *Kant*, Penguin Book, 1954, p. 27

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Korner S. *Kant*, op.cit p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> The Crises is the result of the prioritization of epistemology over ontology.

<sup>18</sup> Korner S. *Kant*, op.cit p. 54.

However we can find certain common denominator between them, for instance; Aristotle's use of the word categories, is specific in the sense that categories are not determined by empirically derived classification rather they are determined by the very conditions that determine a philosophy"<sup>19</sup> Same is the case with Kant as categories for Kant are also pure a-priori concepts of understanding rather than empirically schematized classifications of mind processes.

According to Thompson, the use of categories is different in Aristotle as compared with that of Kant. He claims that Aristotle's approach towards categories is metaphysical whereas Kant's approach is "epistemological"<sup>20</sup> This actually is the core concern of this paper; to show how Aristotelian metaphysically-grounded logical form of judgment has provided an epistemological justification for the derivation of pure a-priori concept of understanding. It is important to note that without indulging into any ontological analysis, Kant has tried to methodologically explain the structure and process of the human mind. The method of determining the pure a-priori concept of understanding "is often called transcendental argument"<sup>21</sup>

Kantian transcendental argument in general and derivation of categories in particular are dependent on Aristotelian metaphysical analysis (for instance In Metaphysics IV) which demands the logical condition of "something which signifies the substance."<sup>22</sup> This logical demand of Aristotle is predominantly discussed in the context of Aristotle's distinction between category of substance and accident. But here we are interested in its role in identifying the clue of the logical form of judgment which makes significant utterances possible and even the functionality of the principle of contradiction.

Kant has used the thinking and judging capacities of the mind to make meaningful utterances about the empirical reality which the human mind is confronted by. Kant thinks that judging cannot be possible without the unification of the judgment and the a-priori concept. The objectivity and generality of objective empirical judgments (despite of their reliance on sense experiences which are intrinsically subjective and private) cannot be identified without a-priori concepts or categories. In his own words "if we resolve all our synthetic judgments, in so far as they are objectively valid, then we find that they never consist of mere perceptions... but that they would be impossible, had there not been added a pure concept of understanding to the concepts which were abstracted from perception."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> ThompsonManley, "Philosophical Approaches to Categories," *The Monist*. Vol. 66, No. 3, July 1983, p. 336.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>22</sup> *The works of Aristotle*, trans. and ed. by W.D. Ross quoted in ThompsonManley, Philosophical Approaches to Categories, in *The Monist*. It is also important to note that Thompson has used *signifies* instead of the word *denotes*, as it is mentioned in Oxford edition – translating *Semainon* the writer prefers the *signifies* which reveals more semantically appropriate, in his thinking, with over all semantic mood of Aristotelian linguistic jargon.

<sup>23</sup> Kant, I. *Prolegomena to every future metaphysics*, trans. by P. E. Lucas (Manchester 1953), p. 302, quoted in Korner S. *Kant*, op.cit, p. 49.

Kant believes that the logical form of judgment can be distinguished from the application of particular concepts and their integral relations with the utterances, or in other words, with judgments. This implies that the logical form of judgment has a specific relation with the structure of the mind. The Kantian transcendental argument is actually an attempt to derive the list of pure a-priori concepts of understanding (categories) from the list of all logical forms of objective empirical judgment. In this derivation of the categories of reason, without indulging into any speculative psychology, Kant has relied on the work of traditional logicians; primarily on the work of Aristotle. It is believed that each specific category of reason corresponds to specific logical forms of judgment. This shows Kant's trust on Aristotelian logic because he considers it as "closed and complete."<sup>24</sup> It is due to this trust that the Kantian list of categories is also closed and completed. Secondly, his reliance on Newtonian physics is also unshakeable. "Kant's twofold dependence on Aristotle's logic and Newtonian science",<sup>25</sup> reveal that a comprehensive understanding of natural physical world is possible through the correct application of pure a-priori concept i.e. categories which are imbedded in the logical form of judgment expressed in traditional logic.

The core concern of this paper is not whether the list of categories identified by Kant is correctly corresponded by all the possible logical forms of judgments, for instance according to Korner, Kant believes that hypothetical judgment has only one form but even Stoics knew<sup>26</sup> that "hypothetical judgments have grammatical similarity which disguises fundamental logical differences amongst them."<sup>27</sup> A lot of work has already been done to explore the weakness in the Kantian argument regarding the determination as well as the completion of the list of categories.<sup>28</sup> However, it is a general consensus among the contemporary Aristotelians and Kantians that:

1) Kant derives the list of categories coherently or incoherently from Aristotelian logical form of judgment.

2) Aristotle's approach towards categories is metaphysical.

3) Thompson's argument regarding the Aristotelian distinction between the signification of substance from that of accident, is to establish that Aristotelian categories are actually ontological.<sup>29</sup> This implies that the being of substance is

<sup>24</sup> Kant I. *Critique of Pure Reason* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Königsberg, 1787, p. 49, quoted in Korner S. Kant. Op.cit. p.50.

<sup>25</sup> Korner S. Kant. Op.cit. p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> See Bochenski, *Ancient Logic*, Amsterdam, 1951, quoted in Korner S. Kant. Op.cit. p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Korner S. Kant. Op.cit. p.50.

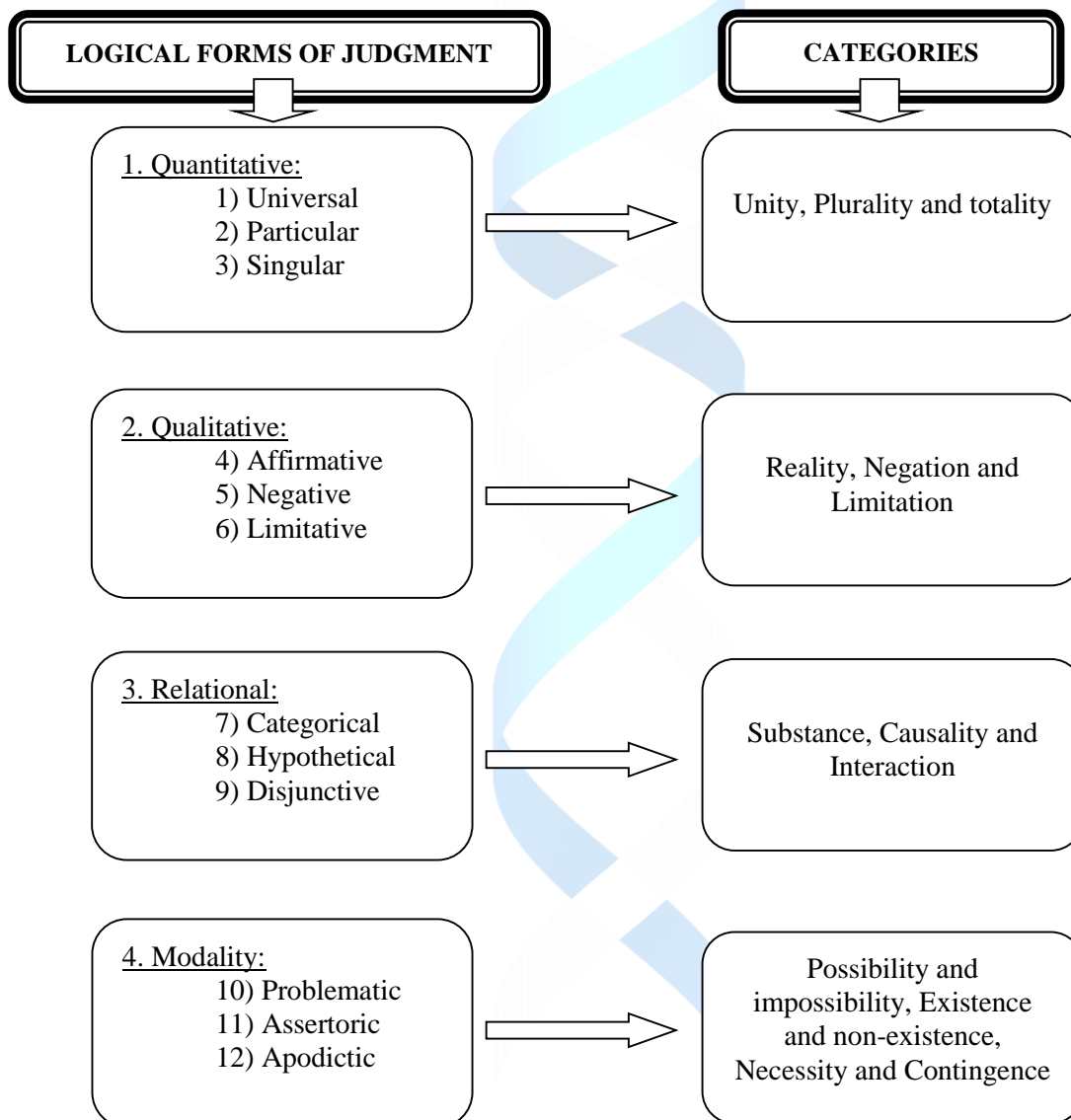
<sup>28</sup> Lot of work has been done in this regard for instance: Putnam, H. *Reason, Truth and History*, Cambridge University press 1981; Putnam, H. *Philosophical Paper*, Vol.2, Cambridge University Press 1975; Beck, Lewis White. "Kant Theory of Definition" in *Philosophical Review* Vol.65, 1965; Kant: A collection of critical essays (ed.) Robert Paul Wolff New York Double and CO. 1967; *Ontological relativity and other essays* New York Columbia university press 1969; Stroud, Barry. "Transcendental Argument" in the *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 65, 1968.

<sup>29</sup> See Thompson Manley, "Philosophical Approaches to Categories," *The Monist*, Vol. 66, No. 3, July 1983, p. 340.

different than the being of accident. Thus the distinction is fundamentally ontological.<sup>30</sup> Due to this ontological foundation of categorization, it is difficult to determine the exact list of categories related to accidental being.<sup>31</sup>

4) Kant's approach towards categories is epistemological.

5) Kantian use of categories due to its epistemological approach demands specific as well as exact list of categories in order to be presented as objective basis of knowing. If there is no exact list available, then it cannot be acknowledged as an objective basis of absolute knowledge because of its relativistic and contingent nature.<sup>32</sup> On the "logical forms" and "categories", see the scheme of Stephan Korner<sup>33</sup>:



<sup>30</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>31</sup> The works of Aristotle. Trans. and ed. by W.D. Ross, quoted in Thompson Manley, *Philosophical Approaches to Categories*, in *The Monist*, op.cit. p. 341.

<sup>32</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>33</sup> See: Stephan Korner, *Kant*, op.cit. 1954, pp. 73-74.



The Kantian derivation of the concept of pure understanding is a fundamental turning point in modern epistemological tradition and it provides a theoretical framework to reconcile the traditional epistemological antagonism between rationalism and empiricism. Secondly, it also provides an alternative framework to make an objective epistemological claim about the absolute understanding of external reality. The Kantian objective to derive a complete list of non-mathematical, a-priori concepts of understanding keeping his transcendental argument within the epistemological parameters he has set for the logical construction of his system of thought; without indulging into any intellectual adventure of speculative psychology, is one of the most important epistemological contributions of Kant.

But it is important to note that this transcendental analysis cannot be possible without Aristotelian metaphysically-grounded logical forms of judgments. The Kantian derivation of the logical form of judgment is central to acknowledge that:

- 1) The fundamental limit of Modern epistemological discourse is the result of the prioritization of epistemology over ontology regarding the determination of objective knowledge claims.
- 2) The Aristotelian logical form of judgments which is actually the result of his ontologically-grounded categories is central for Kantian derivation of pure a-priori concept of understanding. For instance, the Aristotelian ontological distinction between *substance and accident* is central in his epistemological distinction between the apprehension of essence (*nous*) from that of accident. “Without prior support from ontology this epistemological distinction has seemed ad hoc and arbitrary.”<sup>34</sup>
- 3) The Kantian logical forms of judgment provide a theoretical justification for significant metaphysical claims that keep his argument within the limits of his epistemological parameters. For instance Kant’s distinction between Phenomena and Noumena is the result of the dichotomization of knowable and unknowable reality which cannot be theoretically justified without a-priori concept of understanding. In his transcendental argument, he acknowledges that the incapacity of sense and understanding to know things-in-themselves despite this fact that both, “perhaps spring from a common but to us unknown root”<sup>35</sup>
- 4) The transcendental Idealism of Kant cannot be sustained without his transcendental analytic which provides the theoretical foundation for the structure of objective experience from the derivation of the list of pure a-priori concepts. Transcendental dialectic also provides the theoretical justification to demonstrate metaphysical illusion through differentiation between correct and incorrect applications of pure a-priori concepts.

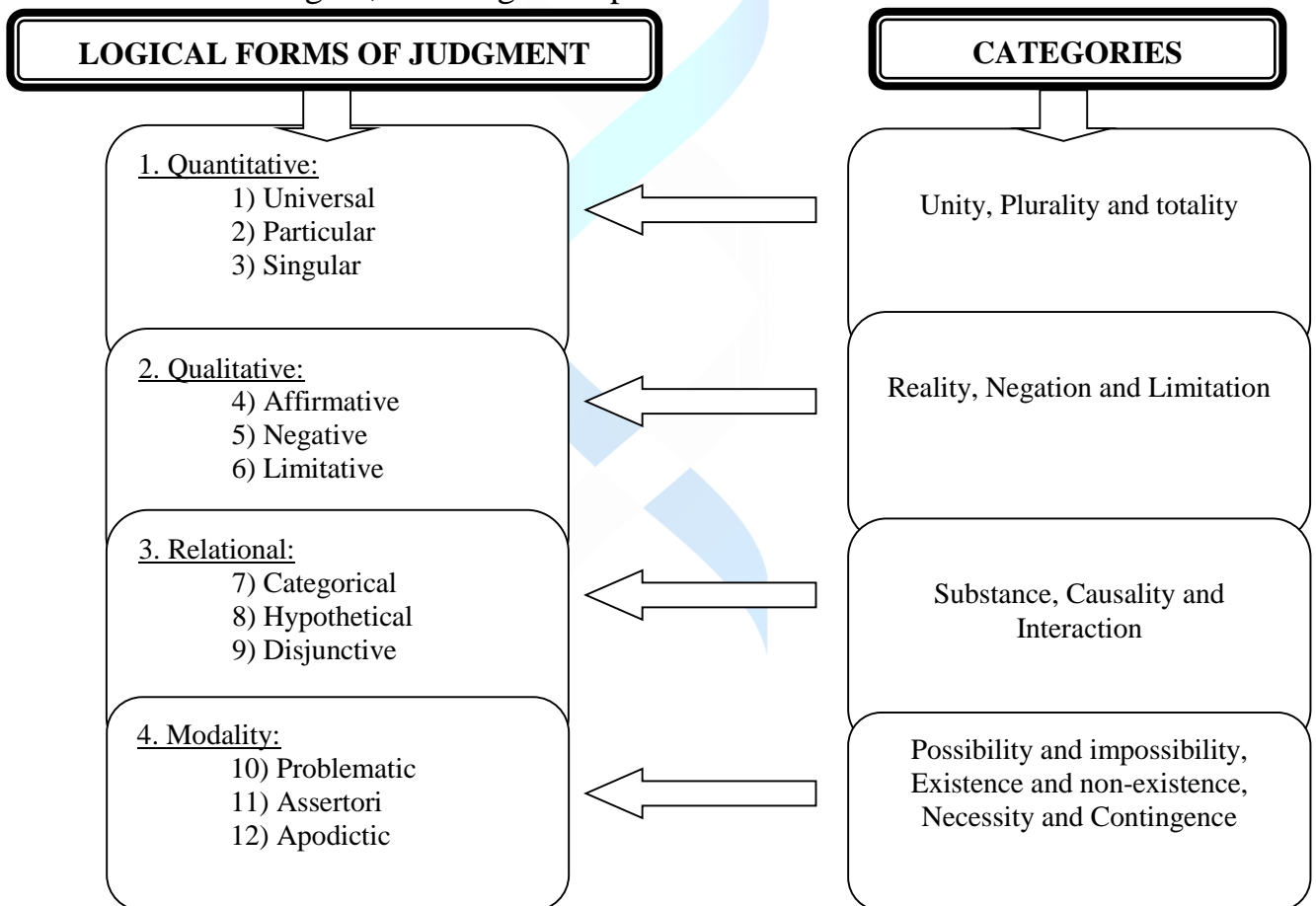
Unlike Empiricist epistemologists, for Kant the mind is not a passive tabula rasa which receives ideas from empirical reality; nor is it just a processing zone for innate

<sup>34</sup> See: in Thompson Manley, “Philosophical Approaches to Categories,” *The Monist*, op.cit. p. 345.

<sup>35</sup> Kant I. *Critique of Pure Reason* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Konigsberg, 1787p.46, quoted in Korner S. *Kant*, op.cit. p. 91

a-priori ideas without having direct encounters with empirical reality as thought by Continental Rationalists.

The experience of the world cannot be epistemologically possible without systematic structuring of representation provided by mind. Unlike Kant, both Continental Rationalists and Empiricists primarily focus on the mind-world interaction. This dualistic realism under the conditions of their respective epistemological frameworks is both epistemologically and ontologically insufficient because they do not have any theoretical framework to explicate the nature of the mind and its corresponding structure. Thus it is not the experience of the world which makes ideas possible, rather it is the structure of the mind which makes experiences possible, according to Kant. On the basis of these pure a-priori concepts of understanding, Kant questions the epistemological legitimacy of the traditional search to discover the structure of reality as an objective standard of knowing. Kant claims that it is not the structure of reality to which the mind should correspond; rather it is the structure of the mind which actually structures reality. This revolutionary worldview which is commonly known as Kantian-Copernican Revolution cannot be possible without pure categories of reason. The Kantian epistemological certainty for having the complete list of the categories of reason without any speculative psychology provides an anthropocentric foundation to impose human will on external reality as per rational order of the mind which is independent of reality outside the human mind. Once again, referring to Stephan Korner<sup>36</sup>:



<sup>36</sup>See: Korner, Stephan. *Kant*, op.cit. 1954, p. 73-74.

The chart shows that it is not the structure of the proposition which is to be confirmed by the mind rather the structure of the mind gives structure to reality. In Kant's words, "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge."<sup>37</sup>

This actually a radical shift in the Enlightenment epistemological discourse because this active role of the mind has shifted the fundamental epistemological objective from the discovery of reality to the creation of reality. Since things in themselves are unknowable, and if there is any structure of reality in-itself, it exists due to its noumenal nature beyond the comprehension of one's active mind. However, as there is a structure of the human mind which is also logically demonstrable (thanks to Aristotelian logical form of judgment) then it is reasonable to imply from this Kantian framework that we have to impose this structure of the mind as per our rational will.

### 3. The Science of Self and The Creation of reality:

The spirit of Kantian thought demands that the future dynamics of philosophical investigation must be on the one hand to participate in the creation of a world that can be experienced and on the other hand, intrinsically anthropocentric.

The fundamental question which needs to be addressed is that how much Kant can rely on categories of reason for the sustenance of his anthropocentric world view without referring to any specific speculative psychology as provided by Fichte.

The theoretical possibility of the *science of self* on the basis of so-called pure reason i.e. independent of any specific empirical analysis or a-posteriori observational system of understanding was an intellectual fashion of Kantian times. The a-priori ontological claim about the objective knowledge of self is usually called, rational psychology. Rational psychology, according to Kant, is a mistake of the human mind or an illusion of metaphysics. The rational ontological analysis and its corresponding claims are not epistemologically demonstrable. Kant contends that the illusion of metaphysics is actually the result of the misuse of the categories of reason.

Although there is no doubt that Kant has extensively written on this subject, but he has made a clear distinction between the thinking self as a being in process which makes synthetic unity possible and the "empirical self-i.e. introspected, self which is itself the presentation."<sup>38</sup> Kant claims that it is actually the pure a-priori aspect of the self which was the subject matter of rational psychology but since pure self is not the object of experience therefore the application of the categories of reason is not possible without objective experience. This implies that although pure self is there which makes the synthetic unity possible it is not knowable.

<sup>37</sup> Kant I., *Critique of pure reason*, trans. By N. Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan, 1963, Bxvi.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

The Kantian contribution about the determination of anthropocentric foundation of Enlightenment humanist tradition is unquestionable. Kant's commitment with the priority of an anthropocentric approach for the determination of a well-ordered society and universal morality is a fundamental cornerstone of his thought.

He provides the metaphysical foundation for liberalism in general and constitutional democracy in particular, from his anthropocentricism. There is no doubt that the Kantian distinction between empirically-determined reason and pure, practical reason is very significant for the absolute defense of liberal order, however this distinction cannot be possible without a particular kind of philosophy of the mind.

Kant's explication of the defining features of *Aufklärung (Enlightenment)* is actually a departure from the state of immaturity to the state of awareness i.e. acknowledgment of *Rational-self-determined-autonomous-self* which is driven by reason and not by some inhuman authorities. Thus it is his notion of reason which enables him to establish "*man as end in him-self rather than a mean to an end.*" which is presumed to be the *raison d'être* of modern anthropocentricism.

The empirically determined reason guides our actions within a sphere of desires and instincts. The practical reason contains unconditional imperative i.e. it is not influenced or determined by our empirical awareness. Thus it deals with the formal aspect of the truth. Kant defends his idea of *categorical imperative* which is the fundamental idea to justify the anthropocentric foundation of his defense of universal morality on the basis of *pure practical reason*. Thereby the validity of categorical imperative is not determined by its content; rather it is determined by its form which is derived from a pure a-priori concept of understanding. Kant's idea of categorical imperative provides the justification of "pure law". This formal law of conduct provides the ultimate justification for the derivation of substantive moral principles. Categorical imperative is, in fact, the principle of universalizability. The ethical principles which can be passed through the test of universalizability are considered as substantive moral laws. The conditions of the universalization may be conceived as follows; firstly, the requirement to universalize rules out differential treatment between individuals on arbitrary grounds. Secondly, the truth value of the formal principle must not be determined by an individual's personal preferences instead it must be true for all. Finally and most importantly, the formal principles chosen by an individual must be independent of his particular value system. This means that the individual chooses principle as if he is "anyone" (i.e. not a person having specific identity and possessing a specific value system).

Every ideology presumes a particular conception of the person. Kant provides the basic philosophical assumption underlying "right-based liberal"<sup>39</sup> conception of the person in general while that of Rawls, in particular. Kant provides an epistemological argument for the justification of a transcendental subject. His

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<sup>39</sup> The Rawlsian defense of liberalism is one of the forms of right based liberalism which provide a theoretical justification universalization of human rights frame work and its cross cultural application. See Rawls J. *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, 1971.



epistemological argument is grounded in the ontological incapacity of the subject regarding the possibility of self-knowledge. He believes that if the self is the sum total of desires, virtues and inclinations then it is not possible to apprehend a unified self in which all these desires, aims, dispositions etc. converge. And if there is a self, it is not empirically demonstrable. Introspective analysis cannot deliver self-awareness on the basis of these empirical appearances. Nevertheless Kant claims that we can presume the possibility of a unified self. He says; "...I can grasp the manifold of the representation in one consciousness, and do I call the one and all mine. For otherwise I should have as many – colored and diverse a self as I have representation of which, I am conscious to myself"<sup>40</sup>.

This means that there is an antecedently individuated self that converges diverse perceptions and holds them together in a single consciousness or awareness. Kant believes that the experience of impressions and the object of experience are not the source of moral obligations. It is Reason which provides the basis of moral obligation (das Sollen). Kant acknowledges that external factors, natural causes and even sensory stimulations affect the individual's drive to "will" something, however he claims that "they cannot produce (my state of) being under obligation...."<sup>41</sup>. This rational sense of moral obligations helps us to unveil the conception of the self, presumed by Kant. The conception of reason presumed by Kant is two-dimensional. He believes that the individual can relate himself to the object, rationally "either by merely determining it and its concept... or making it real."<sup>42</sup> He considers the first function as theoretical and the second function as practical. Kant acknowledges that the conflict of desires is inevitable however the nature of conflict has been differentiated by him. He contrasts the conflict of desires with the conflict of desire with "duty". The purpose of practical reason is to resolve this conflict between desire and duty. Korner believes that the Kantian linguistic expression presumes a particular structure of terminology and generally "the logical grammar of the term 'duty' is different from the grammar of desire and impulse."<sup>43</sup> Moreover in the Kantian paradigm, the conflict of desire and duty simply means the "conflict of one desire with the other."<sup>44</sup> It follows that the purpose of practical reason is to resolve this "conflict" with a sense of moral obligation. Thereby we consider Kantian ethics as rationality bound by desires.

The Kantian idea of the categorical imperative is helpful to understand a particular kind of "self" and the "ontological" possibility of individual autonomy. Kant believes that everything in nature is determined by the law. But "only rational being has the ability to act according to the presentation (Vorstellung) of the law i.e. according to principles"<sup>45</sup>. This means that the individual's capacity or autonomy to

<sup>40</sup> Kant, I (1887). *Critique of Pure Reason* (II ed.), trans. by N.K. Smith. London: Macmillan, 1927, p. 154.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Korner S. *Kant*, Penguin Book 1954, p 130.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> Kant I. *Ground work of Metaphysics of morals*, in H.J. Paton, London, p. 412.

adopt maxims makes man's existence moral or immoral. This reveals the inevitable link between the individual's liberty and his morality. Kant's emphasis on the practical necessity of the categorical imperative makes his claim vulnerable because in his framework, the choice of ends is governed by the order of desires of the individual. Thus in concrete life situations, people may have different ends because they may order their desires differently. So the difficulty arises that "our subjective qua-rational beings to the categorical imperative cannot be explained in terms of our seeking ends which depend on our desire."<sup>46</sup> In order to resolve this difficulty, Kant introduces a conception of the self, which is, an end in itself. Thus the transcendental "self" itself provides the grounds for the necessity of practical law. This notion of "end" is independent of any kind of desire. This emancipation of the self from the instrumental chain of means-end relationship holds the harmony of every rational "will" and binds them together in a coherent moral order.

The Kantian notion of "self" is that of a "rational self". Being a rational self, it is an end in itself i.e. the "absolute end". The theoretical corollary of this absolute end is that "man stands outside all causal chains and consequently outside every hierarchy of means and ends."<sup>47</sup> The Kantian commitment with the prioritization of the rational self as an absolute end compels him to reformulate the structure of the categorical imperative in a manner that "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in the person of all others, never as a means only but always equally as an end."<sup>48</sup> Kant claims that this new formulation of the categorical imperative provides same result as what we were getting from the old formulation of categorical imperative. *Korner believes that this new formulation reflects the moral intuitions of human being in general and Western man in particular.* Therefore the postulate, "man as end in him-self", corresponds to the "moral experiences at least to moral experience of our (Western) culture."<sup>49</sup> Kant adopts an anthropocentric approach and presumes that the individual has a capacity to "will" autonomously. By autonomy, Kant means individual's ontological capacity to determine his ends and virtues independent of history and social determinism. The Kantian subject not only has the desire but also the capacity to determine his ends autonomously. His subject stands outside or independent of history and culture.<sup>50</sup> In order to sustain the autonomy of the self, the value of non-interference has lexical priority over all other substantive values. The natural corollary of this precedence is that the right has priority over the good, i.e. "the subject is prior to his end"<sup>51</sup>. The existence of the antecedently individuated self reveals that our voluntary actions are not determined by the

<sup>46</sup> Korner, S. *Kant*, op. cit p. 145.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>48</sup> Kant, I. *Ground work of Metaphysics of moral*, op. cit page 429.

<sup>49</sup> Korner S. *Kant*, op. cit p. 148.

<sup>50</sup> Good-based liberalism (utilitarianism) has been rejected by Kantians like Rawls because, in it, the individual becomes a means to realize certain ends, as Kant considers the individual as an end-in-himself.

<sup>51</sup> Sandal, M.J., *Liberalism and the limits of justice*, Cambridge University press, Cambridge New York, 1982 P. 7.

community or culture but there is an autonomous and self-determined agency functioning independently, of the world and standing outside history. This super-sensible paradigm of the self legitimizes the possibility of the existence of a free and transcendental subject. This transcendental subject is actually independent of the causal determinism prevailing in this sensible world. The subject is free, autonomous and self-determined. The conception of self emerges from Kantian analysis is as follows: the self is rational, autonomous, and a-historical. The autonomy of the self emancipates it from the organic chain between means and ends, thus it is end in itself. This legitimizes the priority of right over the good. The rational self is not only subject to moral law (universal principle) but also the creator of it. This transcendently rational, unencumbered and antecedently individuated self is ontologically capable to legislate. The nature of legislation is universalistic, because the “idea of the will of any rational being (is interpreted) as a universally legislative will”<sup>52</sup>.

Kant’s aim was to reconcile the antagonistic relationship between science and morality. He believes that the Newtonian world view provides the justification of universal determinism and the Rousseauian moral philosophy defends individual’s autonomy. He tries to resolve this paradoxical co-existence of natural determinism and moral freedom by differentiating phenomenal world from noumenal world. In Kantian framework “the world of phenomena is what science can know, the world of noumena is the realm which is opened up by morality”<sup>53</sup>. In order to understand one of the most important metaphysical foundations of humanism this distinction between phenomena and noumena is central. It provides the basis of dualism in Kantian conception of self. Kant differentiates the lower self from that of upper one.<sup>54</sup> The lower self is the phenomenal one, which is the part of empirical world. On the other hand, the upper self is the noumenal aspect of self which is the part of intellectual world (“the world of things in them-selves”). This noumenal world is unknowable. Kant insists that although noumenal world cannot be known it can be believed in. He introduces the concept of “rational belief”, the belief which leads us (beyond experience) to the idea of freedom. Thus as a noumenal being man is absolutely free. On the other hand in phenomenal world man is heteronomously determined. “This duality of human nature is overcome in Kant’s kingdom of ends”<sup>55</sup>. The Kingdom of Ends is a union of all rational individuals in a system of law.

In such sphere all the ends determined by pure rational will are harmonized in an organic whole. In Kingdom of Ends “each individual realizes his private ends by means of the other and regards the other as an end in himself”<sup>56</sup>. Thus we can say that the Kingdom of Ends is a sphere in which the actions determined by pure reason and

<sup>52</sup> Kant I., *Ground work of Metaphysics of morals*, op.cit page 43.

<sup>53</sup> Hassner, Pierre. “Immaneut Kant,” in *History of political philosophy* (ed.) by Leo Strauss and J. Cropsey (London / Chicago) University of Chicago Press (1972), page 582.

<sup>54</sup> The distinction of upper and lower self is not standardized but for conceptual convenience we are using this distinction.

<sup>55</sup> Ansari J. A. “The poverty of Democracy (Part-I)”, in the Universal message, Oct. 1990, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

actions determined by desires are completely harmonized with each other and the contradiction between reason and desire will be abolished. In the Kantian framework “Kingdom of Ends” is realized through a course of history. Thus the contradiction between desires and pure reason will be eliminated through the teleological process of self-development. Thus man as a rational being is teleologically destined to construct a perfect social arrangement i.e. Kingdom of Ends.

### Concluding remarks

The relevance of Kantian anthropocentricity has consistently persevered in contemporary discourse and there is no disagreement between Modernists and Post-modernists regarding the precedence of human-centricity over any other kind or other spectacles to understand the contemporary life-world. There is no doubt that the Post-modern discourse has substantively extended the domain of “being” which has theoretically questioned the so-called intellectual colonization of anthropocentricity. For instance, Deleuzian substitution of “*Logos*” from “*Nomos*”<sup>57</sup> to justify his notion of unstructured conception of being provide a theoretical possibility to transcend the anthropocentric spectacles, but this Deleuzian attempt to extend the intellectual horizon at the cost of *identity*. This novel conceptualization of *pure difference* has actually questioned the universality of the anthropocentric notion of becoming. However, the institutional conditionality of this pure notion of difference is actually the continuation of the already institutionalized capitalistic form of production and obsession with an unprecedented desire for autonomy of the will and there is no meaning of autonomy in absence of identity.

It is also important to note that the contemporary manifestation of Modern or Post-modern anthropocentricism is more concerned with “what is possible?” rather than “what is?” Both of its manifestations are more concerned with “*becoming*” rather than “*being*”. The impact of this predominantly futuristic orientation regarding the understanding of reality in general and the human being in particular that it is more concerned with the creation of reality rather than its discovery. Any attempt to understand reality is meaningless in this anthropocentricism if we are not interested to impose our will as per our desire. For instance, take the example of medical sciences and their corresponding methodological frameworks. They all are actually working on human becoming rather than human being. «The whole discourse of cloning, genetic mutation, stem-cell methodologies, innumerable possibilities of vaccinations, transplantation etc. are all predominantly futuristic and teleologically grand mechanism to engineer a super-human-being i.e. Ubermench.»<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Nomos according to Deleuze distribute “people (or animal) in an open space, one that is indefinite and non-communicating .... nomad distribute himself in smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial space. See Deleuze&Guttari, A thousand Plateaus (first South Asian ed.) R. Hurley, MussumiTrans. Chennai India Viva Books Pvt. Ltd., p. 420.

<sup>58</sup> Suri, Wahab Abdul, Right without Choice and the Future of Bio-ethics Discourse in Post-Colonial Society, In *EJAIB*, Vol. 23 - (3) May 2013, www.eubios.info ISSN 1173-2571, Official Journal of the Asian Bioethics Association (ABA), Copyright ©2013 Eubios Ethics Institute, p. 92.



It means that the spirit of Kantian-Copernican Revolution is not just the acknowledgement of the limit of human rational capacity to know the reality of *things-in-themselves* rather it also opens up a gateway to determine the structure and nature reality by imposing our will as per our desire. It is due to this reason in the absence of the knowledge of thing-in-them-selves that the claim about normative rational formalism for the determination of absolute and universal imperative as claimed by Kant is just the adventure of rationality bound by desires. Secondly, and most importantly, the Aristotelian ontologically-determined logical forms of judgment are conceptual necessities for the understanding of Kantian transcendental idealism and rational morality.

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